

COPING WITH PSEUDO-SINGLE PARENTING:
EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE MOTHERS IN ASTRONAUT FAMILIES IN CANADA

by
Wei-Chiao Hsu

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

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Examining Committee:

Norman E. Amundson, Counselling Psychology

Supervisor

Ishu Ishiyama, Counselling Psychology

Supervisory Committee Member

Owen, Lo, Special Education

Supervisory Committee Member

Tan, Yuen Sze Michelle, Curriculum and Pedagogy

University Examiner

Buchanan, Marla, Counselling Psychology

University Examiner

Abstract

This explorative research project examined the pseudo-single parenting experience of Chinese and Taiwanese mothers in astronaut families in British Columbia, Canada. Enhanced Critical Incident Technique was utilized to answer research questions including what helps and what hinders the mothers' coping experiences with parenting alone, as well as their wishes and/or expectations within the parenting process. Individual and in-person interviews were conducted with 8 Taiwanese mothers and 7 Chinese mothers. Participants reported 150 helping and 63 hindering critical incidents, and 27 wish items in the areas of intrapersonal process, family process, social interactions, and external resources and conditions. These areas consisted of 12 helping and 7 hindering categories. Approximately 70% of the critical incidents fell under the intrapersonal process (38%) and family process (34%) areas. Adaptability (87%) was the most endorsed helping category, juggling multiple responsibilities (80%) was the most endorsed hindering category, and expectations for children (47%) was the most endorsed wish list item.

The results suggested that the astronaut family arrangement is a goal-oriented family project. The advancement of international transportation and communication technologies helped the family stay connected. Astronaut mothers in this research made informed decisions to undertake the primary care taker's role. Participants coped with quasi-single parenting by connecting to various sources of support intrapersonally and externally. They demonstrated resilience and flexibility when confronted with parenting difficulties.

Counselling practitioners are encouraged to make multidimensional assessments for case conceptualizations when working with mothers in astronaut families. Risk and protective factors can be explored in the areas of intrapersonal process, family process, social interactions, and external resources and conditions. Improving the mothers' internal strengths and increasing sources of validation are likely helpful for successful coping.

Lay Summary

This research examined how Chinese and Taiwanese mothers in astronaut families cope with parenting alone after they immigrated with their children to Canada while their husbands stayed in their home countries. The researcher interviewed 8 Taiwanese mothers and 7 Chinese mothers to learn about their experiences. Participants reported incidents they thought had significantly helped or hindered their ability to cope with parenting alone. 150 helping and 63 hindering incidents were reported, and they were subsequently categorized into 12 helping categories and 7 hindering categories under four areas: intrapersonal process, family process, social interactions, and external resources and conditions. Approximately 70% of the critical incidents fell under the intrapersonal process (38%) and family process (34%) areas. Getting validation and support from within participants themselves and their family appeared to be most helpful. On the other hand, lacking sources of validation and support made parenting alone harder to manage.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by W.C., Hsu.

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I owe my achievement to my dear friends, mentors, and family in Taiwan, Canada and United States. You know who you are! You have provided me with support and so much love that transcend time and space. I can't thank you enough.

My favorite and most unforgettable hiking trip in British Columbia was climbing Unnecessary Mountain. The forgotten and little-traveled trail was so steep and rough that it took four experienced hikers, including myself, much more time than expected to complete. And we made it. We made it and it felt fantastic! Very much like hiking the Unnecessary Mountain, working on this dissertation project used to feel like an impossible mission. I thank myself for giving it the best I can.

Finally, I must express my greatest gratitude to the participants in my study. All of them so openly shared their personal experience with me and I was deeply moved by their kindness and generosity. They are inspirational and admirable. I feel extremely honored to be given permission to write about their stories.

Dedication

To Grandma, my inspiration, my tireless cheerleader who always believes in me more than I do myself.

To Dad, Mom, and my baby sister. My dream has been realized because of your unconditional love and support.

致

阿婆 王文嬌女士：您是啟發我靈感的來源，也是對我始終保持無比信心的最強啦啦隊！

爸媽和均：因你們無條件的支持我的夢想才得以實現。

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This project explored the parenting experience of mothers who are transnational migrants (or transmigrant) from China and Taiwan in Vancouver, British Columbia. Transnational migration is a form of international migration whereby migrants sustain social and/or financial bonds with two or more countries without necessarily seeking permanent settlement (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1995). The term astronaut family was introduced by Hong Kong mass media to refer to nonworking or middle-class families who engaged in transnational migration in the 1990's. The "astronaut" in the astronaut family referred to the men in the family because the literal meaning of astronaut in Chinese is space (*i.e. thai-kung*) traveller. With a twist in interpreting its written form, it could also be understood as a "wifeless" (*i.e. thai kung*, where *thai* means wife, *kung* means absence) man. Participants in this dissertation study reported frequent and regular travels between their two homes as well, thanks to the advancement in international transportations, therefore, *astronaut mothers* will be used to describe the participants in this study.

Between the 1980's and 1990's, Hong Kong and Taiwan were the major source countries of astronaut families in Canada. These families split their households where the father remained in Hong Kong whilst the mother and their offspring emigrated to Western countries such as New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and Australia. In most cases such an arrangement was driven by the family's hope to pursue a better future for the children and family based on a belief that the overall living environment and education systems in Western countries provided better quality and higher prestige. More recently, an increasing number of families from Mainland China participate in such transnational family arrangements (Sin & Lowe, 2014). Elite lifestyle, mobility, and flexibility are common perceptions associated with astronaut families (Man, 1995;

Ong, 1999); however, long-distance separation, and the change of family formation are also significant aspects of their transnational lifestyle (Chee, 2003; Stafford, 2005; Waters, 2002).

Statement of Issues

British Columbia is the second most popular destination for immigrants in Canada. According to the most recent National Household Survey (NHS) in 2011, immigrants make up 27.6% of BC's total population, which is 6% higher than that of the nation. Forty percent of the immigrants in this province reside in Vancouver, with immigrants from China contributing the largest proportion, accounting for approximately 31% (China, 17.4%; Hong Kong, 7.9%; Taiwan, 4.5%). This is relative to an approximate 11% of the population nationally. A BBC News report in 2012 suggests that Canada is heading towards "an Asian future" as Vancouver sees growing numbers of Chinese immigrants (Bhatty, 2012).

The immigrant communities in BC give the province a landscape of cultural diversity, and it exemplifies Canada's policy of multiculturalism, which welcomes immigrants' preservation of their cultural identities and practices while offering support for their integration into the local society (Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006). An increasing number of service providers in the areas of settlement, education, employment, and health have actively reached out to immigrant communities to improve their professional personnel's capacity to serve newcomers.

Arthur and Pedersen (2008) urged counselling psychology as a field to explore counselling issues and interventions in the global context. They published a collection of counselling cases involving international students, professional workers who migrate as a family or as a couple, and military/peacemaking personnel. Unfortunately, they neglected nonworking-class transnational families, such as astronaut families. This research project aims to fill this gap by focusing on astronaut mothers' experiences.

Research Objectives

This project was informed by literature in transnational migration and immigrant parenting. Grounded in the existing knowledge, further exploration in transmigrant parenting is expected to benefit professionals in the counselling field, and the transmigrant communities. The objectives of this project are:

1. To explore and describe Chinese and Taiwanese mothers' coping experience as they become pseudo-single¹ parents after engaging in the transnational family arrangement.
2. To expand psychologists' and counselling practitioners' understanding about Chinese and Taiwanese astronaut mothers' parenting experience and inform counselling practices.
3. To generate knowledge that is authentic, practical, comprehensible, and accessible for transmigrant communities and the public.

Research Questions

To address these objectives, three research questions guided the design of this study.

1. What is the parenting experience of astronaut mothers?

This project examined how astronaut mothers perceive and describe the outcomes and transformation of their parenting experience after migrating to Canada. In the condition of separation from their homelands and husbands, they may find themselves "dislocated" (Ishiyama, 1995) in a new cultural setting, a new family lifestyle, and a new role as the sole parent. It is assumed in this study that parenting is a continuing process rather than a fixed

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary defined *pseudo* as "being apparently rather than actually stated" (pseudo, n.d.). In the current research, *pseudo-single* denotes that although the astronaut mothers appear be single parents, they identify their families as two-parent families as their marriages are in fact intact.

state for the mothers; mothers' parenting practices may undergo changes, adjustments, and negotiations as the parent(s) and offspring begin living in Canadian society.

2. What helped or hindered astronaut mothers' coping with pseudo-single parenting?

This study examined self-reported helpful and hindering incidents that significantly influenced astronaut mothers' adjustment to the experience of parenting alone.

3. What did the participants wish they had or could have in the future to improve their parenting experience?

Descriptions of the Research Site

Vancouver was a suitable research location for this research project. Its rich immigrant cultures provide a natural context for the researcher to investigate the interactions between astronaut mothers and the local society, specifically how their parenting experiences develop. Indeed, participants spoke about how services and programs for immigrants shaped their parenting experiences.

The Use of Qualitative Methodology

This qualitative research project followed the traditions of phenomenology methodology and utilized the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2009) as the research method. A qualitative methodology is a suitable research paradigm when the researcher is interested in gaining in-depth understanding of a certain phenomenon rather than trying to provide an explanation or testing hypotheses. It is useful for enriching or revising existing knowledge (Creswell, 2007).

ECIT was selected as the research method because (a) it has been recognized as a useful tool for investigating under-researched topics; (b) it has been successfully utilized for studying career and adjustment issues with immigrant populations; (c) it is particularly effective in providing pragmatic recommendations for practitioners. Detailed discussion on this research

method and the overall research procedures will be provided in Chapter 3. The credibility of a qualitative inquiry relies heavily on the researcher's ongoing self-reflection (Creswell, 2007; Tracy, 2010). Accordingly, I address my position as researcher in the following section.

Personal Reflections

My cultural background plays a key role in forming my worldview. My experience as an international student prompted my interest in learning about other fellow immigrants. Born and raised in Taiwan where traditional Chinese social conventions and artifacts are preserved, I am familiar with the dominant Confucius ideology, which stresses that family comes before individuals, and hierarchical social roles and structures are in place to maintain political and societal order as well as harmony. Therefore, I found myself often wondering if astronaut mothers considered their sacrifice as necessary. I also wondered if making the sacrifice for the family and children would somehow empower them and help them develop resilience through challenging times. Therefore, I was very curious about the factors that support the astronaut mothers during their transition to solo parenting.

My academic training has been primarily in North America. My knowledge about psychological theories and counselling practice has been predominantly applied to working with clients in the Western context. I was also aware that most of my understanding of transnational migration, and the lens I applied to this investigation was informed primarily from an analysis by Western scholars. It was thus critical for me to suspend pre-existing literature-informed biases while working in the field to fully learn from the research participants' own understanding and interpretations of their experiences. Also, since I identify strongly with my Chinese cultural heritage, I am aware that I maintain certain traditional Chinese values, such as the importance of parent-child bonds, and family connections and coherence. To maintain my research stance, it was imperative to engage in ongoing self-reflections throughout the research process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study aimed to enhance counsellors' understanding of astronaut mothers' experience as they transition into a split-family arrangement and undertake the solo parenting role in a foreign culture. To accomplish this goal, I reviewed three bodies of literature: transnational migration and transnational studies, astronaut family studies, and psychological studies in Chinese immigrant parenting.

Transnational studies offered a conceptualization for the phenomenon of modern transnational migration, which is distinct from traditional migration patterns. Factors that contribute to transnational migration and the impact of this phenomenon on the individuals, families, nations, and global relations were widely explored. I present a broad overview of this body of literature to serve as a large systemic context in which my study was situated. Indeed, as family structures inevitably shift with transnational migration, the transnational approach has been applied to produce abundant empirical studies that explore family systems, family process, and transnational parenthood. I explored studies in this area and learned about the outcomes and mechanisms of Chinese astronaut families and Korean geese families which also engage in the transnational split family practice.

Whereas the astronaut family represents a form of transnational family, to my knowledge, none of the studies in transnational parenthood considered parenting in astronaut families. We know very little about the parenting experience of mothers in astronaut families. In contrast, empirical psychological studies in Asian immigrant families shed light on our understanding of parenting styles, outcomes, and the impact of acculturation process on parenting practices of Asian immigrants.

Transnational Migration

Transnational activities such as border-crossing and back-and-forth travelling have always existed. However, in the past two decades, it has been established that contemporary transnational migration is distinctive from traditional forms of migration. Currently, there are increasing numbers of migrants who engage in frequent transnational travelling through economic, political, social cultural, and religious activities (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). These activities are sustained by the global economy, state policies, and advancement of transportation and telecommunication techniques (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

Scholars began to theorize transnationalism in the early 1990's, employing case studies of transnational migrants from the Caribbean and Latin American countries who leave their home countries to work overseas. These working-class transmigrants maintain close ties with their families back home by sending remittances (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Kearny, 1995). Transnationalism is thereby characterized by the interconnected social, political, and financial relations between the individual migrants or corporations and the receiving and sending countries (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). Transmigrants may be incorporated in one or more receiving countries and simultaneously maintain intimate connections with their countries of origin (Butt, 2014; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999).

Transnational migration involves a wide range of human activity and very different populations. Scholarship in areas such as anthropology, sociology, social and political science, cultural geography, and cross-cultural study have devoted much effort to investigating this phenomenon. So far, the majority of the published theoretical papers or empirical studies primarily adopted a post-modern or critical approach that focused on macro-level issues. For

example, different authors offered a variety of theoretical conceptualizations (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Kearney, 1995; Ong, 1999; Portes, Guarzino, & Landolt, 1999; Skeldon, 1994), reported political, economic, sociocultural issues associated with transnational migration (Levitt & Jawarsky, 2007), and critiqued gender-related issues and power structure within the transnational process (Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Piper & Roces, 2003).

Transnational Family and Gendered Transnational Caring

The modern transnational families are featured by the scale of mobility and the advancement in communication technologies. With the assistance of communication technologies, members in transnational families can be actively involved and virtually present in each other's lives, thereby maintaining family bonds and sense of belonging to the family (Baldassar, Vellekoop Baldock, & Wilding, 2007; Baldassar, Kelkey, Merla, & Wilding, 2014; Stafford, 2005).

Baldassar and colleagues proposed a useful theoretical framework by applying the lens of caregiving in the domain of both nuclear and extended families (Baldassar et al., 2007; Baldassar, 2014). The authors posited that the exchange of care is one of the central processes that maintains and sustains family relationships. In transnational settings, five dimensions of care were provided: financial and material; practical support (e.g., advice giving, assisting with tasks); emotional and moral support for psychological well-being; personal care (e.g., feeding, bathing) and accommodation (i.e. shelter and security). Some form of transnational caring can be arranged or offered from afar with the assistance of communication technologies, or it can be provided when members visit each other.

Baldassar et al. (2014) noted that family members will bond together by networks of reciprocity, obligation, love, and trust; however, these relationships can also be accompanied by tension and unequal power relations. Care exchange among family members is constantly

monitored and negotiated, but the amount of care given was generally not measured. Among family members, women often carry most of the burden of caregiving, and they tend to give more than they receive.

The transnational process is *gendered* (Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Piper & Roces, 2003). Several authors contend that men and women experience the transnational process differently because of their socially-constructed gender roles (Carling, Manjivar, & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Gu, 2006; Muszel, 2013; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Piper & Roces, 2003). Moreover, Piper and Roces (2003) argued that women's roles in work, family, and marriage are intertwined in the transnational process. Evidently, in Carling, Manjivar, and Schmalzbauer's (2012) review of the themes in transnational parenthood literature, the authors indicated that women who leave their children behind to work overseas oftentimes are expected to remain engaged mothers from afar, while fathers usually do not face the same pressure. Women in nonworking-class transnational families who migrate with their children certainly prioritize their role as a mother over their profession and spousal role (Cha & Kim, 2013; Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002; Waters, 2009).

Research in transnational migration and transnational families served as the stepping stone for this current study. First, it becomes clear that the transnational migration trend is unstoppable, therefore psychology as a field must begin to participate in this research area. Second, as more and more individuals and families participate in transnational migration, the definition of citizens, immigrants, and "traditional families" may be shifting. Counselling psychology must recognize the diversified nature of migration and seek to understand the individuals and families living transnational lives. Lastly, the division of labour and caregiving responsibilities remain gender differentiated. This current study aimed to explore how transnational migration, transnational caring, and the gender role of women play into the astronaut mother's experience as a solo parent. In the next section, I will introduce the history and theory on Chinese astronaut

families, followed by a summary of empirical studies.

Astronaut Family

In the 1990's, the Asian Pacific region saw an outflow of elite families from Hong Kong and Taiwan to Western countries, including the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. It is believed that this migration flow was largely driven by the political instability as British-colonized Hong Kong was to be returned to China in 1997. Taiwan was also distressed by economic and political uncertainty. Observing this context, Skeldon (1994) indicated that Hong Kong entrepreneurs had employed transnational migration as a strategy to spread economic risks by having access to job and business markets in two countries. Ong (1999) further added that elite families in the Asian Pacific region separate their households in two countries as a strategy to obtain flexible citizenships, which will afford them transnational mobility and allow them to expand and accumulate economic and social capital. She underscored the socioeconomic advantages these families' gain through transnational migration.

Beginning in the early 1990s, researchers began to explore the experience of Chinese astronaut families. At the time, most studies were conducted with Hong Kong Chinese and Taiwanese. Eight empirical studies conducted between 1998 and 2010 were reviewed (Table 1).

Table 1.

Astronaut Family Studies

Author	Participant Characteristics			Research Focus	Method
	Sending Country	Receiving Country	Participants		
Pe-Pua et al. (1998)	Hong Kong	Australia	120 adults; 120 children	Experience of migration	Focus Group; Surveys
Waters (2002)	Hong Kong Taiwan	Canada (BC)	24 mothers	Experience of being a lone mother	Individual interview
Chee (2003)	Taiwan	USA (Southern California)	30 mothers	Experience of migration	Individual interview; Surveys
Waters (2003)	Taiwan	Canada (BC)	30 mothers; 4 fathers; 15 children	Critique of Ong's (1999) theory	Individual interview
Kobayashi & Prestont (2007)	Hong Kong	Canada (Vancouver, Toronto)	age 10-20 yrs (N=85) age 30-40 yrs (N=70); age 51-74 yrs (N=30)	Family experience over the life course	Focus group
Waters (2009)	Hong Kong Taiwan	Canada (BC)	2 mothers	Follow-up of Waters (2002)	Individual interview
Petersen & Park-Saltzman (2010)	Taiwan	Canada (Vancouver)	6 adults 23-27 yrs	Experience of growing up in astronaut families	Individual interview
Waters (2010)	Taiwan	Canada (BC)	4 fathers	Experience of missing a wife	Individual interview

Two studies were conducted with both Taiwanese and Hong Kong Chinese populations (Waters, 2002, 2009); while three were conducted with only Taiwanese (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002; Waters, 2010; Pederson & Park-Saltzman, 2010), and the other two with only Hong Kong Chinese (Kobayashi & Prestont, 2007; Pe-Pua et al., 1998). These studies were conducted in Australia (Pe-Pua et al., 1998), Canada (Kobayashi & Prestont, 2007; Pederson & Park-Saltzman, 2010; Waters, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2010), and the United States (Chee, 2003), all of which have been the popular receiving countries for Chinese immigrants.

In terms of the research focus, two studies aimed to explore the overall experience of the family members in the astronaut families (Pe-Pua et al. 1998; Waters, 2002); one investigated the families' experience across a lengthy period (Kobayashi & Prestont, 2007; Waters, 2009); one utilized the empirical data to support the author's critique for an existing theory (Waters, 2003); and the rest examined the experience of individual members in the family (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002, 2009, 2010; Pederson & Park-Saltzman, 2010).

All of the studies have employed a qualitative method for data collection, although some also included the use of surveys to acquire detailed demographic data. The theoretical lens applied to the research varies. The work by Pe-Pua and her colleagues (1998) is considered the pioneer in the study of astronaut families. Their research was descriptive and exploratory which focused on the lived experience of a Hong Kong immigrant family in Australia. Chee (2003) and Waters (2002, 2003, 2009, 2010) utilized a critical analytical and feminist approach, focusing on critiquing the gendered process and power dynamics in the transnational contexts. Pederson and Park-Saltzman (2010) on the other hand, took a counselling perspective while they explored young adults' experience growing up in an astronaut family. Their research was the only one that aimed for providing pragmatic implications. Finally, Kobayashi and Prestont (2007) illustrated the transnational experience throughout the migrants' life course. By interviewing three different

age groups, they found that transnational migration has become a life cycle for these families, where the youngest and oldest generations may stay in Canada, whilst the middle-aged group work in Hong Kong or China due to better financial opportunities.

Five major themes emerged from the reviewed studies. First, the primary motivation for astronaut family arrangement is the children's education, thus the separation of the family was viewed as a necessary sacrifice. Second, the women's parenting role becomes profound in this split-household arrangement as they now practically become a single parent. Third, the separation of the family does lead to negative socio-emotional consequences. Moreover, the family as a unit experiences role alterations and changes to the spousal relationship. Finally, women and youth can experience personal growth and gain a sense of empowerment despite the hardships. Below are the five themes.

Necessary sacrifice for a better future. Most astronaut families regard separation as a necessary sacrifice that ensures a better future for the family (Chee, 2003; Kobayashi & Prestont, 2007; Waters, 2002; Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Pedersen & Park-Saltzman, 2010; Waters, 2010). While Ong (2009) views astronaut family migration as a strategy to obtain flexible citizenship, practically speaking, children's education and a better quality of life have been indicated as the most common reason for astronaut families to engage in transnational migration (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002; Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Pedersen & Park-Saltzman, 2010).

Indeed, for most Chinese families, education attainment is viewed as a crucial—if not the most important—means for career enhancement and improved socio-economic status (Chee, 2005; Huang & Yeoh, 2005). This belief motivated Chinese families to participate in transnational migration because they perceive Western education as offering more freedom and less competition, and because it encourages creativity and self-development. English language education and a less stressful curriculum are additional important attractions.

Solo-parenting. In astronaut families, the parenting responsibility falls on the parent who migrates with the children. Many have reported their lives are basically centred around childcare and supporting their children's academic performance (Aye & Guerin, 2001; Kobayashi & Prestont, 2007; Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Waters, 2002, 2010). Because families migrate for their children's education, the children are expected to be high academic achievers, and this can become a stressor for the children and the parent who migrate with them (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002; Kobayashi & Prestont, 2007; Pe-Pua et al, 1998). Some parents reported having difficulties disciplining their children because their traditional and stricter parenting practice is challenged by their children, who are now receiving Western education that celebrates children's independence and autonomy (Pe-Pua et al, 1998; Waters, 2010).

Socio-emotional consequences. The dispersal of family members inevitably alters the balance of family structure and function. It is common for mothers and youths to experience emotional distress, such as loneliness, isolation, and confusion in the early settlement stage, due to the transition to a new cultural setting and a sudden loss of social support (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002; Pedersen & Park-Saltzman, 2010). Language barriers are also a source of stress reported by mothers (Aye & Gurein, 2001; Pedersen & Park-Saltzman, 2010; Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Waters, 2009). In their interviews with family members, Pe-Pua et al. (1998) found that Hong Kong mothers' struggles are more profound than fathers after they migrate to Australia with their children. Most mothers become full-time house makers after they migrate. Some enjoy the privilege of not having to work, while others express a sense of loss after leaving behind a successful career in their home country (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002). Those who are interested in finding employment after they settle become frustrated with the process because most of them are not able to find a job that matches their qualifications (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002; Pe-Pua et al., 1998).

Role alterations. Another transition is the change of roles within the family (Aye & Guerin, 2001; Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002, 2010; Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Pedersen & Park-Saltzman, 2010).

After emigration, women suddenly become the head of the household in the host country, and are expected to make decisions when their husbands are absent (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002; Pe-Pua et al., 1998). In some cases, where the fathers migrate while the mothers work in the home country, the fathers find it challenging to accept the identity of stay-at-home-father (Waters, 2010).

Peterson and Park-Saltzman (2010) interviewed youths in transnational families who also experienced role reversals. The youths report having to bear more family responsibilities, such as being interpreters for their mothers and helping to manage household chores that require their English proficiency. Some youths also become their mothers' emotional support when the parents' marital relationship becomes difficult.

Change in the spousal relationship. Indeed, a shift in the spousal relationship is prevalent among astronaut families, although research findings are contradictory. In some cases, the spousal relationship was found to improve due to the geographical distance, whereas others were found to have suffered. Some of the participants in Peterson and Park-Saltzman's (2010) study reported that long-distance relationship maintenance had caused emotional strains for their parents, but one participant noted that his/her parents' relationship improved. Some couples perceived the relationship to be the same; some found it to have improved, and some found it to have dissolved (Aye & Guerin, 2001; Chee, 2002; Waters, 2002, 2009).

Personal growth and empowerment. Admittedly, the transnational experience is not all gloom and difficulty: there are some positive aspects reported in the research. Not surprisingly, most women report to have more leisure time and freedom compared to their lives in their home countries (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002, 2003, 2009). The freedom is gained by not having to work anymore, which allows them to cultivate their personal interests, such as learning English or

attending community events (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002, 2009). For women, emigration can also be liberating because it frees them from pre-existing marital conflicts or conflicts with in-laws (Pe-Pua et al, 1998). Some immigrants also enjoy the decrease of tension, and solidification of the family bond among those members who migrate (Peterson & Park-Saltzman, 2010). Young adults reported becoming more independent, more self-sufficient, and confident compared to their peers or siblings who stayed in the home countries (Peterson & Park-Saltzman, 2010).

In sum, transnational split family arrangement has its pros and cons. Despite the downsides, increasing number of South Korean families engage in such practice. In the next section, a review of their experiences will be reported, specifically focusing on the psychological consequences

Geese Families in Korea

Families in South Korean began to participate in transnational split-family arrangement in the 2000s. The split-family form is the same as the Chinese astronaut family, but the South Korean transnational families are known as the “geese families” (*kirogi kajok* in Korean). In discussing the emergence of geese families, Ablemann, Mewendorp, and Lee-Chung (2014) argued that whereas Hong Kong transnational families emerged because of elite Hong Kong Chinese’s motivation to secure their cosmopolitan identity (i.e. participation in the global economy), South Korean families seek to bring cosmopolitanism home, so the split-family arrangement is typically only driven by their children’s education.

Kim, Agic, and McKenzie (2014) conducted a systemic literature review of 17 studies that were conducted between 2009 and 2013. The authors generated two themes that indicated evidence for mental health issues reported by *kirogi* mothers. First, *kirogi* mothers were found to experience similar challenges as their Chinese counterparts, including parenting difficulties, social-support related challenges, language barriers and a lack of cultural knowledge of the host

country. Unique to *kirogi* mothers, however, is that they may experience social pressure to carry out their roles as wife and caregiver to their husbands, and may be criticized socially if they are unable to uphold these roles. The second theme has to do with the psychological and emotional states that were reported. Many *kirogi* mothers experienced “psychological burden, distress, psychological strain, tiredness, exhaustion, anxious, lower self-esteem, and helplessness. “(p. 791); clinical depression was also reported. On the plus side, positive feelings of freedom, empowerment, and independence were also present.

In conclusion, families undergo a series of changes in the level of individuals, dyads, and family structures when they are separated. Women in astronaut families and geese families may experience difficulties and positive gains. Interestingly, mothers’ mental health issues were more explicitly named in research with geese mothers, although many of the risk factors clearly were present in the experience of astronaut mothers. Mothers’ mental well-being influences not only themselves, but also their parenting practices, which can lead to negative parental outcomes (Beiser, Goodwill, Albanese, McShane, & Nowakowski, 2014; Kim, Shen, Huang, Wang, & Orozco-Lapray, 2014; Su & Hynie, 2011). This is another reason that drives this current study. By exploring mothers’ parenting experience, it is my hope to gain a more in-depth understanding of the impact of transnational migration on the family, and how mothers cope with the transition. Next, I will discuss Chinese parenting styles and outcomes as well as the role of acculturation in Chinese immigrant parent.

Chinese Parenting Style

It is commonly believed that Chinese parenting beliefs and practices are influenced by Confucianism. In Confucius philosophy, it is a role requirement for parents to ensure their children develop conduct and behaviours that adhere to social standards and expectations (Chao, 1994; Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, & Song, 2013). For instance, children are expected to demonstrate

filial piety by obeying their parents; they are expected to be humble and work hard towards self-growth and improvement, and to value family connections and prioritize collective benefits over individual gains.

An extreme and controversial demonstration of Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in children's development and growth was provided by Amy Chua's (2011) memoir: *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. One of the key components of Chua's parenting style is the strictness and resistance to negotiation, which suggests very little autonomy is granted to the children. Chua's rationale is that the parents tend to have a more accurate judgment of their children's potential. She believes that the parents' demand and high expectations represent their faith in their children, which will foster children's self-confidence when they succeed.

Chinese parents' high level of control and involvement in their children's lives is often equated to an authoritarian parenting style, a typology coined by Diana Baumrind (1996) and which is characterized as high control, low emotional support and warmth. However, scholars have indicated that traditional Chinese parenting may have its own unique characteristics, despite having similar features to an authoritarian style (Chao, 1994; Kim et al., 2013).

Ruth Chao (1994) indicated that Chinese parents tend to employ acts of *chiao shun* and *guan* in their parenting practices. The literal meaning of *chiao shun* in Mandarin is "teaching and disciplining," and *guan* is "to govern," therefore Chao asserted that the concept of "training" is a core component in Chinese parenting. Chao argued that when Chinese parents implement a high level of parental control and involvement, their intention may not always be to dominate or dictate the child's life, but rather to facilitate the child's growth. Kim et al. (2013) found that tiger parenting is not common in Asian immigrant families, but they did find "shaming" to be a strategy that even supportive parents use as much as tiger parents. In their study, the children of supportive parents and tiger parents simultaneously perceived the "shaming" strategy as caring

rather than a form of parental aggression. Accordingly, one can argue that Chua's parenting belief is to some extent consistent with Chao (1994)'s notion of the "training" component in Chinese parenting in that the mother assumes greater responsibility for her children's success and achievements.

On the other hand, research has shown that contemporary Chinese parenting may be shifting to a style that involves more autonomy-granting and more warmth. For example, in a study conducted in urban cities in China, Lu and Chang (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews with 328 parents of only child in an urban Chinese city, asking about their parenting beliefs and practices. The authors found the parents to be child-centred, egalitarian (i.e. respect the children, use two-way communication), and warm. Furthermore, 87% of the parents indicated they encourage children to be pro-socially assertive and cultivate leadership skills; only 14% endorsed expecting their children to be modest and behaviourally constrained. The author stated that the parents' age (on average between 33 and 36 years), education level (approximately 43% of the fathers and 38% of the mothers attended colleges), and residence in a relatively modern and progressive city may contribute to their more democratic parenting style. Similarly, Way and her colleagues (2013) interviewed 24 mothers of middle school students to explore their parenting goals and practices. The results demonstrated that participants have moved away from traditional Chinese parenting to focus more on children's psychological well-being, independence, and autonomy. The authors highlighted that contemporary urbanization and globalization may have contributed to the shifts.

Taken together, Chinese parenting style has its unique features. The emphasis on parental roles and responsibilities in children's development makes parents and their children interdependent as opposed to independent from each other (Fu & Marcus, 2014). Accordingly, familial obligations, parental responsibilities and children's outcomes are closely connected. It

perhaps partially explains why parents in astronaut families are willing to split their families for their children's benefit. Furthermore, the shift towards warmer and less controlling parenting, and the increased expectations for children to become independent, autonomous, and assertive may explain why Western education was desired, as these qualities were perceived as highly valued in the individualistic culture context.

Immigration or international transitions may influence family functions and parenting practices (Leong, Zhang, Pickering & Chang, 2008; Sanchez-Leguelinel, Mathew, Ponterotto, Zigelbaum, & Carlson, 2008; Santisteban & Mitrani, 2003). Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, and Song (2013) remarked that nowadays Chinese parents' goals and practices are dynamic and influenced by contextual forces, such as the market economy and the globalization of Chinese society. Traditional practices influenced by Confucianism are undergoing shifts. In the following section, I review the role of acculturation in immigrant parenting.

The Role of Acculturation in Parenting

John Berry's (1997, 2003) theory of acculturation has been widely applied to guide acculturation studies. Berry viewed acculturation as an interactive process between immigrants and their new cultural context. When people transition to a new culture, they would inevitably assess whether it is more valuable to maintain their own cultural heritage or to assimilate with the host culture. This valuation influences immigrants' cultural practices, which Berry referred to as *acculturation strategies*. Different acculturation strategies contribute to different outcomes. Berry developed a two-dimensional model to delineate such relations. The dyads of strategies and outcomes are: (1) abandoning own value and accepting host culture leads to assimilation; (2) accepting host culture without abandoning own value results in integration; (3) rejecting host culture but maintaining own cultural heritage causes separation; (4) endorsing neither the host culture or one's own culture contributes to marginalization.

Berry's approach has been criticized for having few practical applications, and for oversimplifying the dynamic and fluid nature of the acculturation process (Rudmin, 2003; Tardif-Williams, & Fisher, 2009; Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006), however, it has remained a popular framework for studies on immigrant parenting (e.g., Chen et al., 2014; Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Costigan & Koryzma, 2011).

Ho (2014) reviewed 22 articles from 2003 to 2012 and examined the implications of acculturation on parenting for Chinese immigrants. The author found that acculturation was referred to as the *primary variable* or *concept of interest* in these studies. Three major focuses of studies regarding acculturation and parenting were identified: (1) acculturation and its influence on parenting beliefs, attitudes, and practices; (2) parent-child acculturation differences; and (3) acculturation, parenting, and child outcomes. The author found that there exist complex associations between acculturation related variables, and other parenting and outcome variables. Thus, the results of each of the three domains remain inconsistent. Informed by this author's review, I examined some studies that addressed the three domains.

First, immigrants parenting beliefs and practices may or may not change during the acculturation process. For example, Li (2004) examined parental expectations of Chinese immigrants in Canada by interviewing parents and children of seven Chinese families from Mainland China. The author found that most of the participating parents maintained high expectations for their children's academic achievement and moral character. They also encouraged science-related careers and cultural integration for their children. The author relayed that the high expectations for their children's educational achievement may result from the parents' acculturative stress, such as perceived unequal opportunities to succeed in mainstream society. Tension between parents and children regarding expectations was observed in this study; however, Li noted that these parents and children were able to negotiate parental expectations.

On the other hand, Chea, Leung and Zhou (2013) conducted in-depth interviews with fifty first-generation Chinese immigrant mothers of young children (3-6 years old) in America. The authors' thematic analyses illustrated that the mothers strived to adjust their parenting practices after migration, where they integrated both typical Chinese and American aspects into their parenting. Mothers reported seeing the need for more flexibility in their parenting practice even though they also found it challenging to strike a balance between adopting mainstream cultural values and maintaining their own.

Researches are also interested in the relations between parents and children's acculturation levels and the children's outcomes in areas such as ethnic identity development and adjustment. Su and Costigan (2009) examined the relations between parents' family obligation expectations and children's ethnic identity development by obtaining independent reports from fathers, mothers, and children. The authors found that when children can detect their parents' expectations, the mothers' expectations (not the fathers') were positively associated with their feelings of ethnic identity. Mothers' positive parenting contributes to children's sense of affiliation and positive feelings for their ethnic background. Based on the results, mothers are encouraged to communicate their parental expectations explicitly, which will help increase early adolescents' sense of connectedness to the family, and they may be more motivated to assist in family matters.

Costigan and Dokis (2006) examined the relations between acculturation differences between parent and child and their influence on family and child adjustment. Ninety-one Chinese immigrant families in Canada with adolescents around age 12 participated in the study. Participants completed questionnaires which assessed acculturation variables and adjustment outcomes. Questionnaires for acculturation assessed variables in public (e.g., language use) and private (e.g., values) domains in both Chinese and Canadian cultures; questionnaires for

adjustment outcomes investigated conflict intensity, depressive feelings, and achievement motivation. The results indicated that the parent-child discrepancy in the engagement level of Chinese culture predicted the children's adjustment level. For example, when parents demonstrated higher Chinese orientation than their children, the children's low Chinese orientation was associated with low adjustment. On the other hand, interactions in parent-child discrepancy in the Canadian culture domain were not found.

In another study, Costigan and Koryzma (2011) found that parents felt higher parental efficacy when they were more oriented toward Canadian culture. The parents' higher parental efficacy was associated with better psychological adjustment for them. The authors suggested that increased Canadian-orientation may enhance parents' confidence in parenting because they feel they have the cultural knowledge and skills required for the new intercultural context.

Some authors investigated the relation between parental stress, parenting style, and outcome. Research showed that when parents are stressed, they tend to use a harsh and high-controlling parenting style which led to negative social-emotional outcomes (Beiser et al, 2014; Su & Hynie, 2011). Kim et al. (2014) reported that bicultural management difficulty and mood stress mediate the acculturation/enculturation process and parenting practices. Parental stress affects children's mental health and family life.

Su and Hynie's (2011) examined the relationship between parenting styles, cultural beliefs, stress, and social support. The authors compared a total of 192 mainland-Chinese (N=61), Chinese-Canadian (N=69), and European-Canadian (62) mothers of two- to six-year-old children. The authors concluded that stress had a significant effect on authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. Regardless of mothers' cultural backgrounds, authoritarian parenting increased with stress, whereas authoritative parenting decreased with stress. The authors advocated for more social support to alleviate negative outcomes.

This body of literature sheds light on the complex process of acculturation and parenting. However, Tardif-Williams and Fisher's (2009) cautioned that there are methodological flaws prevailing in studies of acculturation and parenting, thus one must be critical when interpreting and applying the results. Furthermore, it is apparent that researchers often tend to choose quantitative methodology to examine the issues, which lacks the ability to yield in-depth understanding of immigrants' acculturation process over time. Thus, the authors suggested more use of qualitative methods in the future to generate richer information about the process and mechanism of the acculturation process and immigrant parenting. This recommendation was also made by other authors (Ho, 2014; Juang, Qin & Park, 2013; Lau & Fung, 2013).

So far, I have discussed the phenomenon of transnational migration, the characteristics of transnational families, and the uniqueness of Asian transnational families, including Chinese astronaut families and Korean geese families. I also presented research in Chinese parenting style and the role of immigration and acculturation in parenting practice and outcomes. Transnational family arrangement results in a significant shift in the migrants' family life. At the individual level, each member in the family is coping with a variety of transitions. Next, I will demonstrate examples of how counselling psychologists conceptualize people's coping with transitions

Counselling for Coping with Transitions

Personal characteristics (e.g., personality, attitude, proactiveness), education and work backgrounds and experience, resources and support contribute to immigrants' coping with transitional stress (Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan, & Cheng, 2011; Erlebach, 2009; Zheng, Amundson, Borgen, & Butterfield, 2013). Two practical frameworks that address these areas will be introduced here. One is Ishu Ishiyama's (1995a) self-validation model, which focuses on helping immigrants cope with transitional distress by enhancing their inner strength and the experience of validation. The other is Schlossberg's (2011) 4Ss system of coping, which

considers the interconnectedness of the characteristics of the transition as well as the characteristics of the person dealing with the transition.

Self-validation model. Ishu Ishiyama's (1995a) self-validation model provided a pragmatic and holistic perspective in conceptualizing immigrants' cross-cultural transition. Through a person-centred and process-oriented lens, Ishiyama suggested that when a person is transitioning to a new culture, psychological distress may rise if the person feels culturally dislocated. This sense of dislocation may interfere with the validation of their self-identity and the ability to cope with the transitions. He suggested that improvement of the individual's experience of self-validation is the key for well-being. This can be achieved by exploring a client's validation themes, multidimensional self, and validation sources (Ishiyama, 1995b).

Ishiyama (1995a, 1995b) postulated that the psychological process of self-validation comprises five interconnected components, each of which has its contrasting aspect. The core validation theme is love, fulfillment, and meaning in life versus lovelessness, emptiness, and meaninglessness. The other validation themes consist of (1) competence and autonomy versus helplessness and incompetence; (2) sense of self-worth and acceptance versus self-deprecation and self-rejection; (3) security, comfort, and support versus insecurity, discomfort, and abandonment; and (4) identity and belonging versus identity loss and alienation. Self-validation can be obtained from and reinforced by certain things/objects, places, activities and relationships.

Self is considered as multidimensional and fluid in Ishiyama's model. For example, one aspect is social-cultural self, which can include one's occupational, academic, gender and group identities. This aspect of self adheres to internalized norms of certain social memberships. In contrast, one's transcultural self is non-conforming to the social norms. This is the aspect of self that is not restricted by specific social roles or externally imposed values.

Such a framework can be applied to look at astronaut mothers who are confronted by

dislocation in various domains, such as loss of professional identity, changes in spousal relationship, or parent-child interactions. These changes can influence their experience of one of the validation themes, and their sources of validation are likely to shift. Self-validation therefore may be quite relevant to women in astronaut families who become lone mothers or pseudo-single parents after migration.

4Ss system for coping. Whereas Ishiyama's self-validation theory specifically focuses on the immigration context, Nancy Schlossberg's (1981) theory of transition examines changes in people's life and how they cope with the changes in general. Schlossberg defines transition as an event or non-event that alters a person's assumptions of self and the world, and thus requires adjustments in the person's behaviours and relationships. Three sets of factors may influence the adjustment process: (1) the characteristics of the transitions, that is, whether the transition is anticipated, non-anticipated, or non-event (i.e., expected event that fails to occur); (2) the characteristics of the pre- and post-transition support systems and physical settings; and (3) the characteristics of the individual, such as one's psychosocial competence, health, former experiences with transitions, identity and values.

Applying the transition model to career counselling with workers who experience work life transitions, Schlossberg (2011) further describes a 4Ss system for coping with transitions. The 4S's are situation, self, support and strategies. Different circumstances of these areas are likely to influence the outcome of an individual's coping. Situation refers to conditions that influence a person's decision-making or coping when the transition occurs. For example, limited job opportunities in their home countries lead transnational workers to take overseas job offers. If they are struggling with health issues, working overseas may become even more stressful. Self refers to the person's inner strength for coping with transitions. This can include being optimistic, positive and proactive when managing challenges during transitions. Supports include

resources or social connections that are available to the person at the time of the transition. Having the access to needed support during transitions is crucial to one's well-being. Strategies are methods utilized to deal with certain situations. One may choose to problem-solve and reduce the impact of the situation, to try to change the situation, or to reframe one's perspective about the situation. Using strategies flexibly helps a person better cope with transitions.

On top of coping with acculturation stress, transitions in professional career are indeed another task for mothers in astronaut families (e.g., Chi, 2005). The 4S's system is potentially another relevant framework that can inform counselling practice with astronaut mothers.

Gaps in the Literature

Mothers play an agentic role in the split-household arrangement of transnational migration (Ong, 1999). Several studies on mothers of astronaut families have indicated that they privilege their role as a parent over their personal aspirations, thus making the maintenance of the split-household family arrangement possible (Chee, 2003; Man, 1995; Waters, 2002, 2003). Although these studies were published more than a decade ago, a similar phenomenon is observed today. For example, in the researcher's personal encounter with an astronaut mother from Mainland China, this mother indicated that she had taken a leave from her job so that she could accompany her son in Canada. In order for her child to be fully exposed to Canadian local culture, she had arranged for him to stay with a Canadian host family. Meanwhile, she stayed in a small and damp basement suite nearby. This arrangement was the resolution for her dilemma of desiring to stay in proximity to her son, yet wanting to also offer him the best opportunity to learn English. She remarked, "at least I am close by, so I can cook for my son on the weekends."

Making sacrifices for the children and the family has been a recurring theme across studies with astronaut mothers (e.g., Cha & Kim, 2003; Chee, 2003, Waters, 2002, 2009), and it continues to emerge in other anecdotes one hears when conversing with other astronaut mothers.

Despite the existence of literature that focuses on astronaut mothers' overall life experience as a solo parent after migration; little is known about their parenting experience, process, and outcomes. In addition, previous authors have predominantly applied a post-modern lens to address gender and power issues in the transnational process (e.g., Chee, 2005; Piper & Roces, 2003; Waters, 2002). Although these prior works provide valuable theoretical critiques, they offer little information for counselling practice. This project hopes to address this gap by providing applicable information for psychologists and counselling practitioners.

Psychological studies have established that the acculturation and adjustment process following immigration plays an influential role in parenting experiences, and parents' and children's psychosocial outcomes for immigrants (Ho, 2014; Santisteban, & Mitrani, 2003). However, prior research was predominantly done with two-parent immigrant families that have been uprooted from their homelands, and permanently settled in Canada or the United States. Theoretical discussions and empirical studies about Chinese immigrant's parenting style were also only conducted with uprooted immigrants (e.g., Chao, 1994; Kim, Wang, Orozco-Lapray, Shen, Murtuza, 2013). The absence of one parent changes the parent-child relationship and bonds (Carling, Menjivar, & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Piper & Roces, 2003; Stafford, 2005). Given that transnational migration clearly places additional and unique challenges to immigrant parenting, its absence in psychological study is surprising, and the gap requires further investigation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) was employed for the current study. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the method, its philosophical underpinnings followed by detailed descriptions of the research procedures.

Overview of CIT

ECIT is an enhancement of Critical Incident Technique (CIT), a set of research procedures widely used in institutional and organizational psychology. CIT was developed and given its name by John C. Flanagan in 1947. In 1954, Flanagan published an article detailing the development and evolution of this method. He introduced CIT as the following:

“The critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles” (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327)

According to Flanagan’s definition, a critical incident is an observable human behaviour that is bound to result in specific outcomes/consequences under certain situations. Flanagan employed CIT as a scientific method that aimed to identify testable relations between critical incidents and outcomes under specific conditions. These tenets suggest that classical CIT was grounded in reductionist ontology and positivist epistemology, which is consistent with quantitative research paradigms.

CIT procedures. The development of CIT procedures stemmed from several studies for aircrew selection and classification, which was carried out in the Aviation Psychology Program of the U.S. Army Air Force (USAAF) during World War II. Between 1941 and 1947, Flanagan and his colleagues completed a series of research studies that contributed to the formulation of “critical requirements” (p. 329) for specific tasks. In 1941, for example, Flanagan’s colleagues

analyzed personnel reports to identify specific reasons for a pilot candidate's failure to learn to fly. This research became the basis for more research programs focusing on pilot selection. Between 1943 and 1944, further research led to recommendations for changes in pilot training and selection programs. One of the studies examined expert observations to determine factors contributing to failed bombing missions, and the other study used self-report descriptions to delineate effective/ineffective behaviours of combat leadership.

In addition to informing personnel selections and training, CIT was also utilized to examine pilots' experience of operating the aircrafts. One study in 1946 looked at aircraft pilots' experience during takeoff, flying, landing, and controlling the instruments. Another study in 1947 investigated the self-described sensational experiences of pilots with vertical and acute disorientation during flying missions. By collecting and analyzing pilots' self-reported data, these studies resulted in changes in the aircraft control panel and the design of the cockpit.

The studies undertaken by Flanagan and his colleagues at USAAF dealt with practical issues or resolvable problems. After the Second World War, Flanagan and other psychologists founded the American Institute for Research (AIR) to carry out "systematic study of human behavior through a coordinated program of scientific research" (p. 329). It was then that he formally outlined the research procedures and gave CIT its name. These procedures included: (1) determining the aim of the activity to be studied; (2) setting plans, specifications, and criteria for the information to be obtained; (3) collecting data; (4) analyzing the thematic content of the data and creating categories; (5) reporting the findings. In the following decades, these procedures continued to be utilized varying research in a diverse number of disciplines, such as counselling (Arthur & Pedersen, 2008; Bedi, Davis, & Arvay, 2005; Pott 2015), health care service (Kemppainen, 2000; Schluter, Seaton, & Chaboyer, 2008; Yonas et al., 2013), and information technology (Hughes, 2009).

Reliability and validity of CIT. Early studies used positivist terminologies and procedures when examining the quality of CIT research. For example, one of the most cited pieces of research was conducted by Andersson and Nilsson (1964) whose project aimed to identify training requirements for store managers. Data were collected from questionnaires and individual interviews. Categories and subcategories of the critical incidents were established from analyzing both data sources. The authors took procedures to verify the saturation and comprehensiveness of the data, and they performed various reliability and validity checks. Thus, they confidently concluded that “the information collected by this method [CIT] is both reliable and valid” (p. 402). Another frequently cited research study was carried out by Ronan & Latham (1974). These authors sought to evaluate the procedures of CIT and its ability to generate behavioural indices. They explored job performances of pulpwood producers by interviewing wood dealers who had the opportunities to observe producers at work. Three reliability measures (inter-judge, intra-observer, and inter-observer) and four validity measures (content, relevance, construct, concurrent) were employed to evaluate the research process. Echoing Andersson and Nilsson (1964)’s study, they stated that “the reliability and content validity of the critical incident methodology are satisfactory” (p. 61).

The evolvement of CIT. Since its development, CIT has evolved and departed from its original form (Butterfield et al., 2005). The first difference is that it has been applied to the studying of human experience and psychological states including cognitive and affective elements, not limited to observable behaviours. For example, studies have been conducted to look at immigrant’s experience of cultural adjustments (Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan, & Cheng, 2011; Arthur & Pedersen, 2008; Erleback, 2011; Zheng, Amundson, Borgen, & Butterfield, 2013), counselling clients’ experience of therapeutic alliance formation (Bedi, Davis, & Arvay, 2005; Pott 2015), and inequalities in health care system (Yonas et al., 2013). In these studies,

critical incidents range from participants' own behaviours, other people's behaviours that have an impact on the participants, to participants' thought processes and/or affects.

The second difference concerns the source of data. Whereas the original CIT primarily relied on expert observations or workers' daily working logs to collect behavioural samples, researchers have increasingly used participant interviews to obtain individuals' retrospective self-reports as the source of data (Butterfield, 2005; Chell, 1998; Kemppainen, 2000; Schluter, Seaton, & Chaboyer, 2008). Such an increased use of self-report data also marked a major research paradigm shift in CIT (Butterfield et al., 2009; Chell, 1998). Diverge from its positivist methodological framework, overtime CIT has been utilized under a variety of qualitative methodologies. For example, Chell and Pittaway (1998) assumed phenomenology traditions while using CIT to explore entrepreneurship in hospitality industry; Arthur and Pedersen (2008) employed CIT under the case study traditions to solicit anecdotes that highlighted people's experience with international transitions, and Hughes (2009) integrated principals of grounded theory and action research to develop an expanded approach of CIT, referred to as Expanded Critical Incident Approach.

The Birth of ECIT

As CIT continued to evolve as a qualitative research method, Butterfield and her colleagues implemented nine standard credibility checks to ensure the research quality of their use of CIT in counselling psychology research (Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009). These credibility checks involve audiotaping interviews, interview fidelity, independent extraction of critical incidents, exhaustiveness, participation rates, placing incidents into categories by an independent judge, cross-checking by participants, expert opinions, and theoretical agreement. Later in this chapter, I will discuss these procedures in more details, and talk about additional steps I took to further establish the credibility of the current study.

Along with credibility checks, Butterfield et al. (2009) added two sets of questions to the data collection process to further enrich the research findings. First, contextual questions are asked in the beginning of the participant interview to acquire background information for the data. Secondly, in the end of the interview, participants are asked of wish list items which are supports and resources that were absent at the time of the participants' experience, but those could have been helpful to have. With these enhancements, these authors thereby referred to their method as ECIT (Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009).

The Utility of CIT and ECIT in Counselling and Immigrant Research

Woolsey (1986) maintained that CIT is "consistent with the skills, experience and values of counselling psychology practitioners" (p. 252). She indicated that CIT has been useful for criterion development in industrial psychology and also has the potential facility for studying relationships, vocational decision, counselling process, and career development. Britten, Borgen, and Wiggins (2012) indicated that CIT is particularly appropriate for minority populations because of its "honoring the participant's voice and acknowledging the vast diversity of cultural and ethnic people" (p. 55).

Indeed, this method has been successfully used by several faculty and graduate students at the University of British Columbia for studying counselling issues with immigrants in Canada. Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan and Cheng (2011), for example, applied ECIT to study the transition experiences of Chinese immigrants. Their interviews with 20 participants who have had successful transition experiences identified four success categories: positive attitudes and personality, skills and resource development, education and work background, and community and family support. The hindering categories, on the other hand, included a lack of English language skills, a lack of clear and feasible career goals, and cultural differences. Their findings highlighted the significant role of personal attributes and initiatives in successful immigration

and validated the effectiveness of an employment counselling program.

In a similar study, conducted by Zheng, Amundson, Borgen, and Butterfield (2013), the authors utilized ECIT to study the experience of immigrant professionals from Mainland China who felt that they were doing well with the change. Their study revealed structural and personal barriers confronting Chinese immigrant professionals in the context of work after immigration.

Another study used ECIT to explore a wide variety of immigrant experiences of doing well after immigrating to Canada (Erleback, 2011). The author interviewed 17 immigrants and identified 386 helping and hindering incidents and wish items, which were formulated into 10 categories: taking actions, personal qualities, work and life experiences, skills and knowledge, life in Canada, preparations and research, social support, government/agency support, beliefs and perspectives, plans and goals, and financial security. This research uncovered immigrants' adaptive career development strategies and attitudes. It also highlighted the critical role of social support in immigrant adaptation.

The Philosophical Underpinnings of ECIT

In their discussion on the enhancement of CIT, Butterfield and her colleagues (Butterfield et al., 2005, 2009) emphasized the adjustability of CIT for addressing different research aims. As formerly demonstrated, researchers have applied CIT under different qualitative methodologies. ECIT follows post-positivist epistemological traditions (McDaniel, Borgen, Buchanan, Butterfield & Amundson, 2018). Post-positivist research typically involves “a series of logically related steps” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 20), such as examining perspectives from multiple research participants, employing scientific steps for data collection and analysis, and using multiple methods to ensure credibility of the qualitative inquiry. The post-positivist epistemology manifested in the current study in the following ways:

First, the research objective was to explore Chinese astronaut mother's experience of coping

with parenting alone in the context of transitional migration. 15 participants were interviewed to provide their perspectives. Instead of asking broad questions such as what astronaut mothers' parenting experiences generally were, I specifically narrowed the scope of the inquiry to *what* helps and *what* hinders the experience of coping with parenting alone, *in what way*, and *what* might have helped. This specificity was appropriate given that these questions were not fully addressed in prior studies. Accordingly, the experiences examined in the current project were termed as critical incidents. The critical incidents examined included behaviours, events, factors, or psychological processes that the astronaut mothers considered to be effective or ineffective for the outcomes of their coping.

Secondly, contextual questions were included in the participant interviews to inform the interpretations of the research results. The current project took place within the global context of transnational migration trend, and the participants were situated in Vancouver, Canada. In the interviews, participants were asked to describe their backgrounds so that their experiences were contextualized. This consideration was also consistent with the practice of counselling psychology where an individual's experience and presenting concerns must be conceptualized within his or her specific situations.

Lastly, the qualitative data were analyzed following systemic steps with the assistance of a computer program (i.e., ATLAS.ti). The analysis generated both quantitative (in the form of descriptive statistics) and qualitative (in the form of participant quotations) results. Thirteen credibility checks were conducted throughout different stages of the study.

Research Procedures

The procedures of the current study consisted of five stages, detailed below.

Stage 1: Creating the interview protocol. The general aim of this study was to investigate what challenges and what sustains mothers' parenting in Chinese transnational family

arrangements by conducting in-person interviews. The critical incidents in the current project included behaviours, events, factors, and psychological process that were identified as significant by the participants. A semi-structured interview protocol was created (Appendix I) wherein three sets of questions were predetermined. These questions served as a general guidance of the interview rather than rigid requests for answers. The first set of questions concerned relevant information about the background and contexts of participants' migration. For example, "please tell me a little bit about your story of migration, in terms of when you immigrated, how the decisions were made, and why you chose Canada?" The second set of questions asked the participants to indicate critical incidents that contributed to or obstructed their coping with the parenting alone in Canada. For example, "could you tell me about an important incident that was helpful/hindering for your parenting here in Canada? How was it hindering or helpful?" The last set of questions invited the participants to reflect on wishful items that could have improved their parenting experience. The interview concluded with this researcher's provision of the summary of critical incidents discussed.

Stage 2: Participant recruitment. Participants were asked to provide informed consent after the researcher presented a consent form (Appendix II) which detailed the purpose of the study, research procedures, potential benefits, confidentiality, contact for research information, and contact for complaints. The consent form was available in English, traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese to account for participants' language preference.

Recruitment criteria. This research applied purposeful sampling. Chinese and Taiwanese mothers who met the following criteria were recruited: (1) the mother self-identified her family as an astronaut family; (2) the mother had immigrated to Vancouver for at least one year with at least one child whose current age is under 22 years old; (3) the mother was able to communicate in either Mandarin or English; (4) the mother was willing to commit for one face-to-face

interview, and at least one follow-up interview via phone call or email.

Recruitment methods. Multiple methods were used to recruit participants, including advertisements in English, simplified Chinese, and traditional Chinese, which were available in both printed and electronic versions (Appendix III). The advertisements were disseminated or presented to the public through three avenues: word of mouth (snowballing), the researcher's in-person public presentations of the project, and social media postings. Participants recruited by word of mouth consist of those who had no previous relationships with the researcher, but who were made aware of this project from the researcher's personal contacts (e.g., friends or acquaintance of the researcher's friends, colleagues and family); and those who were referred to the researcher by the participants who had completed the first interview. To protect participants' privacy, the researcher did not disclose the interviewees' participation in the research to the referral sources.

During the recruitment process, I made three public presentations of this project. First, a journalist from Minpao Vancouver, a news company whose primary readers are Chinese immigrants, came across my recruitment advertisement on a social media contacted me and requested an interview. This interview resulted in a published news article available in print and online. However, no participants turned up. Second, I was invited to provide a workshop at a women's support group at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a non-profit agency based in British Columbia that assists new immigrants in their settlement process. With the workshop coordinator's permission, I talked about my research project at the end of the workshop and distributed recruitment flyers. Two people did express interest in participating, but they did not meet the recruitment criteria. Third, I presented my research projects through the Community Table Program at the Richmond Library, where a recruitment station was set up for me to display my recruitment materials and directly interact with people who were interested. One person was recruited from this

presentation; another individual helped me connect with two of her friends who met the criteria. However, I was unable to reach them after several attempts.

Number of participants. Fifteen mothers participated in this research. Participant recruitment, interviews and data analysis were conducted concurrently between September 2015 and March 2016. The recruitment process was considered as approaching completion after the tenth interview, when the data analysis demonstrated saturation, (i.e., “the entire content domain of the activity in question has been captured and described, Butterfield et al., 2005, p. 479). Thereafter, five more interviews were added to solidify the saturation. In March 2016, I ceased the recruitment.

Table 2 demonstrates the number of participants recruited from each avenue. Thirteen out of 15 (87%) participants were connected through word of mouth.

Table 2.

Recruitment Methods and Results

Avenue	Number of Participants (N)	Numbers breakdown
Word of Mouth	13	Researcher contacts: 8 Participant contacts: 5
Public Presentation	1	Community Table, Richmond Public Library: 1 S.U.C.C.E.S.S.: 0 Minpao News Article: 0
Flyers	1	Old Barn Community Center: 1 UBC University Neighborhood Association: 0 Richmond Multicultural Community: 0 Chinese Community Services Network Listserve: 0 Social Media Mother's Group: 0 Vancouver Beijing Chinese School: 0 Union Mandarin School: 0

Amundson, Borgen, and Butterfield (2013) in their reflection on how to innovate ECIT research procedures suggested that 12 to 15 interviews typically suffices to achieve data exhaustiveness. My research process observed the same trajectory.

Stage 3: Data collection. Two sorts of data were collected. The first was a demographic survey (Appendix IV) that contained 10 items, including basic personal information, education attainment and occupation, and immigration-related questions. Participants were asked to fill out

the survey based on their comfort level. One participant did not disclose her age, but other than that, every participant filled out the survey completely.

The other type of data was collected through the participant interviews. Individual in-person interviews were conducted at the participants' preferred locations, including their homes, a counselling room on UBC campus, or public spaces (e.g., library, cafes, food court at shopping malls). I began each interview by reiterating the purpose of this study followed by obtaining participants' informed consent. I then stressed that the interview would be primarily focused on learning about what had helped or challenged them to manage the changes in the parenting process after immigration.

Subsequently, I asked warm-up questions regarding the participant's history of immigration, including what brought them to Canada, who made the decision, and what their overall experience had been. I utilized basic counselling interviewing skills (e.g., actively listening, attending, paraphrasing, basic empathy, and probing) and demonstrated interests and curiosity as I listened to the participants' narratives. These interviewing skills successfully elicited comprehensive details from the participants, and I felt genuine connections with the participants.

Most participants narrated their experience chronologically. Right after answering the contextual questions, they tended to spontaneously talk about challenging events that hindered their ability to cope with the single parenthood. These events had been in the past for some, whereas they were ongoing for the others. During the interview process, I chose to honor the participant's flow of story-telling. However, I kept my research goals and primary questions in mind to keep them on track. Focused paraphrasing and intentional probing helped immensely.

All participants indicated both hindering and helping events. However, their responses to wish list items were brief or little to no. This was unexpected but not surprising, as most

participants indicated that they would rather focus on what they can control.

At the end of the interview, I provided a summary of the interview to ensure that I have understood the participants' narratives accurately. By doing so, they also had an opportunity to add more information to the interview. Some participants subsequently provided elaboration or clarification for what had previously been discussed; others provided additional incidents worth noting. Every participant agreed to be audio recorded. The length of the interviews ranged from approximately 40 minutes to 140 minutes.

Each interview flowed organically as participants narrated critical events. The interviews were conversational as opposed to investigative. I believe this was because of the trusting researcher-participant rapport that had been established. I approached each interview with great gratitude because almost every participant told me that one of the reasons why they were willing to be interviewed was that they wanted to help me with my research. When coordinating our meetings, I soon learned that most mothers had limited availability due to fixed daily agendas which were typically planned according to their children's schedules. I vocalized my appreciation for their altruism and time. During the interviews, I remained attentive, curious, and respectful; where appropriate, I used active listening skills, such as paraphrasing and probing to facilitate a deeper conversation. One participant who formerly worked in the news industry commented that she felt very comfortable speaking with me and felt that the interview was focused and in-depth; two participants told me the interview helped them reflect on their experiences more systemically and gave them new insight. Overall, participants reported positive experience with the interview.

Stage 4: Data analysis. The interview data was transcribed verbatim for analysis. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, ATLAS.ti., was used to aid this process. Data analysis began with coding the critical incidents (CIs) and wish list items (WIs) in each

transcript. An incident was identified as a CI if the participant said so or agreed to it, and if the participant provided extensive details about said incident. These criteria also applied to the extraction of WIs. To retain the authenticity of the data, each code was labeled both in Mandarin and in English. Meanwhile, I kept a separate memo to document my subjective interpretations, questions, or comments when they emerged. Each incident consists of three sub-codes: participants' label of the incident (e.g., "My Perseverance was helpful", coded as HP_CI_perseverance), example of such an incident (HP_EX), impact or outcomes of the incident (HP_IM).

After coding the first 3 transcripts I started to sort the incidents to form initial categories by using the *Network View* function in ATLAS.ti. This function allows the user to create a visualized network to demonstrate the connections between codes, thus making it easy to observe themes and develop categories. Upon the completion of coding the tenth interview, no new categories emerged. The categories were finalized after the remaining five interviews were analyzed, and all CIs were placed under appropriate categories.

Stage 5: Selecting and translating participant quotations. Participants quotations were selected after the helping and hindering categories were finalized, and only the selected quotations were translated from Mandarin Chinese to English. I delayed the translation process and only translated selected quotations for two reasons. First, delaying translation ensured that cultural- and language-specific expression remain intact in the data analysis process, so that the participants' voices and perspectives are preserved as much as possible (Temple & Young, 2004; Gawlewicz, 2016). Second, with limited research resources, translating only the selected quotations proved to be an efficient way to address the time and financial constraints.

I opted for the researcher as translator approach (Temple & Young, 2004) in the translation process because of my familiarity with the data, and also because of my language proficiency in

both Mandarin and English. Although English is my second language, my English education began when I was 8 years old; I minored in English in college, specializing in English curriculum and instruction, therefore I had a formal training in English linguistics and writing. Additionally, I received both master and doctorate level of education in English-speaking countries, which further enhanced my colloquial and academic English proficiency.

My translation procedures were informed by Gawlewicz (2016) who highlighted “the comparability of meanings between the original utterance and the translated transcription” (p. 32). Guided by this principle, I developed and followed the protocols below when I translated the quotations from Mandarin to English: (a) retaining or modifying the sentence structure and grammar forms as appropriate (e.g., deciding what tense to use based on the context as Mandarin does not specify tense); (b) referring to thesaurus to select English expression, vocabulary, idioms and phrases that are as comparable as possible; (c) including the original transcription or providing explanations when encountering language-specific expression or non-translatable utterance (e.g., “husband is not husband if he is not within two meters” [丈夫要一丈之内才是丈夫]); (d) reading the translated quotations aloud to ensure that the translation properly demonstrated colloquial English; (e) asking bilingual colleagues to review several randomly selected pairs of the original transcription and translated quotations to verify the accuracy of the translation.

Credibility Checks

Thirteen credibility checks, including steps to address Mandarin-English translation issues, were conducted. Because this research was conducted in Mandarin, whereas the report was to be written in English, bilingual experts were invited to assist in different stages of the credibility checks. The procedures are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Credibility Checks

Research stage	Credibility checks
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio Recording • Expert Audition • Maintain researcher field notes
Data Analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual Independent Coders • Category-tracking (ATLAS.ti network view) • Participant endorsement rate • Maintain researcher memos
Triangulation re: categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual independent judges • Bilingual expert opinions • Participant reviews • Theoretical checks with literature
Reporting research result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant quotes translated verbatim. • Original Chinese terms/idioms retained; meaning explained in footnotes

Audio recording and immediate filed notes. The first two steps are fundamental for data collection. The first step was audio recording the interviews to maintain the descriptive data. Additionally, field notes were taken right after each interview. I kept field notes after each interview and summarized general impressions. These served the purposes of documenting the context of the interviews; also, it can be cross-checked with the coding process. This way, I was able to better trace whether new themes might emerge.

Interview expert audit. Secondly, the recorded first three to four interviews were audited by an expert to verify whether the interview protocol was followed and if it was conducted in a non-leading way. I consulted both English- and Mandarin-speaking experts to audit the interviews. Dr. Norman Amundson, my supervisor and one of the developers of ECIT, read the field notes and summary of the first interview. Dr. Amundson confirmed that the interview yielded meaningful data and that I was on the right track. The Mandarin-speaking expert I consulted with was Lulin Zheng, a registered clinical counsellor who has a master's degree in counselling and has conducted ECIT research with Chinese immigrant professionals. She read three interview transcripts to ensure the quality and integrity of the interviews. She commented that she enjoyed the depth and breadth of the interviews, particularly their conversational flow.

Independent coders. The third step was consensus coding by independent coders. A visiting scholar, Dr. Siwei Wu from China, who is a native Mandarin speaker, served as an independent coder. She had no experience with ECIT research, but I provided her with a brief training, which included an introduction to the ECIT method, the purpose and research questions of my project, and the coding procedures. An interview was given to her as a coding trial. Questions emerged from her first coding process were discussed before she went on to code the remaining interviews.

Two interviews of Taiwanese mothers and two interviews of Chinese mothers were sent to Dr. Wu. A comparison of Dr. Wu's and my own codes yielded 69% to 100 % agreement rates. After discussing the coding rationales for the differences, we reached consensus, and the final agreement rate achieved 100%. This is significant because the interviews were conducted in a non-structural fashion which could have yielded divergent coder interpretations.

Tracking categories. As noted above, *Network View* on ATLAS.ti was used to track categories. Additionally, I referred to literature and jotted down useful phrases or constructs and

wrote memos. New categories ceased emerging after the tenth interview was analyzed. After the remaining five transcripts were analyzed, these categories along with samples of associating CIs were organized and sent for review by an independent judge and participants.

Participant endorsement rates. Participant's endorsement rates of the CIs were calculated to demonstrate relative strength of established categories.

Independent judge. Ms. Zheng was asked to place randomly selected incidents into the emerging categories to ensure robustness. She also provided feedback on the translation of the categories.

Participant checks. Once the categories were developed and the operational definitions written, they were presented to the participants in a second interview via phone calls or emails (Appendix V). This interview invited the participant to help revise, clarify, or validate the established categories; they were also encouraged to provide feedback for amendment. Ten out of 15 participants responded, and their agreement rate was 100%.

Expert checks. This procedure examined whether the categories generated from the current study were congruent with the expert's knowledge of the professional field. The field experts were asked to comment on the following questions.

1. Do you find the categories to be useful?
2. Are you surprised by any of the categories?
3. Do you think there is anything missing based on your experience?

First, I asked an academic expert's opinions on whether these categories fulfilled theoretical validity. I consulted with Dr. Chen-Chen Cheng, assistant professor in the Department of Special Education of Kaohsiung Normal University, Taiwan. Dr. Cheng has expertise in parent-teacher collaboration, multicultural issues in special education, and qualitative research methodology. Dr. Cheng's personal and professional experiences develop through a transnational process and

she examines cultural practices including motherhood from a symbolic interactionist lens. She agreed with the categorization of the critical incidents and cautioned that some of the categories are more process-oriented (e.g., children's development and growth) whereas the others appeared to be characteristics of the individuals (e.g., adaptability). She advised me to provide clear and specific definitions for each category. I was also encouraged to further reflect on the implications of these two types of categories when writing the reports.

Secondly, to verify the usefulness and the applicability of these categories in clinical practice, I consulted with King-Lok Tsoi, R.C.C., a trilingual (Cantonese, Mandarin and English) clinical counsellor at Touchstone Family Association, a nonprofit community service organization in Richmond, BC. Mr. Tsoi has had more than 30 years of experience working with Chinese immigrants and families. He also runs parenting skills workshops for Cantonese- and Mandarin-speaking parents. He stated the research results made sense to him and were consistent with his clinical experience. A reminder he added was that the connection between the research findings and recommendations for intervention must be clearly addressed.

Theoretical agreement. The last step of credibility check was to examine how this current project fit within the transnational migration and counselling fields. To accomplish this, I examined the coherence and discrepancies found between the research findings and existing literature. This will be demonstrated in chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter contains eight sections. It begins with an introduction of the characteristics of the participants' backgrounds and the context of their transnational family arrangements. The second section provides an overview of the data analysis where numbers of helping and hindering critical incidents, and participant endorsement rates are demonstrated; an overview of the wish list is also discussed. Lastly, there is a detailed discussion on the areas and categories that emerged from the critical incidents, supported by quotes from the participants.

Participant Backgrounds and Context of Their Transnational Family Arrangements

This section draws from information gathered from the demographic surveys participants completed before each interview, as well as participants' elaborations on their stories during the interview.

Participant demographics. Fifteen mothers with an age range of 38 to 45 participated in this study (Table 4). Three participants did not report their ages; therefore, the mean was calculated for 12 participants.

Table 4.

Participant Age

Age in years	Number of participants (N=15)	Range	Mean (N=12)
35-40	2	38-50	45
41-45	3		
46-50	7		
N/A	3		

The countries of origin of the participants, their educational level, language proficiency, and pre- and post-immigration professional employment status are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5.

Participant Background

	Number of participants (N=15)
Country of origin	
Taiwan	8
China	7
Education level	
College/university degrees (From home countries)	7
Graduate degrees	
-From home country (Non-English speaking).	2
-From English-speaking country	6
Pre-immigration language proficiency	
Chinese (i.e. Mandarin and/ or other dialects) only	9
Chinese and English	6
Employment status	
Pre-immigration	
-Professionally employed (full time)	13
-Stay-at-home mother	2
Post-immigration	
-Professionally employed (part time/full time)	2 /1
- Stay-at-home mother	12

As shown in Table 5, eight participants were from Taiwan, and seven were from China. All of them held a post-secondary degree. Seven mothers had a bachelor's degree, and eight mothers

completed graduate school. Nine participants spoke only Chinese; six mothers obtained their graduate degrees from English-speaking countries.

The majority of the participants held a professional position before immigration, whereas two were stay-at-home mothers. However, this pattern was reversed after the immigration: twelve mothers stayed at home, two mothers work part-time, and only one mother works in a professional position. The interruption of professional career led to transitional stress for some participants not only at the initial stage of immigration, but also at a later stage when their children have grown up. Personal transition, especially regarding professional career was identified as a hindering category by some participants.

Participant family characteristics. The participants arrived in Canada with their children between 1998 and 2014. It is worth noting that not every family engaged in the astronaut family practice when they first landed in Canada. For example, Celine and her husband landed in Canada with their first child in late 1990s. Their second child was born subsequently, and the family of four continued to reside in Canada until the couple decided to move back to their home country so that their children could learn Mandarin. They left Canada in the early 2000s, and it was not until more than five years later that the couple decided Celine and the children should move back to Canada. Thus, Celine has 12 years of residence in Canada and four of those years are without her husband.

Within-group differences of the participants were observed. Table 6 demonstrates that the duration of the participants' transnational family arrangement ranges from 1.5 to 18 years at the time of the interview. Most participants brought more than one child with them. Two participants from China left their youngest children (age three and six) at home in the care of the grandparents, so that it was easier for them to concentrate on looking after the older child in Canada.

Overall all, the children's ages ranged from 0 to 15 years old when they landed in Canada. Most children were between grade one and seven (6-12 years old) when they immigrated with their mothers; the second largest group was pre-school children under the age of four. The age gap between the participant's youngest and oldest children ranged from five to ten years, (i.e. kindergarten to elementary level.) Children's transition throughout developmental stages influenced the participants' parenting experience. Children's growth and maturity was identified as a helping category when mothers felt validated by positive parenting outcome.

On the other hand, children's entering adolescence significantly challenged mothers. Participants who had immigrated with young children witnessed their children's physical and behavioral shifts when their children entered puberty. These participants provided incidents that demonstrated how the transition of their children's developmental stage made pseudo-single parenting even more stressful. Dealing with teenagers' shifts in moods and rebellious behaviours thus emerged as one of the hindering categories.

Table 6.

Family Characteristics

	Number of families	Range
Years of transnational family arrangement*		
1-5	7	1.5-18
6-10	6	
>10	2	
Number of children		
1	4	
2	7	
3	4	
Children's educational stage and age when immigration	Number of children	
Pre-school (0-4 yrs)	7	
Kindergarten (5 yrs)	2	
grade 1-7 (6-12 yrs)	15	
grade 8-12 (13-17 yrs)	4	

Note: *= First and second landing combined.

Immigration decision making. Reasons and decision-making for immigration are presented in Table 7. Six participants reported the transnational family arrangement was a joint decision of themselves and their husbands. Two participants and their husbands took the advice from a friend or extended family member to consider migration. Another six mothers proposed

the arrangement to their husbands and volunteered to emigrate with their children on their own.

Only one participant stated it was her husband's idea.

Children's education was reported as the primary reason for immigration. The second most reported reason was the pursuit of a better living environment and lifestyle. The participants' own or their husbands' experience studying abroad reportedly contributed to this particular reason. The third reason was to make a change in their life—to “improve their mental health” (Betty), to “remove herself and the children from disliked political climate in the homeland” (Diane), and to “pursue own career goals” (Gloria). One participant shared that obtaining dual citizenship was also a reason for immigration.

For participants, the split-family arrangement was a goal-oriented and collective decision made by themselves and their spouses. This is important to note because having the determination to achieve their goals later emerged as a helping category.

Table 7.

Decision Making

	Number of participants (N=15)
Reason	
Children's education	9
Better living environment and lifestyle	5
Mother needing a change (mental health, career, political view)	3
To secure dual citizenship	1
Decision	
Joint (1 included child)	6
Wife	6
Husband	1
Other	2

In sum, there were a variety of individual differences within the seemingly homogenous group. There were also some differences between Taiwanese and Chinese families. For instance, there were larger age gaps between the first and second children in Chinese families compared to the Taiwanese families, which was due to China's one-child policy. At least two participants disclosed that they gave birth to their second child in Canada.

A couple commonalities were also observed. First, most mothers were highly educated and employable professionals. Second, the decision to immigrate was primarily motivated by their desire that their children receive a quality education. The decision was primarily made by the adults and only one household involved their child in discussions about whether to immigrate.

Overview of the Hindering and Helping Categories and Wish List Items

From 15 interviews, a total of 213 critical incidents were identified, including 150 helping incidents and 63 hindering incidents. For my participants, the hindering incidents were experiences that did not necessarily limit their ability to perform their parenting, but they did challenge their adaptation to the transnational split-family life. These events or factors were reported as hindering or challenging when they evoked negative thoughts or emotions from the participants. In contrast, helping incidents were experiences that led to desired or satisfactory outcomes. These outcomes may include overcoming challenges, finding relief from their psychological distress, and overall contentment with life.

Preliminary data analysis resulted in 12 categories for the helping incidents, and six categories for the hindering incidents. These categories were further grouped into four broad areas: intrapersonal process (area I), family process (area II), social interaction (area III), and extra-personal conditions/resources (area IV). Table 8 demonstrates the number of critical incidents reported for each helping and hindering category, along with the number of participants who contributed to reporting, and the participant endorsement rate. The total number of helping and hindering critical incidents under each area is also reported.

Table 8.

Areas and Categories of Hindering and Helping Incidents

Helping Categories	CIs (N=150)	N of participants (% of total)	Hindering Categories	CIs (N=63)	N of participants (% of total)
Area I: Intra-personal process (N of CIs: 82; percentage of the grand total: 38%)					
1. Adaptability	17	13 (87%)	1. Juggling multiple responsibilities	16	12 (80%)
2. Determination	11	10 (67%)	2. Loss of own career	5	5 (33%)
3. Role adherence	15	9 (60%)			
4. Active learning	11	8 (53%)			
5. Spiritual anchor	7	7 (47%)			
Area II: Family process (N of CIs: 72; percentage of the grand total: 34%)					
6. Children's development and growth	15	11(73%)	3. Distant couples relationship	8	7 (47%)
7. Family support	18	9 (60%)	4. Dealing with teenagers	9	7 (47%)
8. Effective communication	12	6 (40%)	5. Unmet parental expectations	7	5 (33%)

Table 8. (continued)

Helping Categories	CIs (N=150)	N of participants (% of total)	Hindering Categories	Cis (N=63)	N of participants (% of total)
Areal III: Social interaction (N of CIs: 31; percentage of the grand total: 15%)					
9. Friendship	14	10 (67%)	6. Narrowed social circles	7	6 (40%)
10. Community involvement	10	8 (53%)			
Areal IV: Extra-personal conditions/resources (N of CIs: 27; percentage of the grand total: 13%)					
11. Appreciating life in Canada	11	8 (53%)	7. Cultural barriers	11	9 (60%)
12. Financial stability	6	5 (33%)			

Note: CI, critical incidents; N, total number.

All helping categories acquired above 25% participant endorsement rate, with adaptability being the highest (87%). All hindering categories also acquired more than 25% participant endorsement rate. The top two categories were juggling multiple responsibilities (80%) and cultural barriers (60%).

A total of 82 (38%) of the reported critical incidents belong to area I intrapersonal process, and 72 (34%) belong to area II family process. Together these two areas accounted for more than 70% of the endorsed critical incidents. The remaining critical incidents were almost equally distributed to the social interaction area, and extra-personal conditions/resources, the ratio being 15% and 13% respectively (also see Figure 1).

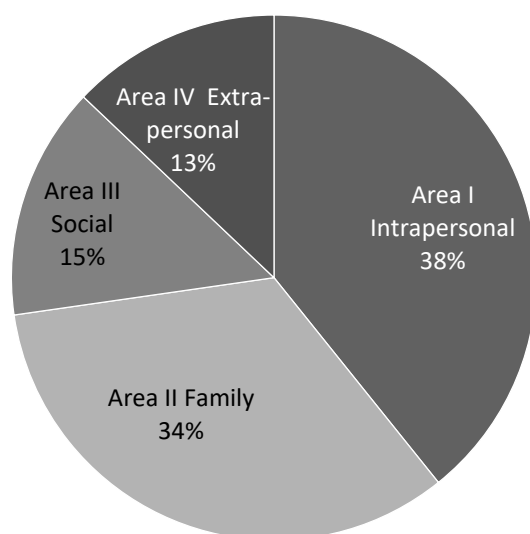


Figure 1.

Areas by Numbers of Critical Incidents

It is interesting to note that helping incidents are more than twice the number of hindering incidents. Some participants' remarks offered viable explanations. First, those who came forward to participate in the study are likely to have had a positive experience with the transnational family arrangement. Granted, there were four participants who acknowledged their experience has been on the somewhat negative side, but they did also report quite a few helping incidents. Second, based on a few anecdotal examples provided by different participants, a majority of their friends or people they knew of, who stayed, have come to terms with the hardships in one way or another; consequently, these participants were more likely to hold a balanced or positive view when telling their stories. A third explanation brought up by a few participants was that, typically, Chinese people tend not to speak ill of their family matters. This behaviour is captured in a popular Chinese idiom—family dirt shall not be spread out (家醜不可外揚).

Only 50% of participants contributed to the question regarding wish list. Twenty-seven

wish list items were provided by seven participants. Most items had a broad perspective of participants' life situation. Three people talked about their hope for the next steps after their children grow up, and all seven of them talked about expectations for their children. When asked what resources they wished to have, only three mothers articulated specific needs or made suggestions for assisting immigrants. These items were grouped into three categories, parallel to three of the areas of helping and hindering critical incidents (see Table 9).

Table 9.

Wish List Items

Categories	# of WIs	N
1. Intra-personal: Next steps for mothers	3	3
2. Family process		
2a. Expectations for children	13	7
2b. Restoration of relationships	3	3
3. Extra-personal: Conditions and resources		
3a. Pragmatic information and resources	3	3
3b. Promptly-offered information	2	2
3c. More free and low-cost ESL programs	1	1
3d. Personalized support	2	2
Total	27	

Note: #, number of items; WI, wish list item; N, number of participants

Categories that Describe the Hindering and Helping Incidents

In this section, I provide participant quotations to further illustrate hindering and helping categories. These categories will be reported under four broad areas, namely, the intra-personal process, family process, social interactions, and extra-personal conditions and resources.

Area I Intra-Personal Process

This area included two hindering and five helping categories related to the participants' internal experiences. Critical incidents in this area demonstrated what it is like to be the participants and what is happening in their inner world. Eighty-two critical incidents mentioned were grouped under this area.

Intra-personal hindering categories. Two hindering categories emerged. They were (a) juggling multiple responsibilities, and (b) loss of career.

(a) Juggling multiple responsibilities (16 CIs, N=12, 80% endorsement rate). Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Juggle, n.d.), defined juggle as “to handle or deal with usually several things (such as obligations) at one time so as to satisfy often competing requirements,” “to engage in manipulation especially in order to achieve a desired end,” and “to hold or balance precariously.” These definitions precisely depict the most endorsed hindering critical incidents by the participants. On top of adjusting to the international relocation, the participants highlighted the extremely challenging and overwhelming process where they were learning to balance multiple tasks and fulfill different obligations on their own.

Two participants expressed regrets for failing to provide transnational care for families in their home country when they were in need. For example, when Amy's sister was dying from a chronic illness in Taiwan, she almost did not get to say goodbye because her daughter's school semester had not ended in Canada. Another time, when her husband had to go through a major surgery, she felt extremely torn as she recognized she yet again had to pick a side, and asked

herself who needed her more:

As a mother, my heart is always ‘hanging in the air’...in situations like these, it doesn’t feel right being at one place but not in another...you think of people here and people over there at the same time; the role I’m playing really makes me concern about my family in Taiwan and my child here all the time, which is extremely heart-wrenching.

Fortunately, she eventually made it back to Taiwan and accompanied her sister through her last days. However, the other mother, Eve, missed her father’s last days because her children were going to school in Canada. His death was unexpected, caused by an acute condition. Still, she lamented, “it was impossible to make a perfect decision.” Indeed, mothers felt distressed when they were confronted with the dilemma of deciding who needs them more: “there may be time when your children, your husband, and parents-in-law all need you and it puts mothers in a very tough position when we know that if you choose one, you end up not being able to meet the other three’s needs. “What do you do in those situations?” May asked.

There could be a time when mothers chose to sacrifice their own wellbeing for the sake of their children. For example, Amy was hospitalized for weeks after a car accident when she was visiting family in Taiwan. Although her daughter had been old enough to look after herself, Amy could not feel at ease knowing her daughter was alone in Canada. Therefore, before she was fully recovered, she returned to Canada as soon as she was released from the hospital to be with her daughter.

Locally, the mothers juggle multiple tasks without sufficient help. After the immigration, the mothers’ new lives orbited around their children. As Diane said, “we are the one that keeps everything going and on schedule, things like extracurricular lessons, paying fees, and we must make sure everything runs smoothly; on the other hand, the children’s job is to just live their life without having to worry about a thing.” Not surprisingly, Lisa described her juggling the

busyness as “battling with an open wound bleeding from the head” [頭破血流].

Indeed, five mothers felt that they became fully and solely responsible for their children’s development and performance once they moved to Canada. Gloria’s remarks depicted this pressure, “there are only two people in our family here, therefore if my child misbehaves in any ways, such as lying or missing classes, I must have caused it.”

Understandably, mothers made a great deal of effort to pave the way for their children’s success by signing them up for extracurricular activities. For example, Hazel believed “these arrangements are important to the children’s future development.” Thus, a challenging task for Hazel was to arrange activities that would fulfill each of her child’s interests. Coordinating their schedules was also a challenge:

Next year my three children will be in three different schools, and the arrangements for each of them will be completely different because they have different interests. If we were in Taiwan, they would just go to the after-school classes offered in their schools and that would be it! Instead, they are off school by 2:30 pm here, so what do they do after 2:30?

In another case, Kate, a former general physician, decided to take on a tutoring role herself to help educate her daughter:

In the first two or three months when we first arrived, the most important task for me every day was to review the physics and chemistry my daughter was studying, so that I could teach her in the evenings in Mandarin to ensure that she understood the teacher better.

On their own, each participant juggled day-to-day tasks as much as they could. These examples are best summarized with Fiona’s remarks, “we are basically single moms playing multiple roles. You are the chauffeur, you are the maid, you are the father, and you are also in charge of disciplining.”

Three mothers' capacity for self-care was compromised due to their busyness. As Kate indicated, "I have no energy to think about how I was, whether I was happy, or what I wanted to do for me for the day." Olivia described her exhaustion and frustration without a personal space to decompress at the end of the day, "occasionally you'd feel this flood of emotions, and I just wanted to be quiet...I operate around them day after day, basically nonstop!" In Diane's experience, "...no one cares if you're off, you are the one he turns to when he needs something, you are the one he talks to when he's in a bad mood, but who do we have?" She described her experience with depression and loneliness:

You become depressed, especially during the winter...one time I was the only person in the parking lot outside of a mall waiting for my son. As it grew darker and colder, I really felt that this is such a lonely world, and I was so down that I felt that I was in the bottom of a valley. I was so lonely seeing other people who have an intact family, whereas I have no roots here, no relatives, and nobody."

Having to juggle multiple responsibilities, balancing priorities, and resolving dilemmas affected the mothers' physical and psychological wellbeing. The critical incidents above indicated participants' perceptions that "I am on my own, therefore I must be responsible, and I should be able to hold things together." Such perceptions and the actual experiences of non-stop operation coupled with an absence of immediate physical support led to the feeling of depression, fatigue, overwhelm, and powerlessness.

(b) Loss of own career (5 CIs, N=5, 33% endorsement rate. This category revealed that psychologically it could be disempowering for some mothers to give up their personal career aspirations for the transnational family arrangement. Thirteen mothers were working professionals before migration, yet twelve of them became stay at home mothers after immigrating to Canada. The loss of professional identity contributed to decreased self-worth.

“Back home, I was somebody but here I am nobody,” said Fiona, “it felt like I were a tiny grass on the prairie, and I was striving for growth under storms.”

Five mothers found they lost a sense of purpose. For example, Kate reported:

I have been working all my life before this, and I’ve never been somebody who feels settled to stay at home...the psychological adjustment to the role change was the biggest challenge for me because I kept wondering ‘how can I just stay home and do nothing?’

Similarly, Hazel described:

You are unable to find a purpose for yourself. Indeed, my children are my centre, but you still want your own life—has my career forever ended because I resigned from my job...from time to time, I still wonder who I am, how my marriage is, and what about my life?

Transitioning from being a full-time professional worker to a full-time homemaker also altered the family dynamics. For example, Irene attributed the loss of her career to her degenerating relationship with her son as she found herself constantly scrutinizing and criticizing him:

When we first arrived, our relationship was much better than now. Now that I don’t have a job and I stay home all day, I pay all my attention to him. Perhaps I have since magnified his shortcomings, and became more aggressive towards him...this process has gradually set us apart.

Betty, on the other hand, experienced feelings of guilt after she resigned from her well-paid position to immigrate because she did not have an income anymore:

If it were just for myself, I can eat poorly, to live without the heat, read without lights. I want to provide my child with the best growing environment, though, so I feel torn because I feel bad about letting my husband bear the financial burden alone. This is quite stressful,

and I have this sense of guilt knowing that there's not much I can do.

Leaving the workforce obviously was a difficult transition to adjust to; trying to return to the workforce was yet another challenging task for mothers whose children had grown old enough and no longer required their full attention. "Suddenly you are not needed, not at all. He actually does everything better than you, so you suddenly feel that your mission as mother is accomplished." After her son had left home for university, Nadia found herself stuck between her own desire to stay in Canada, and family expectations for her to return to China to look after her parents and parents-in-law. She spoke about her dilemma:

It's all about kinship and family ethics. Now that your child does not need you anymore, how can you not go home to look after the elders? If I had a job here, then I could justify my staying. The thing is even if I try to find a job, I'm not willing to do something like preparing vegetables or washing dishes. After all, I was working at a big corporation back home, so why would I downgrade my job option unless I am so short on money that I'm unable to put bread on the table? Family and friends back home wouldn't approve of it, either.

Intra-personal helping categories. Five helping categories emerged. They were (a) adaptability, (b) role adherence, (c) determination, (d) spiritual anchor, and (e) self-improvement

(a) Adaptability (17 CIs, N=13, 87% endorsement rate). According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the root of the word adapt has the idea of "becoming fit for something", and it "implies a modification according to changing circumstances" (Adapt. n.d.).

Accordingly, this helping category illustrates incidents where participants demonstrated cognitive and behavioural flexibility during the transitions. All 15 participants recognized that the pursuit of a preferable education and life in Canada came with a price, and there was much uncertainty about the outcome of their decisions. In this category, 13 mothers indicated they

managed emotional difficulties and adapted to transitional difficulties by practicing the mindset of acceptance and/or staying positive.

Seven mothers talked about accepting the reality as a helpful way to deal with different challenging situations. Celine shared that accepting reality, and focusing on trouble-shooting has been her general strategy to deal with all kinds of problems:

When there is trouble, we first take a step back and try to put things into perspective...from a religious standpoint, perhaps it is your karma of having done something wrong at a certain point of your life. Since you can't really turn back time and undo what had been done, all you can do is to focus on how to resolve the problem at present. I accept that I don't have the power to change my past, but I know I can change how I deal with things now. In other words, we don't ask why this happened to me.

Lisa's view was consistent with that of Celine. Her mantra was "go with the flow." Using mountain-climbing as a metaphor, she further highlighted that acceptance also means taking things slow:

When I was younger, if there is a mountain in front of me, I would exhaust myself to climb it to get to the other side. Now I'd just go around it to get to the same destination. I recognize that my age and my situation don't allow me to climb anymore, not with children, so I'd rather take it slow and go around the mountain.

Two mothers indicated that managing priorities without overthinking helped them embrace uncertainty and accept the present. For May, she did not have specific expectations for immigration outcomes, nor did she have any anticipatory worries before her actual arrival. She said that not overthinking and remaining somewhat naïve gave her the courage to embrace uncertainty. Olivia who has three young children, noted that she learned from her children:

They are always in a sunny mood because they don't think too much. The more you think,

the more you worry. Often, things unfold with their own rhythm, and if something is not meant to be, it doesn't matter how hard I fight for it. Going with the flow brings peace to my mind, and it helps me to be more effective in handling day-to-day tasks.

When Kate was nostalgic about her lost career, she sometimes doubted whether it was worthwhile giving up her career for her children. Gradually, she learned to replace her rumination on the past with acceptance, and began to appreciate her life in the present moment. This former general physician stated:

My colleagues would be spending most of their life at their job, and if that's how all your life is, there will be a great sense of loss when retirement comes. But being there for your children is not the same. I'm giving them something that will not disappear with my retirement. Throughout their life they will remember that it is their mother who's always there for them, and this is something that can't ever be replaced.

She also learned to accept her daughter as she is, so that she became less distressed about her daughter's academic performance:

I decided to stop expecting my daughter to perform the way I wished her to. I realized that it was true that getting good grades was so easy for me, but it might not be the case for my daughter, so I have been gradually adjusting to how she is—I learned that she is not me, and certainly not an extension of me.

Diane promised herself to “live every year better than the previous one.” Stopping worrying too much about her son's academic performance, Diane realized that “I could only do what I can; if I can be helpful for my son, great, if not I have learned to let go...he has limits, and I have my life.” By accepting the reality that both she and her son have limits, she became “less harsh toward myself, and accept that things didn't have to be perfect. I want to be happier and live life for myself.”

When it came to concerns about the maintenance of marriage, a helpful approach was to be mentally prepared. Fiona, whose husband initially opposed her idea of immigration, accepted the possibility of a “worst-case scenario.” She said to herself that she would focus on taking ownership of her life, and enjoy the here-and-now:

The more effort you put in, the higher your expectations and eventually greater sense of loss.

You should take a neutral perspective, same way we maintain friendships, and be thankful for his support. After all, I don’t have the power to control his actions, and migration was my idea. If he ends up having an affair, that’s his choice and it’s not my place to say that you’re not allowed to do that...I think it is much more important to make sure that I am well, with or without a husband. After all, what’s the point of spending this much money to come here just to overthink and worry when I can enjoy my daily coffee and bread?

Hazel normalized her negative emotions by detaching it from the context of immigration, “you can’t let yourself dwell on the negative emotions whether being an immigrant or not.” She would “take a break when I’m tired. The future and life are long. Of course, there was time when I get emotional or feel negative. It happens, but what are you going to do if you don’t stabilize yourself...I am aware that showing my negative emotions is of no help for my children’s development; I am an adult, so I have the capacity to regulate myself.”

Irene normalized parent-child conflicts, noting that she knew she was not alone in dealing with this difficulty, “I don’t necessarily view this process as some sort of bitterness because I believe that every newcomer would have to deal with the same thing. Therefore, I feel quite receptive of the process.”

One of the causes of mother’s emotional distress is related to children’s academic performance. May shared that she tends to “look at the bright side” without relying on her children’s performances as her main source of happiness:

My children's academic achievement is part of my responsibility...however, their performance can't be the only source of my happiness...I believe happiness consists of lots of different elements...whatever happens, I try to look on the bright side. For example, if one of my children performed badly academically, I'd say to myself at least the other two are doing well. Even if they weren't academically successful, they may have other strengths that make you equally happy, if not more.

The participants' cognitive and behavioural flexibility was not necessarily innate, but rather an active practice. The critical incidents showed their process of recognizing the reality, accepting the reality and determining there is a need for change, that is to "become fit."

(b) Determination (11 CIs, N=10, 67% endorsement rate). The definition of this category is remaining the devotion to family goals and the decisions made even when confronted with difficulties and challenges. This category demonstrated participants' commitment to their decisions and goals. In their mind, the split family decision was goal-driven. According to the survey, their goals involved family life, children's education, personal development, and general life quality, etc. Focusing on these helped them through hardships. "Once you embark, there is no turning back," said Diane; or "the decision has been made, so you must persevere," Amy asserted.

In Betty's case, she was dealing with other people's doubt. When Betty announced her decision to immigrate to Canada with her son, she said almost none of her colleagues and family believed that she was serious. "Even my own mother didn't think that I would make this work. She didn't think I'd last more than a year. She thought I'd probably go home being all defeated, or with my son being beaten up by me within a year." However, she proved them wrong. By the time of our interview, Betty had been in Canada for 5.5 years. "Once I've made up my mind, I will grit my teeth and keep going until I achieve my goal. I would never just cry out for help."

Similarly, Fiona also said that she was not a type of person who gives up easily. Below are her eloquent descriptions of how she persevered. First, she was willing to accept the consequences of her decision:

You prepared yourself. You must know that every decision you made concerning immigration has its ramifications. When you pack, you were packing both good and bad decisions, and you carry them with you.

Second, she used mountain-climbing as a metaphor to encourage herself:

You feel uncertain about the road in front of you because you don't know what it is like. But this process is almost like the scenery along the way leading to the summit of a mountain. I haven't made it to the top! If I turned back down, I would miss the beauty at the summit. We must persist because we knew from the get-go that aiming for the summit also means hardship is inevitable. Whenever I feel like I can't go on, I'd tell myself, there's no mountain that can't be conquered. The hardship will pass.

Nadia's narrative account was like that of her fellow astronaut mothers. She added that although it was extremely difficult for her to cope with the family's separation and being a new immigrant, giving up and moving back home was not an option. She said

I had a sense of responsibility. My child was doing well. How could I make him move back home with me just because I was not happy here? I was determined. Once I decided that moving home was not an option, it helped me focused on how to make things work.

(c) Role adherence (15 CIs, N=9, 60% endorsement rate). This category captures participants' self-acknowledgement of the significant and unique role of being a mother. Being a mother was portrayed as bitter and sweet, and most importantly, rewarding. The mothers expressed pride for having the capacity to fully devoted themselves to their children and the family. Role adherence appeared to help console the mothers' occasional regrets for the family

separation; celebrating the identity of a mother also prevented them from psychological suffering.

At least three participants highlighted the significant contributions they had made for their children. Amy expressed unconditional love for her children, “I never expect my child to pay me back because being a mother is my duty. Oliva believed that mothers “are the pillar for the children.” May said that mothers in astronaut families are “the bridge” that connect the family transnationally, and who “oversee the domestic affairs and hold everything in place.” She highlighted the intrinsic joy of being a mother by saying that it is “an obligation that I enjoy very much. Therefore, I don’t really think about the hard part.”

Role adherence could develop or strengthen by the direct experience of being and learning to be a mother. For example, Betty said, “the role of the mother is worthy of lifelong commitment and cultivating.” Her perception of motherhood shifted after immigration:

I worked 14 hours a day for my managerial position when I was working back home, but now I realized how critical the mother’s role is in the family. Mothers’ responsibilities are no less than a paid worker, but rather even more demanding than employment!”

Another mother, Fiona cogently put:

Being a mother gives the most value to my life. I feel very proud of myself for giving so much for my children because I believe that I am the only person that is willing to commit to them wholeheartedly...I know I am irreplaceable.

Role adherence also involved accepting woman’s role in the family domain in general.

Celine talked about her learning from her family experience:

You witnessed how things were managed at home. My husband is the oldest child in his

family, which means I am expected to live up to the role of the oldest daughter in law².

Recognizing this makes you work hard and to not easily yield to challenges. You also observed how our parents divided responsibilities. Naturally, you developed the same mindset in terms of what tasks belonged to the woman's territory.

Adherence to their role of a mother/wife prevented participants from being negative and resentful. Alternatively, they viewed challenges as an inevitable part of being a mother, and overcoming these challenges further gives them a meaning of their existence.

Interestingly, for some their role adherence was strengthened by their religious belief. I will discuss this aspect in the category entitled spiritual anchor within this same section.

(d) Active learning. (11 CIs, N=8, 53% endorsement rate) This category remarked mother's active engagement in self-reflection (反思, aiming for self-growth) and self-inspection (檢討, aiming for remedy and correction) to improve their parenting practice. Lisa, mother of two, said "raising children takes wisdom, and requires the use of brain and muscle (鬥智鬥勇)"

Some mothers talked about applying knowledge they learned from reading books to their real-life experience, for example, Judy remarked:

You must relate the knowledge in the book to your own experience, especially when it comes to parenting, otherwise there's no use for it. Books offer you a general framework.

Indeed, raising children is something that you learn by doing or exchanging ideas with other parents, and it is such brain work! It is helpful to be aware of the theoretical foundation, like developmental theory.

Betty, a diligent Christian, referred to the Bible as her guidance. Reading the Bible was not

² in traditional Chinese families, the wife of the oldest son has an honourable status as she would eventually oversee and manage the family affairs

mainly about honouring her religion for Betty; more importantly, she read it, so she could apply the teachings to her life. The following quotation illustrates her process of perspective change in parenting:

At times, we can really be stuck in our head when we look at something from an ordinary person's perspective...you [referring to the researcher] and I are both highly educated, so what we lack is not knowledge. Ironically, sometimes we become self-restricted because we have too much knowledge. We thought we knew a lot, and it must mean that we're always in the right. That is why I used to impose my own standards and rules on my children's education, despite that he and I are two very different individuals. In the end, I realized that this imposition only caused mutual pain for both him and me. I would have sabotaged his strengths by forcing him to deal with his weakness for my sake. Now I have come to realize that his energy should be used to further sharpen his strengths.

Learning about other people's experience was also another way the mothers sought to improve themselves. May shared her experience:

I still feel lost quite often when confronted with new situations. There's a lot I don't know, so I contemplate a lot, or I seek help. I also like listening to people and learning from their unique wisdom. I'd listen to other parents' successful experience of dealing with their children at a certain situation. Although my children may not be the same age as their children yet, at least I know there's something worthy of trying when a comparable situation emerges.

Regarding parent-child communication or conflict resolution, mothers demonstrated their willingness to listen to their children, and consider their input and self-reflection. Self-inspection is meant to examine and to confront. This practice was encouraged in traditional Chinese. It was a cultural/social norm to always strive for self-improvement. "I'd take a step back so that I can

ground myself and self-reflect.” “Even an ancient revolution has novel problems. You must adapt to whatever tasks that come along with children’s growth.”

Lisa said that she “never stops self-inspecting, and I learned from my mistakes.” For example, one time I promised my daughter something, but I didn’t carry it out. She remembered that and called me out in another occasion. Since then, I learned to keep my mouth shut instead of making promises I can’t keep.”

Amy described her communication with her daughter as open and honest because they can discuss just about anything. She credited her own willingness to self-inspect and self-correct: “I take her feedback seriously. And I understand where she’s coming from, so I would adjust myself—what matters to her matters to me!” For example, she shared an incident where she used a harsh tone of voice when talking to her daughter. Her daughter responded, “mom, why are you talking to me in this way? None of my teachers, my classmates, or my friends has ever talked to me with that tone of voice.” Amy said she was stunned by her daughter’s reaction, and she also realized her daughter was being quite reasonable. “After all, if people could talk to my daughter in a respectful way, I can too,” she said.

Betty talked about a time when she complained to her son about how she felt ignored when he didn’t respond to her requests or questions, to which he replied, “could you just show me some sympathy? There are lots of things I need to do at school every day, and I’m stressed out. I was not talking because I don’t want to talk to you, it’s just I was too tired to talk.” Betty felt a sense of relief knowing that she didn’t have to take her son’s silence personally, and that it was not because he was being unthoughtful. She recognized that “I was being childish for calling for my son’s attention. And even though I had thought that I was communicating with him, I was only venting about him to him. What he needed was my compassion, and I agree with him completely!” She thus learned a parenting lesson:

Every child is unique, so just because something works on other people's children doesn't mean that it will work on my child, too. I've learned that as mothers we must empty ourselves. Mothers must observe their children and be patient; they must suspend their own biases. Often, I think children become unhappy or think that mothers don't love them because mothers are using the wrong ways of treating their children. Every mother loves her child, but sometimes our way could be unsuitable for them.

These examples demonstrated how mothers' active pursuit of self-improvement helped raise their confidence in their parenting efficacy. It helped the mothers to more confidently cope with the situation, it also helped them to become reconciled to the challenges. Their perspectives also became more flexible and less judgmental.

(e) Spiritual anchor (7 CIs, N=7, 47% endorsement rate). This category demonstrated that religion served as a spiritual anchor for the astronaut mothers. Participants who contributed to this category indicated that practicing or exploring a religious belief helped them find psychological comfort and support. Religious institution, such as the church or the Buddhist temple they go to, gave them a trusting community where they found social and material support.

Having faith alleviated the feeling of isolation and loneliness. Perceived unconditional acceptance and persistent love from God provided a strong sense of security, "you know *he* is always by your side, and *he* will tell you that he understands your suffering; *he* will give you the strength to move forward, and *he* will never leave." Mothers of Christian and Mormon faith reported this sense of security grounded them when they were feeling overwhelmed and distressed. Amy said, "my religion helped me through emotional difficulties and practical life difficulties." Diane referred to a verse in the Bible to cope with anticipatory fear before immigration:

I recalled reading about a prophet who grew up in Jerusalem. God sent him to America, so

he brought his entire family with him. Reading this, I told myself that I was basically in the same situation—from Taiwan to Canada—so all I could do was pray. I told myself that I was walking the path as the prophet. I trusted that God would guide me through.

May developed a sense of self-growth and self-enhancement by attending regular team meetings where church members “help each other with spiritual self-cultivation, talk about challenges, share life experiences in a more focused way, unlike the usual chitty chats.” Betty described the Bible as a “miraculous book” that continued to “inspire, encourage, and comfort” her at the time when she felt stuck. She shared that her worldview drastically changed after studying verses in the Bible. For instance, one critical change was her now strong adherence to her role as a devoted wife and mother (demonstrated in the section entitled role adherence), as opposed to feeling resentful for her sacrifice. The Bible served as an unbiased and trustworthy guide to which Betty repeatedly turned for enlightenment.

Having faith helped strengthen the bond between couples. Amy shared, “my husband and I have the same faith, and we abide by the doctrines. We know our responsibilities for each other, and we know how to maintain our family.” Furthermore, having faith helped them cope with uncertainty and increased their tolerance of not having control over long distance couple relationships. May eloquently indicated:

Our faith is like a harbour for the family. It helped ground me. In terms of couple’s relationship.... it’s not realistic to think that the bond between two people will always exist. That sense of relationship insecurity is going to be there to some extent. Instead of pressuring your partner with unrealistic expectations, why not relay them to God? You can give God any complaints, worries, or whatever chaotic feelings you have. *He* will take whatever garbage you have.

Three participants who contributed critical incidents to the role adherence category also

endorsed having a spiritual anchor. These participants said that they naturally appreciated the experience of being a mother, and their Christian belief provided guidelines for performing their role. For example, Betty said that by studying the Bible, she learned “women ought to serve others with love, patience, and self-control.” Therefore, when reflecting on her role in the family context, she came to realize that to serve means “to devote myself without any reservations to my husband and child.” May and Amy both said that because of their Christian belief, they viewed their children as God’s gifts to them, therefore, they recognized “I don’t have the ownership of my children.” Taking good care of their children was thus serving the God. These examples role adherence was not in and of itself merely an outcome of their religious belief, but it is sustained and reinforced by their religious belief.

Besides psychological support, the religious community also offers pragmatic assistance.

May noted:

There are many church members with diverse professional backgrounds, and they can provide practical assistance for one another. My experience has been that every church member is willing to do their best to help others in need. After all, one person has only very minimal power, but one can gain incredible strength from a caring community.

Diane’s church offered immediate help when she was hospitalized for days due to an acute health condition: “my bishop came to visit me in the hospital, and my friends at church cooked meals for me—it was such a strong moral support; other times I visited other church members when they were ill. I can be a receiver and a giver.”

When she first arrived in Canada and desperately needed a part-time job, Betty was offered a position at her church. Not only did the income release her from financial distress, the church members took turns to help her with child-caring when she was at work on the weekends, which she also much appreciated.

The church and Buddhist temple also served as an educational environment for the mothers and their children. Mothers regarded these religious institutions as an aid to their parenting role. For example, Lisa referred to Buddhist teaching and philosophy to assist her in teaching and monitoring children's behavioural conduct:

My children and I volunteered at the temple every Sunday. I wanted to expose them to an environment that is filled with kindness. The master there also teaches them important life lessons such as filial piety and treating other people nicely.

On the other hand, Diane shared that her children participated in a variety of activities they otherwise wouldn't have had the opportunity to partake in had it not been coordinated by the church:

They learned about the Gospel and leadership; they went camping, offered community services, like laying sod for church members, all of which was something we wouldn't have had many opportunities to do in our daily life. I also appreciated that we went to an English-speaking church. It was a bonus because my children gained an opportunity to practice their English more. After all, not all Chinese children got to speak English after school.

For the participants, religion goes beyond worshipping the transcendent (e.g., God, Buddha) or performing the ritual. It becomes their spiritual anchor by connecting them with the transcendent, with themselves, and with a social community. Accompanying the participants' immigration and transnational family life is uncertainty and the necessity to adapt to changes, thus the certainty of religion may bring them a sense of control and comfort. Moreover, it appears that the participants engaged in a meaning making process by applying the religious teaching to their day to day living experience. In so doing, their values and sense of self become consolidated. Their embedment to the local society is facilitated by their membership in the local religious community.

Intra-personal wish list. Three mothers contributed to the wish items under the intra-personal area. All participants viewed children's college entrance as the finish line of their child-centred life. The theme that emerged from the conversations about these plans was that they were looking forward to the day when they can finally do something for themselves.

Olivia said, "after my children grow up and become independent, I would like to take a long vacation." Diane indicated, "I want to move back home so that I can access medical care I need more promptly." Finally, Nadia wished that she could find a suitable job for herself.

Area II: Family Process

This area demonstrated the relationship, communication, and dynamics between the participants and other family members, including their husbands, children, and extended family. Participants spoke about how these factors supported or disappointed them as they played the primary parenting role. Three hindering, three helping categories, and two wish list categories were grouped into this area.

Family process hindering categories. Three hindering categories emerged. They were (a) distant couple's relationship, (b) unmet parental expectations, and (c) dealing with teenagers.

(a) *Distant couple's relationship (8 CIs, N=7, 47% endorsement rate).* This category illustrated both geographical and psychological distance between the participants and their husbands. Participants who endorsed this category had experienced their husbands as physically and/or emotionally unavailable. Critical incidents in this category revealed that some participants' husbands were often absent in the family life or participated very minimally in the childrearing process.

That their husbands are physically out of reach due to the geographic distance led three participants to worry about their marital relationship. Betty used the Chinese proverb, "husband

is not husband if he is not within two meters” [丈夫要一丈之內才是丈夫] to express her insecurity. Despite frequent contacts via international phone calls, or through other telecommunication methods, the couple’s physical absence in each other’s life created psychological distance. “He’s at best an assisting role because he’s too far away. He can’t help much about our life here other than calling us once a week,” said Irene; “Many people refer to us as pseudo-single mothers. Because my husband is not here, he doesn’t quite understand what we are going through every day or our emotional ups and downs,” noted Fiona.

While the mother may try to keep her husband informed about her life in Canada, this effort may not be reciprocated. For example, Betty shared that she “feels disconnected from him” due to her husband’s disengagement. She expressed feeling insecure about her marital relationship:

It just seems that we have nothing in common in our lives at all...sometimes I try to tell him about my life here, but he seems indifferent...we can’t even find a common topic to talk about...I don’t even know if he’s in a good mood, if he eats well, what he’s been up to, or if he’s doing something I wish he wouldn’t.

Similarly, Fiona was not optimistic about the maintenance of her marriage:

If you have a fight with your husband, it can be promptly made up if you are both in Taiwan. Now you are a Pacific Ocean apart, it’s going to take a very long time to repair any relationship cracks. Sure, we may be able to rely on faith and trust, but they are intangible...all you can do is to accept that there is a worst-case scenario, that the family could fall apart.

Although the men’s emotional unavailability can be attributed to the geographical distance, two mothers acknowledged that it could also be that their husbands were struggling with their

own emotional challenges. Betty did not think that she could expect her husband's support because:

My husband has said that it is hard for him to be alone in Taiwan, and that he is also lonely...he expects me to understand his loneliness, and comfort him, which makes it even harder for me to ask for emotional support from him.

Olivia also shared that her husband's mental health issues almost cost them their marriage:

I started to notice that he was a bit depressed and having poor sleep. And out of nowhere he said he wanted a divorce! I later learned that it might have been a symptom of depression, but at the time I just thought "are you kidding me?! I gave birth to our three children, and now you're telling me that you don't want me anymore?" It made no sense, so I became quite depressed too.

At least four participants talked about their husbands' absence as a parent. Their absence caused the mothers to lose trust in the father's capacity to effectively help with parenting, so the mothers stopped asking. Fiona recalled a disappointing experience:

My husband didn't understand my bitterness. He didn't think that he could be helpful from afar, and he was not interested in listening to me talk about my suffering at all. That's why I had to carry the burden on my own.

Betty also remarked on her husband's detachment:

There were times when I got so irritated by my son... I told my husband that I didn't care anymore, and I wanted to move back home. The response from him was, 'it was your choice to go to Canada.' He would never console me nor empathize with me. It would have been nice to hear him say, 'poor thing, just ignore him,' but instead, he'd either say nothing, or coldly reminded me that 'it was your choice.'

In Gloria's case, she avoided telling her husband about her conflicts with her daughter,

believing that he would react negatively:

If I told him about the fight, he'd be very irritated. He'd only be upset with us. Not only that there is nothing he could do to resolve the problem even if I told him, but I'd be turning a drama between two people into that among three...I would never tell him. I'd rather try to resolve it on my own.

In contrast, Diane described how her husband prioritized relationship harmony with their children as opposed to helping her discipline them:

My husband plays completely useless role in parenting. For example, he'd snap at me if he's not happy with what I told him about things happening in our children's school or their performances. If I ask him to talk to our sons directly, he would take his time to 'be mentally prepared.' And he is always nice and gentle with them. He always begins with chit-chat and concludes by telling them to study hard and listen to your mother. Well...that means the ball is passed on to me yet again.

Finally, Eve shared her friend's experience which underscored the mother's pressure of being solely responsible for their children's development:

My friend's husband is 180 cm tall, but her son is 178 cm. He has repeatedly asked her why their son isn't growing taller. Gosh! Why does her husband have to keep nagging her about this? She is doing her best...I can appreciate that this may be his way to show his caring, but it is pressure for the mother. This kind of expectation turns a supposedly non-issue into a problem. Mothers here are under all kinds of pressure. My husband told me not to give myself too much pressure, but it is hard not to.

The critical incidents described in this category revealed that the participants experienced great isolation and stress in carrying out their family role. As a spouse, the participants expressed a sense of powerlessness in the relationship maintenance with their husbands. As a parent, they

realized that the father of their children is not necessarily an ally that they are “on their own.” In Diane and Eve’s cases, the fathers only performed lip services in that they expressed their expectations without providing tangible help. Consequently, fathers’ caring for the children sometimes becomes pressure for the mothers.

(b) Unmet parental expectations (11 CIs, N=5, 33% endorsement rate). This category indicated the discrepancy between mothers’ parental expectations and their children’s actual performances. Critical incidents included children’s undesirable or unsatisfactory conduct and behaviours or/and academic outcomes. Illustrated in this category are five mothers’ experience with their children’s disrespectful or hostile attitudes, passive attitudes and learning styles, unsatisfactory academic performances, and worrisome friendships. These performances did not meet the participant’s expectations for their children, which led to worries, disappointment, frustrations, and helplessness. The discrepancy between parental expectations and children’s performances also resulted in parent-child conflicts.

Children’s lack of gratitude. Three mothers talked about their disappointment when the children took parents’ devotion to them for granted. For example, Amy expressed her frustration when her daughter asked her to go out and buy stationary for her without offering to join her, “I was infuriated. I told her either she came with me, or she’d have no stationary to use. You don’t get to summon your mother when you need her and dismiss her when you don’t; your mother is not your maid who takes order from you.”

As well, Betty did not appreciate her son’s ignorance of his privilege:

He didn’t understand the concept of gratitude. He basically took everything my husband and I provided for him for granted. When I saw him not cherish his time or his belongings, or when he was being verbally disrespectful, I couldn’t help but ask myself ‘what on earth did I do this for?’

Passive attitudes and learning styles. Betty spoke about her frustration recognizing that she and her son have “different values, personal style, and habits.” She described herself as an organized and diligent person, whereas her son tends to be “chiller — he either forgets about what he should do, or waits till the last minute, unlike me, I always plan ahead.” This difference led to constant struggles. She found herself having to learn more effective ways to communicate with her son.

Judy expressed impatience about her daughter’s lack of proactivity:

She doesn’t do her best most of the time...I wanted to hold her accountable for everything she does...to have a sense of responsibility. You ought to do your best, but she doesn’t agree with me. I think if something takes 100 percent of my effort to do it well, I’d devote 100 percent of my effort. When you have the capacity, you must live up to it, but she settles with just half of it. Sure, if you don’t have the capacity, there’s no point for me to push you, but I know you can, so it’s frustrating that she doesn’t do it at all.

Dissatisfactory academic performance. Children’s academic performance was considered a reflection of whether the participants successfully fulfil their role as a good mother. As Diane said, “our children’s achievements are our credits.” Eve also noted, “whether our children get into the university and get good grades is basically the only criteria to evaluate if we fulfil our obligation as a mother.” Therefore, when their children underperformed, the participants tended to feel stressed, embarrassed, or ashamed.

The mother’s dissatisfaction for the children’s academic performance may be based on their grades or a comparison with students, such as Diane who had financially invested a lot in her son’s English education before they immigrated to Canada, however, he was placed in a lower level English class after arriving in Canada. She was particularly frustrated when she compared her son with her friend’s child:

Her child is gifted. He reads two book chapters every night even when he was still in preschool or kindergarten...knowing that gave me much pressure, especially when I think about my son's ESL level, and his grades were five C's and two B's. I was so desperate that at some point I was even thinking about moving back to Taiwan.

Nevertheless, a dialogue between Diane and her son showed that the pressure fell on both of their shoulders:

Son (with tears): I'm also upset every time I show you my report card; I feel a lot of pressure.

Diane: Son, I'm also bearing a lot of pressure! How would I answer to your ancestors?

Traditionally, an individual's success brings glory to the family. When Diane talked about not knowing how to answer to the ancestors, she inferred embarrassment and shame.

Worrisome friendship. Two mothers talked about their concerns about their children's friend circle, especially when their friends' behaviours are deviant from what the mother would approve for their children, or when their friends' family upbringing and values appeared different from their own.

For example, Judy disliked one of her daughter's friends, whose father "is unemployed most of the time and a single parent. I can't say he's not good but he's not Chinese, so it's just that a lot of his values are not quite the same as mine; the girl doesn't have much manners—she never looks me in the eye when talking to me, and she never says hello. This is different from what I have taught my daughter when meeting other parents."

For Gloria, it would have been beneficial to become friends with the parents of her daughter's friends because they can exchange information and look out for one another's

children. Therefore, when her daughter became friends with a “parachute child³” whose parents were not in Canada, Gloria thought it was problematic:

If I help look after her—which I often do, like taking her out and paying for things—and her parents are around, at least they would see my contribution, but her parents aren’t even here! Should anything happen to her while she hangs out with us, I don’t want to take the blame, plus I already have too much on my plate.

Furthermore, the more time her daughter spent with this friend, the greater Gloria’s distress: “I wonder if she deliberately hangs out with that kid, just so she may feel freer and because it’s easier to keep secrets from me.”

The other concern both Gloria and Judy both had was their daughters’ making friends with boys. Judy said, “I can’t help but thinking about issues with teenage pregnancy. Chinese parents tend to take this issue more seriously. We are relatively more conservative than Western families in this regard...and it’s a reflection of your family education.” Gloria noticed that her daughter had more boyfriends than girlfriends and it bothered her:

[First,] I’m afraid she may go astray...I think she should prioritize making friends with girls. I’m not saying that she is involved in anything bad; and talking to boys doesn’t mean

³ Parachute children are separated from the parents to reside abroad with (a) relatives or parents’ friends, (b) paid legal guardians/landlords/caregiver, (c) siblings or by themselves, or (d) other students in a boarding school or a private boarding home. This phenomenon emerged in the 1980’s and continued to grow in the U.S. and in Canada. The top reason why these children were sent abroad was for better education opportunities. Other reasons may include political uncertainty, avoiding military duty (Taiwan and South Korea), and separating children from bad influences (Hong Kong). The majority of parachute children come from Taiwan, China, and South Korea. Scholars found that they enjoy more freedom, less adult supervision, more allowance than their immigrant peers who immigrated with their parents. Although some parachute children demonstrate high maturity level and good coping skills; stress of immigration, loneliness, homesickness, alienation, frustration, anger, and problematic behaviours (e.g., substance abuse, gambling) are also common experience of parachute children (Tsong & Liu, 2009).

that it's going to become a problem, but it's not a great start...Chinese parents tend to think that boys shouldn't become girls' major social groups. [Moreover,] there wouldn't be a common language between parents of boys and me.

The participants preferred their children making friends with those whose family background and values were alike, and with those of the same gender. When this was not the case, the participants worried that their children might be negatively influenced, which could cause undesirable outcomes (e.g., teenage romance, misconduct, academic failure). Unfortunately, their judgements or criticism of their children's friends tended to meet resistance as well as children's emotional withdrawal.

(c) Dealing with teenagers (11CIs, N=7, 47% endorsement rate). This category concerned the participants' struggle to communicate with their teenage children, and difficulties to persuade their children to follow their guidance. As children entering adolescence, participants found themselves facing another adjustment task. Nine participants immigrated with at least one child under the age of ten; seven of them recalled increased parenting difficulties as these children grew into teenagers. Betty expressed feeling lost as she experienced her son's drastic change:

He used to be so clingy, and he would tell me all kinds of jokes, share everything that had happened at school, but now he is totally silent! He hardly is saying anything... we barely talk to each other now, except that the other day I asked him why he seemed upset, and he told me he was just tired. This dynamic is so awkward.

She added her desire to go back in time, "I don't think I've changed but he has indeed, continually. As of now I couldn't find the way to take us back to where we were before, the time when we were still like good friends." This change required her to reconstruct her way of interacting with her child. She said she found herself walking on egg shells and being vigilant

about how she should approach communicating with her son (分寸拿捏). Without her husband's presence, "I feel like a log bridge in danger of collapsing...with one side hanging onto my child, and the other side onto my husband. I don't feel secure about either side. I want to do something, but I don't know what. I just have been dangling and dangling."

Unlike Betty who experienced little interactions with her son, Fiona reported that she and her son "fight almost every day" for issues ranging from his school performances, purchase of a luxurious cellphone, and his computer use. She asked, "how can I help him transition from a little boy to a teenager without a father figure?"

Diane learned her son had grown up and she no longer had full authority over him after one incident in which he outsmarted her:

We had a fight and I told him to get out of my car, so he did. What I didn't realize was that he had smuggled my keys away, so when I got home I wasn't able to enter our house! I ended up becoming the person who couldn't go home, but he could. At that moment, I felt so ashamed! I didn't realize he had all grown up until then...he is so smart, and he uses his cleverness to trick me. I felt like a loser (ha ha).

Similarly, Judy found herself constantly in conflict with her daughter, which led to ineffective communication outcomes:

She went against [me] all the time, and she'd say very negative things, which made me very unhappy...she would do completely the opposite of what you asked her to do, so our relationship was quite tense last year. Sometimes I'd mindlessly say something hurtful like, 'I want nothing to do with you if you continue to behave this way...although she'd then listen to me, I know it still upset her.

Gloria also expressed her frustration regarding conflicts with her daughter. She described her daughter as rebellious and ungrateful: she hardly followed Gloria's guidance or requests. Feeling drained, she said, "her behaviours upset me so much that I'm not sure if I still love her anymore." The following quote depicts her feeling of helplessness and sorrow:

I felt that my devotion for my friends are reciprocated, but all I get from my daughter is hurt. I know that sometimes my attitude towards her is not good, but it's because of resentment, deep resentment which creates a vicious cycle. I think a mother's love should be unconditional, but now I feel like my love is conditional.

Mothers experienced a shift in their relationship with their children when their children entered adolescence. While their children began to express autonomy and claimed their independence, the mothers experienced a loss of power and control. As conflicts and arguments increased and intensified, mothers reported experiencing a wide range of difficult emotions, such as frustration, disbelief, powerlessness, disappointment, hurt, worry, and self-doubt.

Family process helping categories. Three helping categories emerged. They were (a) children's development and growth, (b) family support, and (c) effective communication.

(a) Children's development and growth (15CIs, N=11, 73% endorsement rate). This category indicated that it helped the mothers cope with lone parenting when the children successfully adapted to school and living environment, became more mature, and demonstrated socially and culturally desirable conduct, and/or academic performance.

Eleven participants contributed critical incidents to this category. Mothers expressed pride and joy as they described their children's positive behaviours. Their children's maturity and growth gave them a sense of reward and validation, which reinforced their willingness to devote themselves to their children. Because their children achieved desirable outcomes, mothers also found their sacrifice worthwhile, and the stress of parenting alone endurable. The following

quotes exemplified the development and growth that participants were pleased to see. First, children's transformation and maturity:

My oldest son now helps with the house chores without me having to ask. His thoughtfulness makes me very happy. I wouldn't have dreamt for him to get to this level. He clearly understands how much there is on my plate. (Olivia)

He's grown up a lot, from a little boy to a thoughtful young man. He helps with everything. If we are taking a family trip, it would be him that books the tickets and the hotel, and he'd drive us around. (Nadia)

And children being responsible and self-disciplined:

He has become self-disciplined and spontaneous; he now manages his own study plans and becomes more organized; he has made considerable progress that everyone in his school can see. We are moving towards our goal. Our suffering has now paid off. (Fiona)

I never worry about my daughter's academic performance. She has a regular routine for doing homework, so she saved me a lot of time and energy. I feel very lucky. I don't have to say a word and she would do her homework, practice her piano on her own. All I need to do was to cook—easy! (Amy)

Furthermore, children's caring for the mother:

She called and asked me why I haven't come home. I told her I was sorry for being harsh on her, and she just said, 'don't worry about it; just come home.' I was so moved because I realized she does care for me...if she hadn't called, I would still be wandering around and feeling sad. (Irene)

Now that my children have grown up they gradually became my support. In the past, the support was one way, from me, and now it is two ways. I strengthened them in the past and now I am strengthened by them. (Diane)

(b) Family support (18 CIs, N=9, 60% endorsement rate). This category means physical support, companionship, moral and emotional support that mothers received from their husband or extended family. Family support helps the mother cope with difficult emotions and defeat the feeling of aloneness. It is a safety net and a shelter that participants know that they can reach out for.

Support from other family members. Eve appreciated her sister's empathic ears: "I had a rough time when I first arrived, and my sister was a great emotional support. She'd cry with me over the phone, and that was all I needed, you know, someone who'd listen." May was grateful for her parents-in-law who live with her husband back home, whose presence compensates May and their children's absence:

Sometimes I can't help but wonder how sad it would be if my husband lived alone. Even though it is still sad that his wife and children are not around, at least we're lucky enough to have his parents be there for him. How fortunate it is that he has someone who cooks for him, does his laundry and opens the door for him when he comes home.

Support from the husband. Amy appreciated her husband's unconditional support, "he never blames me for anything, never! He is also very generous to me, and that's all I need. Because of him, I don't have much to worry about, so I can concentrate on raising our child." Mothers expressed much relief and gratitude when fathers made the effort to participate in parenting. Gloria said that when her husband visited, "he'd help with house chores, cook, and clean the house. This small detail shows that he cares about our family and he is seriously devoted to us, otherwise he could have abandoned us." Indeed, actions speak louder than words, Kate also appreciated her husband's gradual shift towards prioritizing the family over his career:

My husband used to focus more on work than family, like most Chinese fathers. In recent years he has shifted his focus from business to family, recognizing that our son has grown

older and needs his father's company more, so he goes to scuba diving, surfing, skiing with our son, you know, activities guys do. He does his best to come to visit as often as possible to make up for his absence.

Even though physical presence may be difficult for some fathers, virtual participation was much appreciated. For example, Nadia's husband used technology to engage in the education of their children:

My husband sends instant messages or videos every day, mostly telling our son that he has grown up and that he should share household responsibilities. He told our son that he must understand the challenges I undertook as a single parent here, and that I had given up my career to move here. He told our son to be considerate of me.

Likewise, although Hazel's husband can't visit them frequently, he made himself available as much as he could:

He's quite involved in our children's education. His English is better than mine, so if there's anything that needs to be communicated with my children's school, he's the one who emails the teachers. If he happens to be here, it is him that goes to the meetings with the teachers.

Parenting consistency is another form of support. Kate believed that because both she and her husband's family value education, their children grow up knowing that education is important. Celine and her husband both adhere to the family values that "everyone needs to have a purpose," so they "practice what we preach to our children, that is if my husband finishes a task, he'd tell our children, such that they know their father is working hard and not being lazy." She also referred to the children's grandparents, who are also hard working and perseverant, as the role models of the family. Because the family shares common values, Celine feels that the family bond transcends the geographic separation. Thus, she knows that there is always a safety net that she could fall back on.

Nadia said that she and her husband are “adamant about being consistent in parenting.” She spelled out her principle clearly:

I told my husband and my child’s grandparents that no one can intervene when I’m disciplining my children. If they think I’m wrong, they can give me the feedback in private and I would apologize if I am indeed wrong. Therefore, my child knows that it is mom who sets the rule and if he violates the rules, no one would be on his side, so he won’t be looking for loopholes and manipulate us.

(c) *Effective communication (12 CIs, N=6, 40% endorsement rate)*. This category indicated honest and transparent mother-child communications. According to the participants who endorsed this category, an effective communication process involved the mother’s use of open, non-judgemental, and empathetic attitudes when interacting with their children and treating their children with respect and trust. The outcomes were that they received the same treatment from their children and they never had to worry about their children withholding secrets from them.

Amy described mutual trust she and her daughter had for each other. She attributed this to rapport and to a non-judgmental and supportive communication style:

She doesn’t hide anything from me and tells me everything. I think my parenting style helps because I repeatedly assure her that she can tell me anything...I told her that whatever it is, I will not judge her because if I judge her she’d be more reserved in telling me stuff. I assure her that what’s important for me is that if she gets into any kind of trouble, I want her to know that I will support her. I don’t want her to deal with it on her own because it can be hard. Meanwhile, I tell her everything too. I don’t keep anything from her.

Nadia highlighted being empathic and providing her son with assurance and validation. She said, “my son is quite open to me,” and described her approach:

If he is a fragile kid, you must encourage him; if he's being overly ambitious, you must guide him with gentle challenges without attacking his self-esteem. Parents must try to understand where their children are coming from. For example, my son called me today and told me he didn't do well in an exam, and he's feeling confused and doubting himself. I just told him that I don't want him to pressure himself too much. I reassured him that all we want is for him to be healthy and well.

When communicating expectations, mothers found it helpful to be gentle, reasonable and respectful. For example, Kate talked about avoiding imposing her values onto her child to allow him space for self-exploration:

I do have my agenda for shaping his character and values, like what kind of adult he should become. These goals are clear for me, but I can't just impose my expectations on him. I never force him. Instead, I do my best to offer him the opportunities to try out different experiences, as long as he expresses an interest.

Nadia included her son in major decision-making processes, treating him as an adult. She spoke about discussing buying real estate in Canada. The outcome of such a discussion was that "he became more aware of his responsibility, so that he has been quite mindful of our living expenses here."

I told him I preferred a house, but we could at best afford the mortgage for 10 years. I told him we could buy a house if he is willing to help pay the loans after he starts working; otherwise, we'd buy a condo. He said he would...actually, I wasn't gonna let him pay the mortgage, but I think it is important to make him aware of the responsibility.

Mothers' conversations with their children frequently involve teaching and instilling expectations. It was also helpful for mothers to set clear boundaries and be assertive. For

example, Fiona was transparent with her children when it comes to communicating their financial situations. She talked to them about their expenses and how they managed the money. Her approach was to hold the children accountable for their spending, and to teach them not to take money for granted. When her lessons were met with resistance, she persisted:

He told me he's the only person that doesn't even have a phone. He probably thought because everyone has it, it must mean that buying one is not that big of a deal. I reasoned with him [and] I gave him the facts, in terms of how much it costs to buy one and how much the phone service costs. I made it clear that I didn't have the budget, and there's no place for negotiation.

Celine also found that disagreements are inevitable, but the communication process can be a learning opportunity for both her children and her:

My son has been nagging me for months about wanting to move to the neighbourhood closer to his friends. My response to that is not to engage with him. I told him my stance and told him that the reality is that he needs to go to the high school in our current neighbourhood. He can continue to nag all he wants, but my principle is clear. I told him moving is not an option. I told him that I hear that he will miss his friends, and I understand it's going to take some work for him to develop a new social group, but he will get over it.

Another type of communication enhances family ties by connecting the father from afar.

Both May and Amy said they felt well supported and secure in their relationship with their husbands because they tell them everything. Amy's quote illustrates this, "I tell my husband everything that's going on with us here, like if my daughter gets sick or something like that. Some people have said that I shouldn't burden him, but I disagree. I think he has the right to know. And I don't assume that I can handle everything by myself, so he should stay informed."

Family process wish Lists. The wish items were grouped into two categories: (a) expectations for children, and (b) restoration of relationships.

(a) Expectations for children. Seven participants talked about their future-oriented expectations for their children. Irene said, “I just want him to be like a normal person who dresses nicely and can take care of himself.” Hazel focused on a farther future, recognizing that there is a limit of what she and her husband can provide for their children. She stated, “I can’t guarantee that I can provide my children with lifelong wealth. Therefore, I want them to develop the ability to support themselves.” Likewise, Fiona told her son, “you need to work hard to get what you want, rather than asking for it from your parents...what we have right now was achieved with hard work by [your] father and myself, not from [your] grandparents.” Another mother, Olivia did not ask for much, “all I ask is for them to not cause troubles for the society, that they can respect other people, have friends, and a stable job.” Additionally, she privileged her children’s acquisition of English as part of their career preparation, over other skills:

I want them to forget Mandarin and cultivate their English ability at present because I can help them with Mandarin if needed in the future. I don’t want them to end up not mastering either language. I don’t want them to not master English and end up in a mundane university.

In general, these mothers expected their children to become independent, self-reliant adults who know their responsibilities and obligations for themselves and others. Interestingly, Kate spoke about different expectations she had for her daughter and son:

I think it’d be great if [my daughter] can have a family where she can be a good mother and wife. Although, if she ends up not having a family, she could probably still be happy being on her own. Therefore, there is no need for her to push herself too hard. On the other hand, I do have different expectations for my son. I believe that it is difficult to sustain a family without a responsible man. I think my son has responsibilities for the society...my son must

provide for his family after he's married. Therefore, he must study hard now, so that he will have the capacity to get married and provide for his future family. He knows that we expect him to go to the university, followed by getting a master's degree and then a doctorate.

There's nothing to be negotiated. This is his obligation.

Mothers' expectations for their children's future also guided their parenting approaches. For instance, some focused on inspiring their children with their own experiences (e.g., Hazel and Fiona); some set clear guidelines for their children, including spelling out gender role differences (i.e. Kate) and prioritizing learning English (i.e. Olivia).

(b) Restoration of relationships. Three items contributed by three mothers were grouped under this category. Two mothers, Irene and Gloria expressed difficulties in maintaining good relationship with their children. Thus, one of the items they indicated on their wish list was to restore their relationship with their children. Irene wished for her son's gratitude towards her, "he doesn't understand how much you sacrifice for him, so that he doesn't have any gratitude...I don't think he's grateful for my sacrifice because I feel it from the way he talks and acts. I wish he could understand."

Gloria wished she and her daughter could find their way back to sharing a positive and loving bond:

My biggest wish is for my relationship with my daughter to be restored. When I see other mothers and their little kids, I see such a pure relationship...there's no residuals of any hurt. I really hope that my daughter and I go back in time when nothing negative happened.

Fiona, on the other hand, remarked her wish to reunite with her husband as soon as her oldest son goes to college:

The aspect of my marital relationship leaves my life incomplete, like there is a hole; that's why I set a timeline of eight years for this family arrangement. I told my children that I'll be

old after eight years, and that will be the time that I'm going home to be with their father. I told them that that is my next life goal.

Area III Social Interactions

This area demonstrated how participants' interpersonal relationships and involvement in the local communities influenced their sense of belonging, connectedness to the local workforce, and self-confidence. One hindering category and two helping categories emerged in this area.

Social interactions hindering category. Narrow social circle (7 CI's, N=6, 40% endorsement rate) was marked by family-oriented and children-centered social networks that predominantly consisted of immigrant mothers. This was the only category that emerged for hindering critical incidents under the area of social interactions. The participants who endorsed this category reported that their social connection was primarily limited to the mothers of their children's friends, friends' friends who are also housewives, or other mothers they met in ESL classes. Consequently, their friendship circles tend to be ethnically and socioeconomically homogenous.

Three mothers mentioned that being involved only in such a social network hindered the opportunity for them to become connected with the local workforce, which would have been beneficial for them and their children. For example, after her son had left home for college, Nadia wished to establish her own career locally, however, she felt that she did not have helpful social connections: "all of my friends are mothers like me [in a transnational family]! My life has not expanded at all, and I'm stuck in this narrowed circle." Similarly, Diane and Hazel said they would have liked to know some working professionals locally, so that they could be helpful in assisting their children to find co-op opportunities.

The other problem with narrow social circles was that participants refrained from seeking emotional support from their friends because they did not want to become their friends' burden;

they also doubted that their friends could be of any help. This assumption was based on their own experience being the solo parent in the transnational family arrangement. The following quotes demonstrates their reservations:

Not everyone would help you! I've heard many stories like that. Just because you are friends with someone, doesn't mean that you'd get help when you need it. (Amy)

I guess I don't feel that close to my friends even though we are close enough in some respect. Sometimes I wonder who would be willing to sit down and listen when really everyone is dealing with their own issues? I also don't like to trouble other people with my own baggage. (Irene)

Loneliness is not something that can be tapered by just chatting with friends...if I tell my friends...there's really nothing they can do. They can't help me. (Olivia)

Social interactions helping categories. Two categories emerged for this area, they are (a) friendship and (b) community involvement.

(a) Friendship (14 CIs, N=10, 67% endorsement rates). Friendships as a helping category illustrates not just *what* the participants' friends have done for them, but it also demonstrates *how* these supports were delivered, received and circulated. In terms of the *what* component, ten participants remarked on the importance of being able to receive help and support from trusted friends and neighbors. The support and assistance they spoke about largely regarded pragmatic issues which helped alleviate their distress from multitasking.

One of the tasks was immigration settlement: "my friend provided lodging when I first landed and showed me around (Diane), "my friend helped me a lot when I was looking for a house to buy and getting it ready to live in (Olivia)." Another was parenting ideas from their friends, "I observed how my friends interact with their teenage children, so that I can try some of their communication strategies on my children (May)," or "I often consult my friends with

parenting tips because her children are very successful academically (Olivia).” Participants also exchanged information ranging from classes, extra-curricular activities for children, good tutors, and shopping deals.

Friends were particularly helpful when mothers needed extra assistance for childcare. For instance, Betty and Judy’s friends helped them look after their children occasionally when their time was constrained by professional commitments; Amy had an acute medical condition one night, so she had to ask her friend to take her to the hospital, who then stayed and looked after her daughter when she was receiving the treatment. Because of the absence of immediate assistance from their husbands and family, it was of immense help for the mothers to have a circle of reliable and trustworthy friends.

Three mothers contributed to the *how* component. First, the quality of friendships was prioritized over quantity. Amy said, “I think that you can meet lots of people and get to know many acquaintances, but at the end of the day, friends that really matter are those who can have a heart-to-heart with you.” Celine also remarked, “I don’t need many friends, but it is helpful to have friends who can offer various kinds of help.” She relayed:

I need a few very good friends, so that when I have troubles I can turn to the right person for help. For example, I have one friend who’s very resourceful and she’s good at helping me find all kinds of information, like how to fix the leak in the house; I also have friends who I can just chit chat without the pressure of having to do anything fancy together.

The *how* also consisted of friends’ understanding of one another’s capacity and willingness to seek help and/or offer mutual support. May’s insight, below, demonstrated her appreciation for friendships:

You must know that you have very minimal power being alone here, so you need good neighbours and friends...after getting to know many people as years go by, we can usually

get a good sense of friends' characteristics and how we get along with each other. You'd know who can help you with what task. I encourage everyone to reach out for help when help is needed. You must ask! If your friend can help you, then it's great; if not, you could still appreciate their understanding... sometimes a trouble can be very chaotic, and talking about it with friends can help put things into perspectives. Reaching out for help is so much better than trying to handle it alone and taking the risk of messing things up even further.

(b) Community involvement (10 CIs, N=8, 53% endorsement rate). This category included participants' active participation in recreational, volunteering or educational activities. Eight mothers endorsed this category. All of them routinely participated in activities beyond household matters and childcare. For example, they attended ESL courses or other community workshops, and/or attended religious services or gatherings. These involvements generally have three functions. First, they helped mothers become familiar with the local culture and lifestyle; pragmatically, these activities helped them gain practical information and knowledge that would help them cope with their new lives in Canada. In addition, they established a broader social network by getting to know different people through a variety of activities.

These mothers also signed their children up for activities that taught their children skills the mothers could not teach them, such as athletic sports and outdoor activities such as camping or gardening. These opportunities exposed them and their children to socio-cultural learning so that they were able to adjust more smoothly.

Two mothers mentioned that volunteering helped improve their self-confidence and put them in a positive mood. For example, Lisa enjoyed volunteering at a Buddhist temple with her daughters every week: "I like to interact with people at the temple to absorb some positive energy; also, to bath ourselves in Buddhist good vibes." The other mother, Gloria, was quite active in her daughter's school by "[being] the representative of the parent committee at my

daughter's school. I also undertake other responsibilities, including examining and changing lunch menus for students, and so on...I wanted to get involved and help newcomers as well." This involvement helped her feel that she was "being part of something and making contributions to the community."

Area IV Extra-personal conditions and resources

This area summarizes participants' descriptions of their experience interacting with external situations. It encompasses 1 hindering and 2 helping categories, and 5 wish list categories.

Extra-personal conditions and resources hindering category. Confronting cultural barriers (10 CIs, N=9 60% endorsement rate) was the only hindering category under the area of extra-personal conditions and resources. In this category, nine participants shared their struggles with language barriers and navigating unfamiliar educational and legal practices.

Language gap. Not having English language proficiency was one of the most common barriers. Three participants indicated the lack of language proficiency affects their self- and parental-efficacy. Nadia talked about an incident when she was pulled over by a police officer as she was driving on her way to pick up her son from an after-school lesson. It was about 9:30 at night:

I had no idea why I was pulled over ...I showed him my driver's license and he immediately turned straight-faced. He kept talking until he realized that I didn't understand a thing he said, and then he said 'friends' —good thing I understood that one—so I thought he wanted me to call a friend...it took me a while to think of whom to call...but they didn't pick up...I was super nervous, and my hands were shaking.

Fortunately, Nadia managed to reach a neighbour, who then helped her find out the officer was requesting to see Nadia's international driver's license. His facial expression may have become serious because she had inadvertently provided the one that was issued from her home country,

and which was written in Chinese. This experience was stressful not only because of the communication gap, but also because she “never had to deal with a police officer back home.” It also provoked her self-consciousness, “[I] didn’t speak English and it was very embarrassing, considering I am highly educated and my social-economic status back home is not low. I felt embarrassed all the time!”

Eve shared that the language barrier also limited her ability to communicate with her children's school teachers:

You could only use very simple words to communicate with the teachers, and it’s hard to deepen the conversations. These circumstances make me feel uneasy, afraid, and helpless.”

Irene also noted, “sometimes I don’t completely understand notifications or documents the school sent...and I can’t help too much with his learning; I also have no sense of what he is or is not capable of.

For Betty, the challenge manifested itself in her workplace. Before immigration, Betty held a prestige management position in Taiwan, whereas after immigration she acquired a clerical position in a university office. Unfortunately, she was let go without completing the probation period. Betty attributed her loss of employment to mismatching work styles and language barriers:

I tend to be proactive...however, my boss here was someone who just wanted me to follow his orders...for example, he’d give me such a hard time if I went ahead and completed three steps of a five-step task when I was told to only do the first two...I’m the kind of person who would find the best solution to a problem as opposed to asking my boss for instructions... but this was not appreciated, and I had no idea why. And I didn’t know what I did wrong.

She expressed disbelief, frustration, and hurt. “I didn’t even pass the probation. Can you imagine? I had been working in Taiwan for 15 years and my position was only one level lower than the executive manager!”

However, having the language barrier is something Betty couldn’t deny:

...it was quite stressful for me, especially when talking to people with different accents. I had to ask them to repeat what they said, and it always made me feel bad...perhaps I would have been able to adjust had I been given more time, but I wasn’t...so at the end of the day it was probably for the best that I was fired. Even though I recognized this reality, I still suffered from being kicked out of my job...I suffered very much!”

Cultural shock. Six mothers talked about not knowing how and why things work in Canada. As they were trying to build their lives in their new homes, they found themselves surprised, disappointed, frustrated, or intimidated by the cultural differences. Olivia experienced the cultural difference as an employer when she hired someone to help her cook. Her stress increased because her expectations were different from what her employee could offer:

I hired her to cook for me but sometimes she took too much time, so I would ask her to look after my children and let me do the cooking. She refused and said that child-minding does not fit her job description...that’s how I learned that people are strict about job descriptions here. They follow a clear boundary. I mean, if I had to think much about what is an appropriate task for her to do every time I need help, I might as well do it on my own.

Another hindrance observed by some mothers was the discrepancy between the Canadian school culture and that of home. For instance, Judy commented on her disappointment in having less teacher-parent collaboration:

In China, teachers initiate phone calls or texts quite promptly whenever there is an issue with your child...especially regarding their grades; if the child is not doing well, parents

would be asked to meet with the teacher; here on the other hand, teachers don't contact parents regularly...some of the teachers don't even provide their emails...I feel that a lot of things depend more on the parent's [taking initiatives] than on the teachers.

Additionally, the general school atmosphere was said to be "laid-back" and "relaxing."

Four mothers noticed the teachers tend to offer positive feedback and highlight their children's strengths. However, this positivity and absence of recommendations for improvements is incongruent with mothers' expectations. In Lisa's view:

Back home, students are urged to never stop striving for improvements, whereas here they are encouraged to pursue a lifestyle of stability, joy, and contentment. Granted this is a reasonable expectation for a 40-year-old like me, because I've already fought my battle.

Children, however, should be encouraged to work hard so that they can thrive.

Judy also expressed her concern, "my child is not the self-motivated kind, and she's learning from the Canadian culture the concept that life is all about being comfortable, and this atmosphere is particularly prominent in BC." According to Eve, "what bothers me is that I want to know his areas for growth...if the school tells us only the strengths of my children, how do I help him improve?" She expressed her anxiety about failing as a mother:

[Mothers] feel responsible for how our children turn out to be...if we fail, we fail the family name. We'd be so embarrassed that we wouldn't be able to face the entire family given that looking after our children is the only thing we do here! If we fail, we're worthless.

In addition to adjusting to different education styles, Fiona learned a hard lesson not long after she arrived in Canada. In this incident, she was almost accused of child-negligence. One late afternoon, Fiona took her children (ages 12, 7, and 5) to a shopping mall, because they wanted to go to a computer store. Upon their arrival, she thought, "they were very into playing with the devices there, so why don't I make good use of the time and do some quick grocery

shopping right next door.” Although she told her children not to go anywhere, and she did make her way back within 20 minutes, by the time she returned, she was shocked to find that her boys had been surrounded by more than ten people. Among them, the staff of the store, security staff of the mall, police officers, and a social worker. It was because the mall was closing earlier than she had anticipated, and the computer store was cleared before she made her way back for her children. Consequently, the staff had made a child-protection report when they noticed that Fiona’s boys were in the store unaccompanied by any adult. She described her terror:

They were going to take my children! I was terrified and so were my boys. I had to explain that I was a newcomer, and I was basically a single mother here. I begged and begged, and I almost got down on my knees.

Indeed, cultural barriers were something the participants experienced repeatedly in different domains. The experience of attempting to conquer these barriers can be disheartening, particularly when participants’ sense of efficacy is shaken. Next, I will report wish list items that address some of the issues mentioned above.

Extra-personal conditions and resources helping category. Two categories emerged. They were (a) appreciating life in Canada, and (b) financial stability.

(a) Appreciating life in Canada (11 CIs, N=8, 53% endorsement rate). Critical incidents in this category demonstrated that Canada was perceived by the participants as a growth-enhancing and positive living environment for their children. Eight participants contributed 11 critical incidents to this category. These mothers found the quality of life and education in Canada met their expectations and therefore decided “it’s worth it.” They expressed a sense of relief and validation for having immigrated since they have chosen the right environment to raise their children.

Diane spoke about a sense of pure happiness, derived from the experience of admiring the

beauty of nature with her son:

It is beautiful here. Sometimes my son and I would admire the skyline which was just gorgeous; on the day of mid-autumn festival, we went out to admire the moon together, and I felt that it was pure happiness... it was such a blessing that my son and I were able to admire the beautiful scenery side by side.

Lisa shared her contentment as she recalled her first impression of her friendly neighbourhood:

I felt quite content being here. Houses in my neighbourhood looked the same as those in the movies, you know, with low fences as opposed to high walls...and my neighbors were very friendly to me. They came to say hello, asked who I am and wrote cards to welcome us for moving into the neighbourhood. They were all very nice and fond of children; I became well connected with them.

At least five mothers described the education their children were receiving in Canada as less competitive, less stressful and more flexible. This quality is consistent with what drove them to immigrate. Judy particularly appreciated the many educational opportunities one can pursue, because it eases the pressure:

There is always a second chance here in Canada despite your age. Back home opportunities are likely to vanish as soon as the timing has passed, whereas the environment here is relatively less restricted in the context of education. You can pick up education at any age, so there is less pressure on the individual... I appreciate having this flexibility.

Kate observed that her daughter's confidence increased in the less competitive and strength-based learning environment:

There isn't unhealthy competition among students here; it's just that one must do her best to be the best of herself! My daughter's teachers have consistently given her much validation,

telling her that she is good enough and has been good enough, and that really helped increase her confidence.

Eve remarked that students learn to be responsible for their own academic performances:

The academic stress is suffocating back home because students are constantly asked how well you do in the exams. Here, on the contrary, no one asks about your grades, not even your teachers! Students can basically do whatever they want with their study because it is no one else's business...it reduces parents' stress for sure. Here, students are held accountable for their own academic performance. In Taiwan, parents are expected to share that responsibility with their children—if the student doesn't do well in one exam, the teacher will inform the parents and remind them to keep an eye on the children, therefore parents are stressed out, too!

At least four mothers appreciated that grades are not the sole focus of the school education here in Canada. They were pleased that their children can develop more holistically by completing school projects that require integration of different academic skills, and by participating in extra-curricular activities. Eve indicated this variety of learning opportunities would have been less attainable had they stayed in their home countries:

Children hardly have any homework, not much anyway, which is a significant difference from Taiwan. I suppose students are encouraged to be active learners and to be independent here. For example, when they go on a field trip, there wouldn't be a school bus for them; the parents won't be asked to pick up their children at a certain time...children are treated as old enough to develop autonomy and the ability to problem solve.

Diane enjoyed the cultural diversity at their children's school because it helped them develop an open mind:

In the school, my son has good friends from Korea, Hong Kong, and China...it makes a difference for their perspectives and worldview. In Taiwan, it's less likely for them to meet people of other ethnicities, but in Canada they must learn about diversity, including different people's opinions and logic.

As much as mothers did embrace the diverse culture in Canada's schools, three mothers said that they liked there being many Asian students in their children's school. From their perspective, parents from East Asian countries such as Korea, Taiwan, and China are generally like-minded in terms of parental expectations and practices. They believed that children in Asian families tend to demonstrate less behavioural problems and better academic performance compared to their non-Asian peers. For example, it eased Eve's mind that her children attended an Asian-dominant school:

Perhaps due to a lack of understanding, I wasn't sure if [my children] would be negatively influenced by other kids...like being bullied, cursing or teenage sex, just like we often can see on TV or in the movies...teenagers here can be quite open and more self-centred, so it's nice that my children go to a school whose population is approximately 60% Asian.

Likewise, Celine liked that her daughter's teachers are Canadians, but most of the students are Asian. She explained that she preferred Canadian teachers' pedagogy because students were given the opportunity to cultivate a wide range of project management skills, such as organization, communication, and presentation. However, from the stance of motivating children's pursuit of academic success, she favored the Asian style:

Asian parents have higher expectations for their children, and this is in addition to the existing peer pressure among Asian students in the classroom. Consequently, it goes without saying that students are more likely to perform well academically.

(b) Financial stability (6 CIs, N=5, 33% endorsement rate). This included having a reliable source of money, and careful management of the family finance. Five participants contributed to this category.

Having a reliable source of money. Having a reliable source of money gave the mothers a sense of security and let them focus on looking after the children and providing educational and extracurricular resources for them. Three mothers emphasized that having some control over the family money made a difference and this includes managing the family finances or making contributions to the family's income.

Judy managed the family finances and she indicated that having control over the money reinforced her independence because her husband "relies on me more than I do him." Additionally, she works full-time. Not having to depend on her husband for living expenses, she indicated:

Psychologically, it's better to work than doing nothing significant everyday...especially for us who have a high level of education. You are employable, so you can't just rely on your husband's support...because you have self-esteem...if you focus only on your children, it's more likely you'd experience a profound sense of loss someday.

Betty, another mother who was a working professional before immigrating, had been feeling guilty about receiving monthly allowances from her husband before she found a part-time job locally. It was not until she started earning money to cover her and her son's living expenses that she began to feel at peace, "I'm very grateful that now I can work from home and my income is sufficient, so that my husband feels that we have enough money, which alleviated his financial distress."

May managed her family's bank accounts even though her husband was the bread winner. That her husband gave her full control over the family finances contributed to a sense of power

balance between the couple. Citing the Chinese proverb, “The ingredient of a miserable family is poverty,” May relayed examples she had witnessed of how financial power differences between her friends and her friends’ husbands resulted in a rupture within their families:

I have friends whose husbands started off as managers making average money when they immigrated. However, as time went by, the husbands got promoted and began to make more money back home, which also means he had more temptations, and one by one they were gone! If you have a chance to interview a broken family, usually it’s because the husband has left. Why does he leave? Because the wife constantly asks for money...I have seen many examples where the couples started off equal, however as the husband brings in more money, and the wife only asks for money...the wife’s status will get lower and eventually the power dynamic becomes off-balance.

Careful management of the family finance. Another way to maintain financial stability was to carefully manage expenses. At least four mothers mentioned a change in their spending habits. Being former working professionals, these participants and their husbands collectively made good earnings and they were less concerned about spending. Immigrating inevitably led to a decrease in income. Therefore, these mothers experienced a lifestyle downgrade.

Three mothers used the change in their financial situation to teach their children about the values of working hard, and the importance of spending money wisely and responsibly. For example, Fiona’s children learned about budgeting and to appreciate used toys after Fiona shared their financial situation with them:

I told them that every penny their father made in Taiwan must be divided by three because of the currency exchange rate...they have learned how to better budget after moving here. They never ask me to buy toys, but instead, they like to go to garage sales where you can get a bucket of toys for only one dollar, and that would please them very much.”

Nadia believed that holding her son accountable for monetary responsibility helped him grow into a considerate and competent adult:

There are a lot of wealthy families here, but we are not. I told him not to feel inferior...the bottom line is to teach him that spending parents' money is nothing to be proud of; I really encouraged him to work hard and make his own money that he can proudly spend...he's changed a lot...from a boy who just always waited to be served and whose room was always messy to a young man who's able to plan our family trips, books hotels, and drives.

Diane proudly shared her own transformation:

Our financial situation was quite good before immigration; I never had to put a second thought into buying toys or clothes for my children; after immigration though, I'd even feel lucky when I pick up a hat on the street! You know, I just take it home and wash it—free hat! I'd also buy five-dollar mittens, the cheapest!

Diane expressed no regrets for this change of lifestyle. She said it was helpful for her children to know that “immigrants did not come here to have fun. Immigrants must act like immigrants...they must work hard...like stories where the main character is put through much suffering before achieving a happy ending.”

Five participants in this category asserted they were not the wealthiest compared to other astronaut families they know. Nevertheless, they expressed gratitude for having enough to lead a comfortable life. In addition, they acknowledged their privilege, and made sure their children did not take their privilege for granted.

Extra-personal conditions and resources wish list. Four categories in this area of emerged from the participants' wish list items. The first three categories concerned resources that may help the mothers more quickly learn how to navigate their new life and engage as parents more effectively. The last category addressed the mothers' vulnerability and revealed their desire

to feel connected with someone at a deeper level.

(a) *Pragmatic information and resources.* First, three participants indicated that workshops on pragmatic topics for newcomers have been helpful and they look forward to having more. Topics of interests included university applications, immigrant adaptation challenges, filing taxes, and how to provide a nutritious and balanced diet for children. Topics pertaining to parenting roles and childrearing were considered most appealing.

(b) *Promptly offered information.* Not knowing where to find help and support made early-stage adjustment challenging. Irene wondered if she simply didn't have time to find resources she needed or that she just wasn't aware of where to start. Therefore, she wished "to have the resources and information come to us." Nadia indicated that the first six months were the hardest, unfortunately it was also when mothers were least aware of useful information. She suggested that Mandarin pamphlets with lists of services should be disseminated at custom services.

(c) *More free or low-cost ESL programs.* The ESL classroom is a place where mothers learn English language skills, meet people, and make friends. Two mothers highlighted the benefits of attending these programs. However, mothers "can't begin before my children started going to school," and the waitlist could be long. For example, Nadia had applied for an ESL class as soon as she arrived in Canada, however, she was not admitted until six months later. On top of the delay, she also noted "when classes were cancelled, or if your children's school is off, many mothers have no choice but to stop going to their classes. It would take another half year or a year of waiting to be able to resume the class again."

Nadia spoke about the solitude she endured before starting to attend the classes: "all I did was spending time on the computer all day or taking a walk by myself; sometimes you feel like you're talking to the air, or you'd suddenly notice how quiet it is in the room, and you hadn't

talked to a soul for an entire day.” Thus, it is no surprise that she highlighted that it would have been very beneficial to have more free and low-cost ESL programs for newcomers, especially for mothers: “I’m not trying to take advantages of the government, not at all. In fact, every mother is quite diligent. We all hope we don’t have to rely on our children and improve our English; we hope to make good use of the three hours where we study English and interact with other classmates.”

(d) *Personalized support.* Two mothers wished to receive one-on-one guidance and emotional support to help them navigate hardships and emotional distress. Irene said, “it would be nice to have someone, like a mental health and education expert to tell me what to do, or at least to guide me.” During the interview, Gloria admitted that she contacted me because she wanted to talk with a professional privately. Even though she understood that the nature of the interview was purely for a research project, she believed that just by talking about her experience might be helpful to alleviate her distress. She said that it would have been hard for her to express her vulnerability in a group or workshop setting:

Why did you think I left my phone number? It means I need this. But why didn’t I seek help sooner? I guess I still have concerns, but you said you could come to my place, and I think I could be more relaxed being home because I’m familiar with this environment. My pain is contained here, so I was hoping that it can also be dissolved here.

Both Irene and Gloria reported that the interview helped them “get things off their chests” and “gain some new perspectives.” At least four other participants described “feeling good” after sharing their stories. Even though these mothers did not identify having personal support as a wish list item, their positive comments echoed Gloria and Irene’s wish.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this section, I explore how the research findings fit within the current literature. I also discuss the implications for counselling psychology as well as recommendations for policy making and the provision of immigrant services. Limitations of this research and future research directions are also discussed.

Transnational Living as a Family Project

Almost three decades ago, Hong Kong and Taiwanese emigrants split their family transnationally due to unstable political situations at home and uncertain financial prospects in the destination countries (Aye & Guerin, 2001; Ong, 1999; Skeldon, 1994). Seeking better educational opportunities was another incentive for transnational families (Chee, 2005; Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Waters, 2002;). These transnational families continued to increase, and soon Chinese and Korean families replaced Hong Kong families as part of this emerging trend (Butt, 2014). Echoing their predecessors, participants in the current study said their children's education was the top reason for their transnational family arrangement, followed by pursuing a better living environment. Participants' narratives in this study suggested that the split family arrangement was, as Ong (1999) had indicated, a strategy for the participants' families to achieve a family goal. Thus, the mothers in the current study looked for validation for the split family arrangement as well as reassurance that their devotion to the children would not be in vain. This mindset manifested in their narratives of what was hindering and what was helpful. Hindering incidents led to emotional distress and invalidation whereas helping incidents alleviated distress and increased their resilience and sense of self and parental efficacy.

Embedded in this broad context, astronaut mothers in the current study internalized cultural and familial expectations that they were the primary managers and executors of a goal-oriented family project (Young, Ball, Vlach, Turkel, & Wong, 2003). Becoming an immigrant and a lone

parent, the top two challenges they encountered were, unsurprisingly, multiple responsibilities and cultural barriers. To successfully carry out the project, the mothers exhibited incredible resilience and the capacity to overcome challenges by resorting to their intrapersonal resources, and by maintaining strong connections to other resources, (i.e. in family support, social interactions, and extra-personal domains).

The majority of the studies with mothers in Chinese astronaut families or in Korean geese families portray them as passive and vulnerable recipients of systemic oppression. Although it is also acknowledged that the transnational migration can be an empowering process where women obtained freedom and autonomy (Cha & Kim, 2003; Chee, 2003; Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014; Waters, 2002, 2003), these authors offered little discussions on mothers' active role in self-empowerment and how they cope with challenges inherent in the transnational migration process. The following sections address this problem.

The Shifting Gendered Process

Gender inequality and power imbalance was highlighted by previous research with women in transnational contexts (Carling, Manjivar, & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Chee, 2003; Man, 1995; Ong, 1999; Waters, 2009). Whereas previous research found that most mothers in astronaut families regarded family separation as a compromise or sacrifice for the greater good for the family and children (Chee, 2003; Waters, 2002), only one participant in my study referred to her immigration as a "sacrifice." In contrast, two thirds of the participants in this study referred to the transnational family arrangement as an informed decision and spoke of their role of being a mother with pride and contentment.

It is impressive that the participants in this study portrayed themselves as a proud, agentic, and empowered. Although Waters (2002, 2003, 2009) consistently argued transnational migration can be an empowering and transformative experience for mothers in astronaut

families, the mothers in these earlier studies did not speak of their parenting role from the perspective of pride and self-acknowledgement. Participants in the current study said their solo parenting became a rewarding process because they felt their unconditional love for their children. This is an important finding because it demonstrates these mothers do not perceive themselves as being sacrificed nor the victims of systemic oppression.

Some participants highlighted their intentional efforts to engage their husbands in transnational parenting. Participants said that their husbands would share child-caring responsibilities and house chores when they visited. Such involvement of the men in astronaut families was unseen in prior research. Recently, Waters (2010) reported astronaut family cases in which the men were the homemakers, and the women were the breadwinners. The findings of the current study coupled with Waters' (2010) report may signal improved gender equality and a more egalitarian responsibility-distribution in transnational families.

Furthermore, in the current study, at least two participants managed their family's finances even though their husbands were the breadwinners. At least two participants held a part-time job, so they did not fully rely on their husbands' regular remittances. These mothers spoke of their financial autonomy with pride. That some women in this study held comparable, if not equal financial power as their husbands is yet another indication of the potentially shifting gender power differentials in the transnational process.

The Role of Acculturation in the Pseudo-Single Parenting Experience

Participants in the current study appeared to adopt *integration* (Berry, 1997) as their acculturation strategy. Not only did they demonstrate appreciation for the Canadian culture, but they also actively engaged in learning about the local culture by taking English classes or participating in community activities. On the other hand, participants remained adhered to the traditional value of Chinese parenting that emphasized the parents' responsibilities in

childrearing (Chao, 1994; Li, 2004; Chua, 2011), especially in ensuring children's positive developmental and educational outcomes. As transnational migrants, astronaut families maintain close bonds to both their home countries and their new homes in Canada. Therefore, it is not a surprise that participants in the current study demonstrated their devotion to their children, as expected in Chinese culture, and at the same time exhibited openness to integrate different perspectives into their parenting practice. For example, although it is not uncommon for mothers to at times assume an authoritarian attitude towards their children, Amy became more mindful of her tone of voice when talking to her daughter so as to show her that Amy respected her just as her teachers and peers did. The current study found that effective communication and mother's willingness to self-improve by self-reflection and active learning helped lead to positive parenting experiences. Their communication style was consistent with recent research which found that contemporary Chinese parenting has begun to demonstrate a more flexible parenting style where they offer high emotional support, and low parental control (Chea, Leung and Zhou, 2013; Lu & Chang, 2013; Way et al., 2013).

Participants did experience multifaceted distress in the transnational split family arrangement, especially when it comes to experiencing tension and conflicts with their children. Difficult emotions were reported and included, but were not limited to: fear, loneliness, disappointment, distress, frustration, resentment, helplessness, guilt, doubt, worry, concerns, uncertainty, hurt, and pain. Some of these negative experiences were also reported in previous research with Chinese astronaut families and Korean geese families (e.g., Chee, 2003; Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014; Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Waters, 2009). Nevertheless, something that was not reported in previous studies was mothers' resentment towards their children, and the fear that they would stop loving their children. In this research, more than one third of the participants recalled incidents where they have had the experience of resenting their children for not showing

appreciation for them, disobeying them, or not performing well behaviourally or academically. This experience in turn led to mothers' self-doubt and self-blame. Although most mothers attributed it to children's entering adolescence, (recognizing that communication difficulties might have been developmental,) their self-doubt and self-blame likely illustrated just how ingrained it was in the mothers' belief that they were responsible for their children's performance.

The mothers' disappointment towards their children appeared to have multiple layers. Four mothers indicated their fear of failing the family name if their children failed academically. In Chinese society, it is generally believed that parents are responsible for their children's overall development as a human being, namely there is an internalized sense of obligation to make sure their children grow up to be productive, responsible, and decent adults (Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, & Song, 2013). As Chao (1994) indicated, a core component of Chinese parenting is "training," which is beyond providing emotional support and material supplies. Despite the rewarding experience of role adherence for some mothers, the majority of their stress level was inevitably high.

Although stress may occur when their parental expectations were not met, having some expectations and communicating them to the children was considered helpful. Participants in the current study spoke about their parental expectations in the wish list items. Some of them communicated these explicitly with their children. Participants who reported using effective communication skills also reported feeling validated by their children's growth and positive development. Some mothers described their communication style in terms of having a positive relationship with their children, and that they were confident in their emotional bond with their children. Their children's positive development in turn reinforced their parental efficacy. Indeed, research does support that openly communicating parental expectations does enhance

adolescents' perceptions of their family obligations, and this in turn promotes their feelings of ethnic affirmation and belonging (Su & Costigan, 2009).

Implications for Counselling Practices

This study demonstrates that the parenting experience for astronaut mothers is multifaceted and might be influenced by intrapersonal, family, social, and external factors. The astronaut mothers' parenting experience is a fluid process that evolves through adapting to changes in these domains. It is a process of navigating transitions, balancing roles, managing distress, juggling expectations, and continual learning. The research results shed light on counselling practices in assessment, goal setting and potential interventions.

Multidimensional assessments and case conceptualization. As previously discussed in chapter 2, counselling scholars have established multidimensional models when conceptualizing immigration and other human transitions (e.g., Ishiyama, 1995a, 1995b; Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). The current research results also supported that participants' experience and their ways of coping were indeed multidimensional. Participants experienced difficulties as a lone astronaut mother in the intrapersonal, familial, social, and extra-personal areas. Clients may express emotional (e.g., loneliness, guilt, powerlessness) and physical distress (e.g., exhaustion, tiredness) as well as behavioural (e.g., aggressive communication style) and attitude/thought change (e.g., self-blame, hopeless thoughts). These experiences are likely to lead to loss of validation sources (Ishiyama, 1995b). Thus, practitioners are encouraged to assess risk factors in each area when working with astronaut mothers. In the current study, for instance, juggling multiple responsibilities, cultural barriers, distant relationships with husbands, and dissatisfactory relationship with children were the most frequently mentioned factors that led to distress.

When working with astronaut mothers, it may be helpful to ask them their conceptualizations of their presenting concerns. A starting point might be their frame of

reference in terms of what constitutes a problem. For example, some mothers in the study considered their children's unsatisfactory performance a failure of their parenting. Their definitions of failure were different. One participant used grades and comparison with other people's children as the reference frame to determine her child's performance; another participant compared her child's post-migration performance with his pre-migration performance. The former participant worried about dishonouring the family name because her son did not do well at school, whereas the latter struggled to bear her husband's unforgiving accusation that she had set their son up for failure. Understanding the client's frame of reference of their concerns can facilitate a discussion on their own theory of change. After understanding clients' conceptualization of their problem and their theory of change, practitioners can help participants further explore their blind spot, if any, and to gain different perspectives.

Protective factors must also be assessed. Participants in this study demonstrated resilience in handling multiple responsibilities and crisis situations. They exhibited insights and self-reflectivity as well as the motivation and ability to self-correct and self-monitor when learning new perspectives. Keeping this in mind, practitioners can apply a strength-oriented perspective to assess clients' own psychological resources and other external resources. The 4S's system of coping with transitions (Schlossberg, 2011) can be utilized to facilitate the treatment process.

Potential counselling goals and interventions. Half of the helping categories in this study obtained more than a fifty percent participant endorsement rate. These include three categories in the intrapersonal area: adaptability, determination, role adherence, and active learning; two in the family process area: children's growth and development and family support; two in the social support area: friendship and community involvement; and appreciating life in Canada, which is in the extra-personal conditions and resources area. These categories inform the practitioners about what might be the protective factors for the wellbeing of their clients who are astronaut

mothers. These categories can be turned into counselling goals that focus on strengthening resilience, gaining insight/awareness, and developing skills (e.g., stress coping, communication, and self-compassion).

Practitioners can work with clients on improving their intrapersonal resources. For example, several mothers reported that accepting their reality and being okay with the uncertainty helped them better manage stress and adapt to new situations. This required them to relent rigid ways of thinking and develop openness and flexibility. As such, a mindfulness approach can be introduced to help clients accept reality without being caught up in anxiety for the future, regrets, or self-blame. Compassion-focused approaches (Guilbert, 2009; Neff, 2003) and validation-oriented work (Ishiyama, 1995b; Linehan, 1993) may also be helpful. To help participants gain perspectives and insight, practitioners can adopt a more direct and collaborative approach. In Ng and James' (2003) study, their Chinese participants reported they found it helpful when counsellors helped them analyze their situations, offer suggestions and guidance, or connect them with additional resources.

When specifically working on issues related to parenting, it may be helpful to explore their children's positive characteristics and development with the clients. This is informed by the finding that mothers reported feeling content, validated, and grateful when recognizing their children's growth. Practitioners can also help clients examine whether their parenting goals and desired outcomes are realistic; psychoeducation regarding children and youth's cognitive, identity, and socioemotional development may need to be provided where appropriate.

Bring spirituality and/or religiosity in. Spiritual anchor received 47% endorsement rate as a helping category. Although it is not the most endorsed category, it is a unique category that deserves extra attention. Religion/spirituality helps people cope with illness or stressful situations; it also has a positive relationship with positive emotions such as well-being and

happiness, hope, optimism, meaning and purpose, self-esteem, sense of control, and positive character traits, (i.e., altruism, forgiveness, gratefulness, kindness and compassion, marital stability, social support and social capital, Koenig, 2012). In the context of coping with immigration process and cultural adjustment stress, religion plays a significant role in the migration process (Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003) and immigrants' adaptation to the receiving country (Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Hirschman, 2004; Lee & Chan, 2009; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Despite its influential role in mental health, religion and/or spirituality has not been sufficiently integrated into mental health professional's clinical practices (Daniels, 2013; Koenig, 2012).

Based on a systemic literature review of 3,300 peer-reviewed journal article, Koenig (2012) suggested that religion influences mental health through three pathways. First, cognitively religion offers an adaptive perspective when people are confronted with adversity. The individuals may have a better sense of control of their life because they believed that God has greatest power and they can connect with God by praying. Religion may provide meaning and purpose of one's suffering and thus inspire the individual to formulate a more optimistic view. Second, religion offers behavioural guidelines which may help prevent individuals from involving in behaviors that may result in life stress, for example, extra-marital affairs, risky sexual practices or substance abuse. Third, most religions encourage prosocial behaviours, such as forgiveness, gratefulness, altruism, honesty, altruism, and so on. These behaviours distract the individual from over-engaged in their own problems and promote social connections. The critical incidents provided by the participants in the current study echoed Koenig's hypothesis. In their narratives, religion shapes the participants' family values and role identity which in turn facilitates positive coping thoughts and behaviours. By bringing religion and spirituality into the therapeutic conversation, mental health practitioners may gain a fuller understanding of the client's being.

Although religion can foster intrapersonal strengths, it is not uncommon that people also adopt negative ways of coping based on their religious doctrines. Examples of these coping strategies include guilt, self-blame, or self-punishment (Bjorck & Thurman, 2007; Daniels, 2013; Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998). Fortunately, negative religious coping was not observed in the current study. Still, it is worth noting that some participants did express a sense of guilt and embarrassment when they interpret their children's under-achievement as the result of their failed parenting. When working with astronaut mothers, mental health practitioners are encouraged to further explore the nature of the client's negative self-judgement

Recommendations for Immigrant Services

One-on-one counselling may not be the only solution for resolving astronaut mothers' presenting concerns. As demonstrated in the results, hindering and helping categories for the participants were multifaceted. In this section, recommendations that go beyond individual counselling are provided.

A first recommendation is to develop programs that enhance astronaut mothers' intrapersonal resources. Many immigrant service agencies offer regular workshops or support groups for Chinese immigrant families. These programs typically offer parenting tips and pragmatic information (e.g., tax-filing, tips for physical health). Although these topics are indeed popular, the results of the current study suggest that strengthening mothers' intrapersonal resources are also an area that calls for attention. Recall that a few participants in the current study noted they did not have time to think about what they need, or to take a break; at least two mothers said that they were waiting for a long vacation or to have time for themselves in their wish list. These narratives illustrated a sense of fatigue. Accordingly, workshops focusing on psychoeducation on improving awareness of how physical and mental health issues related to transitional stress (i.e. in the context of immigration and career), how to increase self-compassion

and practice self-care, and how to construct a validating relationship with self and others could be helpful.

A second recommendation is to diversify the venues through which the services are provided. The results of the current study suggest that mothers are very likely constrained by household and child-caring responsibilities and they have limited time for themselves, especially in the early stages of settlement. One must also take into account whether mothers have the time and energy to attend workshops when developing and offering these educational resources. Indeed, at least three participants indicated that they would like resources to come to them or at least to be accessible in a timely fashion. Distance and digitized services and resources may be helpful. The advantage of utilizing digital technology is that the resources can then be accessed anywhere at anytime by more people.

The third area to be considered is the provision of English Language Learning (ELL) programs. Two participants explicitly spoke about their struggles with language barriers, lacking the English proficiency to carry out basic day-to-day conversations. Another participant noted that she lacked the proficiency for the work setting. It was recommended by one participant that more ELL programs be offered so that immigrants can access them as early as possible. This suggestion was made because she had to wait six months before she could enroll in the ELL programs. Indeed, several participants indicated that attending ELL programs not only helped them develop language skills, but also expanded their social network. This suggests that enhancing the accessibility and availability of ELL programs in immigrants' early settlement can alleviate astronaut mothers' language barriers and social isolation. Practically speaking, one option might be for school districts to offer ELL programs tailored to mothers in transnational families. The benefit of doing so is so that mothers can potentially start the program as soon as their children start school. Another option may be to develop peer-support or mentoring

programs that would connect the new immigrants with a peer or a mentor for initial language and social support as they wait for formal ELL programs to accept them.

Finally, in order to establish programs and services tailored to astronaut mothers, a survey should be conducted to better comprehend how many nonworking-class transnational families reside in BC, and whether their residences are concentrated in certain metropolitan districts. This data will potentially inform the scope of necessities and budgeting requirements for settlement services.

Research Limitations

There are some limitations to be noted. First and foremost, only mothers in astronaut families were interviewed, so the research findings only reflect mothers' subjective perceptions of their parenting experience. Children may not share the same perspective on parental outcomes. Thus, one must interpret the results with caution.

Secondly, 8% of the participants reported having positive parenting experiences. They reported more about what was helpful than what was hindering. As mentioned in Chapter 4, almost all participants disclosed that they knew somebody who did not have positive experience with astronaut family arrangements. Although at least three participants in the current study spoke about their experience overall as more on the negative side, it would be interesting to speak with more mothers who are not doing as well in future research. To recruit participants who are experiencing more difficulties, researchers may need to seek referrals from immigrant service organizations that specifically work with at-risk families (e.g., through pro-bono immigrant legal consultation service).

Another limitation is the recruitment source. As indicated in Chapter 3 (participant recruitment section), 13 out of 15 participants participated because of snowball sampling rather than through other venues. Future researchers may want to explore ways in which the

recruitment venue can be broadened. For example, collaborating with school counsellors or settlement workers who may have more opportunities to work with immigrant mothers may help enlarge the recruitment pool. If financial resources permit, monetary incentives such as gift cards or a small amount of research participation fees may increase mothers' motivation to participate. Another consideration is to explore ways to collect data through information technology. Many participants in the current research mentioned that they had busy and rigid schedules because they followed their children's daily routines. There were house chores and errands to attend to when children were at school, thus meeting the researcher in person may not necessarily be convenient for them. Addressing these concerns could potentially improve mothers' willingness to participate in future studies.

One may suspect whether the number of 15 participants was indeed sufficient to achieve data saturation. To address this inherent concern of qualitative inquiries, participant recruitment and interviews, and data analysis were conducted simultaneously in the current research. This practice allowed for ongoing tracking of emerging categories. Participant recruitment remained open and interviews were being added until no new category surfaced. As demonstrated in chapter 3, five additional interviews were conducted after the categories had stopped emerging, thus adequate data saturation was likely attained. Prior ECIT studies typically employed a similar approach, and they reported data saturation by having 12 to 15 participants as well (Amundson, Borgen, & Butterfield, 2013).

Finally, ECIT's reliance on participants' retrospective accounts may be a limitation (e.g., Amundson et al, 2011; Zheng et al., 2013). This concern was addressed by analyzing only the incidents for which participants were able to provide detailed and in-depth descriptions.

Directions of Future Research

Firstly, several potential topics for future counselling psychology research emerged from the current study. For example, a couple of participants said they wished to have an expert who could provide guidance and consultation when they needed it. It would be interesting to explore the experience of astronaut mothers who have accessed or are receiving counselling services to help generate information about what brings them to counselling. What do they expect? How do they spend the time with their counsellors (e.g., self-exploration, guidance seeking, or working on mental health concerns)? Conversely, researchers can also explore practitioners' experience working with members in the astronaut families. It would also be interesting to survey whether the recommendations generated from the current study are useful for the practitioners, and how they could integrate the research findings into their practices.

Second, transnational migration is indeed different from the traditional sense of migration in that flexible citizenships become possible, and permanent settlement is no longer the only option for migrants, and they have less pressure and need to assimilate (Levitt, 2007). For example, Van Oudenhoven, Ward, and Masgoret (2006) suggest that the wish to be engaged in transnational contact be added to Berry's acculturation model as a third dimension, as the current model only captured two dimensions: the wish to maintain contact with the host society and the wish to maintain culture and identity. Similarly, a broader conceptual framework for transnational families may needed to be developed.

Finally, communication technologies have played an imperative role in long-distance relationship maintenance (Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla & Wildings, 2016; Strafford, 2005) and transnational caring (Baldassar et al., 2007; Baldassar et al., 2014). The aid of internet communication technology was surprisingly not explicitly indicated as a helpful factor, although the significant role of technology was indeed observed in the current study. A few participants talked about how they keep their husband in the loop via international phone calls or online

communications. During the interviews, it was also observed that a participant called her husband via instant messaging. Participants may have not specifically mentioned the technology as a helpful factor because they have been immersed in the instant connections long enough that they have taken it for granted. The transnational caring paradigm, i.e. the “online dimensions of family life” (Baldassar, et al, 2014, p158) illuminated another area for further exploration.

Technology plays a significant role in long-distance communication and relationship maintenance. It is crucial for researchers to begin utilizing advanced technology to conduct research and assist in data collection. Researchers can explore a number of questions; for example, ways in which members in astronaut families communicate with each other, the kind of information and topics they share with one another via technology-assisted communication, frequency of these communications, and the type of software or media they use. By learning about their patterns and habits of technology usage, we can generate informed and customized recommendations on how to use technology to deliver services and assistance promptly and effectively.

Significance and Contributions

First, this study built on previous research by obtaining self-reported parenting experience from Taiwanese and Chinese mothers in astronaut families. Theoretically speaking, the findings of this study appeared to be aligned with transnationalism in that the embodiment of mobility, flexibility, and the circulation of transnational care were observed in the participants' narratives. Still, this study contradicted the narratives of women being oppressed and disempowered by this arrangement. Instead of taking a victim perspective, participants in this study demonstrated resilience and strength when narrating their experiences. Whereas previous studies with Chinese astronaut families highlighted the general negative impact of the split-family arrangements, this study underscores factors that have challenged the mothers specifically on their parenting

process as well as ways in which they effectively incorporate interpersonal, familial, social, and external resources to manage these challenges. Furthermore, existing transnational family studies primarily focus on working-class mothers who left their children behind and executed their motherhood from afar. To my knowledge, this study is the first study that explores the parenting experience of mothers in the nonworking-class transnational family.

Thirdly, previous counselling studies with astronaut families focused only on the children who grew up in the astronaut families (Popadiuk, 2009; Petersen & Park-Saltzman, 2010). This study is the first counselling psychology research that accounts for the mothers' experience. Practitioners can potentially enhance their knowledge and awareness domains of their multicultural competencies by familiarizing themselves with the contexts of the astronaut family arrangement as well as the mothers' struggles and coping strategies. Gaining familiarity in these domains may in turn inform counsellors' skills in determining and delivering interventions. In particular, interventions that are focused towards the mindfulness concept of radical acceptance, cognitive flexibility and openness, and compassion and validation were highly recommended based on the findings.

International transitions have become not only a common phenomenon, but an unstoppable global trend. Migration of various forms significantly influences people's living situations, psychosocial processes, behaviours, and wellbeing (Arthur & Pedersen, 2008; Leong & Ponterotto, 2003). With the increasing trend of transnational migration, counselling psychologist and practitioners can expect to meet more transnational migrants and families whose formation deviates from *the norm*, (i.e., nuclear family formed by a married couple with/without children who all live together.) It is an ethical mandate for counsellors and psychologists to develop multicultural competencies accordingly (e.g., ACA, 2014; CPA, 2007).

Finally, this project extends and adds support to the ECIT research method. Cultural- and language- sensitive measures were added to credibility checks. This project was unique in that the majority of the research procedures were fully conducted in Mandarin. Given that the report was written in English, a few procedures (discussed chapter 3) were added to the credibility checks to address issues that may have occurred with Mandarin and English translations.

Final Remarks

Even though I am not a mother and not from an astronaut family, my identity as a Mandarin-speaking international student from Taiwan gave me the access to connect with my participants. They allowed me to enter their homes, offered me coffee and gave me little souvenirs from the home country. They readily opened up to me during the interviews and I felt a great sense of community. I am honored to be trusted with their personal stories.

My role as a researcher and professional counsellor afforded me the opportunity to tell my participants' stories, and I do not take this privilege lightly. The various credibility checks and the effort I took in addressing the issues of translation hopefully have given my participants and readers of this dissertation confidence in the trustworthiness of this study. I had promised my first interviewee to notify her when my dissertation becomes available for public access. I hope she will be pleased to read about her and other mothers' stories being told.

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Appendix I: Interview Protocol

Preamble: Thank you very much for having this interview with me. As you know, I'm curious about what your parenting experience has been like after moving to Canada without your husband around. I'm also interested in learning about whether there are specific incidents and factors which you have found helpful or obstructive in this process.

Logistics:

1. Explanation of Confidentiality and obtain informed consent.
2. Complete the demographic survey.

Warming up Question:

Could you tell me what prompted you to participate in this research?

Part 1 Contextual Component

1. As a way of getting started, please tell me a little bit about your story of migration?

Potential Probes:

- What made you and/or your family decide on the arrangement (transnational migration)?
- Who did you come with when you first arrived?
- Why did you choose Canada?

2. **How would you describe your parenting experience after immigrating to Canada?**

(Focus on the participant's subjective experience: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural experience)

Potential Probes:

- What are your parental beliefs, and goals?
- How would you describe your parenting practice or style?
- What's your perception of your parenting outcome?

3. **What are the changes that have affected you in this process?**

Part 2 Critical Incident Section

You have talked about your overall parenting experience, and I'm curious about specific incidents that may have influence your experience.

2.1 Helping Incidents

What have helped you in parenting in the context of the new country and separation from your husband and homeland? *(What was the incident/factor? How did it impact you? How was it helping? Can you give me a specific example where xxx has helped? How did that help you to do well in parenting?)*

2.2 Hindering Incidents

What kinds of things have happened that made it harder for you? *(What was the incident/factor? How did it impact you? How was it challenging? Can you give me a specific example where xxx has helped? How did that help you to do well in parenting?)*

2.3 Wish List

Summarize what has been discussed up to this point with the participant as a transition to the next question:

We've talked about what's helped you, for example...,and some things that have made it more difficult for you in the parenting process. I wonder what else might be helpful to you that you haven't had access to?

Part 3 Checking-Out Reflections

What comes up for you right now after our discussions? (Emotions, thoughts, realizations)

Appendix II: Participant Consent Form



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Faculty of Education
Department of Education and Counselling
Psychology, and Special Education
 2125 Main Mall
 Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4
 Phone 604 822 0242
 Fax 604 822 3302

Parenting Experience of Chinese Mothers in Astronaut Families in Canada

Principal Investigator: Norman Amundson, PhD, Professor

Department of Education, and Counselling Psychology, and Special
 Education

Co-Investigator: Wei-Chiao Hsu, MS, doctoral student

Department of Education, and Counselling Psychology, and Special
 Education

This research project is part of the requirements for Wei-Chiao Hsu's completion of a doctorate degree. The results of this research will be reported in a doctoral dissertation which will become an academic resource accessible for the public in the University library. The results of this research may also be published in appropriate academic journals or books, or be presented in professional conferences. This consent form outlines the purposes and procedures of this research project.

STUDY PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS

We want to learn more about the parenting experience of Chinese immigrant mothers. We are inviting people like you who undertake primary childrearing responsibility after immigration without the husband around. The findings of this study will help us learn how to assist Chinese

immigrant mothers in the parenting process in Canada. There may not be direct benefit for you to participate in this study, but it is possible that you will gain some useful insights by sharing your experiences and stories with a trained researcher.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you say “YES” to our invitation, we will ask you to:

1. Fill out a demographic survey— This survey has 10 questions that will take less than 5 minutes to answer. It requests basic background information such as your age, position, and family situation.
2. Participate in face-to-face individual interview — You will be interviewed by the co-investigator, Wei-Chiao Hsu, who will ask you some questions about your parenting experiences. The interview will be audio recorded. It will require up to 2 hours.
3. You may also be asked to participate in a follow up phone interview to review the information gathered from your interview, and see if you agree with our preliminary analysis. You are welcome to provide feedback to us. This interview may take up to 30 minutes of your time.

POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY

We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. Although very unlikely, some of the questions we ask might upset you. You do not have to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Please let one of the investigators know if you have any concerns. If you feel that you may need further help from a clinical counsellor or a social service provider after the interview, you will be provided with referrals to agencies that fit your needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your confidentiality will be respected. Information that discloses your identity will not be

released without your consent unless required by law. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Only the primary investigator and the co-investigator have full access to these documents. Participants in the study will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. However, at any point in the study, if you reveal that there has been an incident that involves abuse and/or neglect of a child or an elderly person (or that there is a risk of such occurring) , or if you express an immediate attempt to hurt yourself, please be advised that the researcher must, by law, report this information to the appropriate authorities.

CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

If you have any questions or require more information about what this research project, you may contact Dr. Norman Amundson (Principal Investigator) or Wei-Chiao Hsu (Co-Investigator) .

CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail

RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

CONSENT

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Participant	Signature	Date
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Printed Name of the Participant

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.



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Faculty of Education
Department of Education and Counselling
Psychology, and Special Education
 2125 Main Mall
 Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4
 Phone 604 822 0242
 Fax 604 822 3302

同意书

太空人家庭母亲在加拿大的亲职教养经验

主研究者: **Norman Amundson** 博士, 专任教授

教育、心理咨商及特殊教育系

共同研究者: 徐薇乔, 硕士, 博士生

教育、心理咨商及特殊教育系

这项研究是徐薇乔为取得博士学位所需完成的修业要求之一。研究结果将撰写于她的博士论文中，而完成的博士论文将收藏于大学图书馆供公共参考用途。本研究结果也可能刊载于合适的专学术期刊或书籍，或发表于专业研讨会。本同意书概述本研究的目的及程序。

研究目的及潜在福利

我们希望对于华人移民母亲的子女教养经验取得更多了解。我们邀请像您这样，丈夫不在身边，且在移民后承担主要养育子女责任的妈妈来参加我们的研究。这项研究的结果将帮助我们了解如何协助华人移民母亲在加拿大的子女教养过程。这项研究可能没有办法让您直接受益，但透过与训练有素的研究人员分享您的经验和故事，您可能可以获得

一些有帮助的启发。

研究程序

如果您接受我们的邀请，我们会请您：

1. 填写一份基本资料调查表——本调查表有 10 个问题，大约在 5 分钟以内便能完成。主要询问基本背景资料，比如你的年龄，职业及家庭情况。
2. 参加面对面的个别访谈——您将接受共同研究者徐薇乔的访谈，询问您关于教养经验的问题。访谈将全程录音。所需时间最高可达 2 小时。
3. 您可能还被邀请参加后续的电话访谈，协助我们审查从您前次的访谈收集到的讯息，看看您是否同意我们的初步分析。欢迎您在此时提供反馈意见。这个访谈可能需要占用您 30 分钟。

潜在风险

我们不认为在这项研究中有任何会对您造成伤害或对您不好的事情。虽然机率不高，但有可能我们问的某些问题会令您感到心烦。您不想回答的问题可以不必回答。而如果您有任何疑问，请告知任一位研究主持人。如果在访谈后，您觉得您需要接受咨商员或社会服务工作者的进一步协助，我们将提供符合您需求的机构转介资源。

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我们尊重您的隐私。这表示您的身份除非在法律要求下，不会在未经您的许可下公开。所有的文件将仅由数字代码来识别并保存在上锁的档案柜中。只有主研究者和共

同研究者能取得这些文件。研究参与者的姓名不会在完成的研究报告中被提及。然而，在研究过程中，若您谈到涉及虐待和/或疏忽儿童或老人的事件（或者说有发生这样事件的风险），或者如果您表达立即的自伤意图，请注意根据法律规定，研究人员必须将这样的讯息通告给有关当局。

研究相关联络人

如果您有任何疑问或需要对这个研究的进一步讯息，您可以联系 **Norman Amundson** 博士（研究主持人）或徐薇乔（共同研究者）。

投诉管道

如果您在参与这项研究的过程中有任何关于您作为研究参与者的权利以及/或经验的问题或投诉，请联络 UBC 科研伦理办公室的研究参与者投诉热线 604-822-8598，或若是长途可以 E-mail 联系 RSIL@ors.ubc.ca 或免费电话 1-877-822-8598。

同意声明

参加这次研究完全取决于您的意愿。您有权拒绝参加这项研究。如果您决定参加，您可以在任何时候选择退出，且不需要提供理由。

下方签名表明您已经收到本同意书的副本以作为个人记录。

您的签名表明您同意参与这项研究。

研究参与者签名

日期

正体书写研究参与者姓名

感謝您願意參與這項研究



www.ecps.educ.ubc.ca

Faculty of Education
Department of Education and Counselling
Psychology, and Special Education
 2125 Main Mall
 Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4
 Phone 604 822 0242
 Fax 604 822 3302

同意書

太空人家庭母親在加拿大的親職教養經驗

主研究者: **Norman Amundson** 博士, 專任教授

教育、心理諮商及特殊教育系

共同研究者: 徐薇喬, 碩士, 博士生

教育、心理諮商及特殊教育系

這項研究是徐薇喬為取得博士學位所需完成的修業要求之一。研究結果將撰寫於她的博士論文中，而完成的博士論文將收藏於大學圖書館供公共參考用途。本研究結果也可能刊載於合適的專學術期刊或書籍，或發表於專業研討會。本同意書概述本研究的目的及程序。

研究目的及潛在福利

我們希望對於華人移民母親的子女教養經驗取得更多了解。我們邀請像您這樣，丈夫不在身邊，且在移民後承擔主要養育子女責任的媽媽來參加我們的研究。這項研究的結果將幫助我們了解如何協助華人移民母親在加拿大的子女教

養過程。這項研究可能沒有無法讓您直接受益，但透過與訓練有素的研究人員

分享您的經驗和故事，您可能可以獲得一些有幫助的啟發。

研究程序

如果您接受我們的邀請，我們會請您：

1. 填寫一份基本資料調查表— 本調查表有 10 個問題，大約在 5 分鐘以內便能完成。主要詢問基本背景資料，比如你的年齡，職業及家庭情況。
2. 參加面對面的個別訪談 —您將接受共同研究者徐薇喬的訪談，詢問您關於教養經驗的問題。訪談將全程錄音。所需時間最高可達 2 小時。
3. 您還可能被邀請參加後續的電話訪談，協助我們審查從您前次的訪談收集到的訊息，看看您是否同意我們的初步分析。歡迎您在此時提供回饋給我們。這個訪談可能需要佔用您 30 分鐘。

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我們不認為在這項研究中有任何會對您造成傷害或對您不好的事情。雖然機率不高，但有可能我們問的某些問題會讓您感到心煩。您不想回答的問題可以不必回答。而如果您有任何疑慮，請告知任一位研究主持人。如果在訪談後，您覺得您需要接受諮商員或社會服務工作者的進一步協助，我們將提供符合您需求的機構轉介資源。

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如果您在參與這項研究的過程中有任何關於您作為研究參與者的權利以及/或經驗的問題或投訴，請聯絡 UBC 科研倫理辦公室的研究參與者投訴熱線 604-822-8598，或若是長途可以 E-mail 聯繫 RSIL@ors.ubc.ca 或免費電話 1-877-822-8598。

同意聲明

參加這次研究完全取決於您的意願。您有權拒絕參加這項研究。如果您決定參加，您可以在任何時候選擇退出，且不需要提供理由。

下方簽名表明您已經收到本同意書的副本以作為個人記錄。

您的簽名表明您同意參與這項研究。

研究參與者簽名

日期

正體書寫研究參與者姓名

感謝您願意參與這項研究

Appendix III: Recruitment Flyers in English, Simplified and Traditional Chinese

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Hi Chinese Moms!

Parenting Experience in BC

You are invited to participate in a UBC doctoral thesis study that examines Chinese immigrant mothers' parenting experience after immigrating to British Columbia (BC). We are interested in your experience.

Please consider participating in this study if you:

1. Are from Taiwan or P. R. China, and have children under 23.
2. Have resided in BC for more than 1 year with your children, while your husband resides in another country.
3. Can speak English or Mandarin.

Participating mothers will receive one face-to-face interview (time and place upon your convenience) and a follow-up phone interview.

Participation of this project is voluntary. To participate or for more information, please contact:

Wei-Chiao Hsu, UBC doctoral candidate

Telephone number

Email address

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



华人妈妈看过来：**BC** 教养经验甘苦谈

邀请您参与 UBC 咨商心理学研究所有关华人移民家庭母亲在 BC 省子女教养经验的博士论文研究。我们希望了解您的心路历程和具体经验。

若您符合下列条件，欢迎参加这项研究：

1. 来自台湾或中华人民共和国，子女未满 **23** 岁。
2. 与子女移民并共同居住在 **BC** 省满一年以上，但丈夫留在国内或在其他国家工作。
3. 能以流利中文或英文沟通。

参与者需接受一次的面对面访谈(时间、地点由您决定，至多 2 小时)，及一次后续电话跟进访谈。参与本研究完全属志愿性质。若您有意愿接受访谈，或想了解更多相关细节，欢迎与我联络：

聯絡人：徐薇乔

电话

电子邮件

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



華人媽媽看過來：BC 教養經驗甘苦談

邀請您參與 UBC 諮商心理學研究所有關華人移民家庭母親在 BC 省子女教養經驗的博士論文研究。我們希望了解您的心路歷程和具體經驗。

若您符合下列條件，歡迎參加這項研究：

1. 來自台灣或中華人民共和國，子女未滿 **23** 歲。
2. 與子女移民並共同居住在 **BC** 省滿一年以上，但丈夫留在國內
或在其他國家工作。
3. 能以流利中文或英文溝通。

參與者需接受一次面對面訪談(時間、地點由您決定，至多 2 小時)，及一次後續電話追蹤訪談 (至多 30 分鐘)。參與本研究完全屬志願性質。若您有意願接受訪談，或想了解更多相關細節，歡迎與我聯絡：

聯絡人：徐薇喬

電話

電子郵件

Appendix IV: Participant Demographic Survey

*本調查完全保密，並僅作本研究之用 (本调查完全保密，并仅作本研究之用)

This survey will be kept confidential, and will be only used for this research

*請依據意願填答 (请依据意愿填答)

Please fill out the areas based on your comfort level

1. 姓名 Name: _____

2. 出生地 Country of birth: ☐台灣 Taiwan ☐中國 P.R. China ☐其他 Other

3. 慣用語言(惯用语言) Preferred language: ☐中文 Mandarin ☐英文 English ☐其他

Other

4. 年齡 (年龄) Age: _____

5. 職業狀況 (职业状况) Occupation:

移民前是否曾就業(业) Employed before immigration ? ☐ Yes ☐ No

目前是否就業(业) Are you currently employed ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. 教育程度 Level of education: ☐高中 High School ☐專(专)科 Some College

☐大學(本科)University Degree ☐研究所(碩士/博士) Graduate Degree ☐其他

Other

7. 子女人數(数) Numbers of children: _____

8. 移民時子女年紀 Children's age when emigrated: _____

9. 初到加拿大年份 Year of first arrival in Canada: _____

10. 居住卑詩省年數(数) Years of residing in British Columbia: _____

謝謝您 Thank you!

Appendix V: Participant Checks⁴

Dear participant,

Thank you for having interviewed with me, which helped me understand your parenting experience. You and another fourteen participants from China and Taiwan identified helping and hindering critical incidents that have influenced your parenting experiences. After transcribing our interview for data analysis, I have generated 13 categories for the helping incidents, and 7 categories for the hindering incidents. Three categories for your wish lists were also generated. You are invited to provide feedback and suggestions. Please refer to the preliminary results below.

Critical incidents are events you reported either positively or negatively influence your parenting experience. They may have occurred at different points of time, and involved a variety of people, events, and tasks.

Categories and definitions are generated from 15 interview data. After the categories were created, I then place your identified critical incidents under appropriate categories. I did my best to use your own words without over interpretations or revision. I used [...] to indicate any modifications I made. These modifications were made to enhance clarity. Please read the contents and examine if the current categorization:

1. Accurately reflects your experience and articulation.
2. Requires revision?
3. Demands further elaboration?

Wei-Chiao Hsu

PhD Candidate

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

University of British Columbia

Preliminary Results of Analysis

⁴ All participants received this message and the preliminary results via email. A follow-up interview was made via phone calls with their permission.

- You identified # helping incidents, # hindering incidents, and # wish items in the interview.

Categories of Hindering Incidents

Seven categories were identified and arranged into four broad areas. These categories encompass the critical incidents that were identified as causing challenges, distress, and undesired outcome for you in the parenting process.

REESULT I : Categories of Critical Incidents (Listed according to item endorsement rates)

Helping Categories	Critical Incidents	Hindering Categories	Critical Incidents
Area I Mother's intra-personal process			
1. Adaptability and resilience	Definition: Having proficient language skills and/or the ability to learn from experiences, develop new perspectives, and demonstrate cognitive and behavioural flexibility.	1. Lone mother, multiple responsibilities	Definition: Busy juggling multiple tasks locally without much help, and feeling powerless for having limited abilities to offer care for husbands or extended family transnationally.
2. Adherence to role as mother/wife	Definition: Celebrating own role of being a mother and wife, and acknowledging self-worth.	2. Personal transition	Definition: Experiencing transitions in areas of adaptation to immigration, professional career, and family life.

3. Determined and goal-focused attitude	Definition: Remaining the devotion to family goals and the decisions made even when confronted with difficulties and challenges.		
4. Spiritual anchor	Definition: Finding comfort, moral support, and inspirations from own religious belief or by exploring faith.		
5. Creativity and self-reflectivity in parenting	Definition: Self-improvement and adjustment in parenting by continuous self-reflection and exploring creative ways to educate children.		
Area II Extra-Familial Social Interactions			
6. Friendship	Definition: Receiving promptly help and exchanging useful and practical information from friends and neighbors.	3. Narrowed social circles	Definition: Family oriented and children-centered social networks predominantly formed by immigrant mothers: minimum deep emotional interactions and lack of connections to the broader society.

7. Community involvement	Definition: Actively participating in recreational, volunteering or educational activities.		
Area III Family process			
8. Authoritative parent-child communication	Definition: Open, respectful, inviting, and empathetic parent-child communications and that children's opinions are treated as equally important as the parents.	4. Distant couple relationship	Definition: The husband is emotionally and physically absent or very minimally involved in childrearing process and family life.
9. Support from the husband and extended family	Definition: Coherent family values sustained mutual understanding and transnational support from the husband and the other family members.	5. Discrepancy in parental expectations and perceived outcome	Definition: Children's undesirable or unsatisfactory performances in areas of academic, conduct and behaviours.
10. Children's development and growth	Definition: That the children demonstrate desirable conduct, academic performance, successful general adaptation and maturity.	6. Transition of children	Definition: Experiencing transitions in areas of adaptation to immigration and entering a different developmental stage.

11. Parenting consistency	Definition: Having coherent parenting goals, attitudes, and styles with the husband and the respected elders in the family.		
Area IV: Extra-personal resources and conditions			
12. Financial autonomy	Definition: Absence of financial concerns and constraints.	7. Perceived cultural barriers	Definition: Language barriers, unfamiliarity to local systems, and different cultural values.
13. Life and educational style	Definition: Perceived growth-enhancing and positive living environment for children's development.		

RESULT 2 : Wish lists

Categories	Items
1. Personal process	e.g., able to reunite with the husband
2. Family process	
2.1 Expectations for children	e.g., career prospect, behaviours and conduct
2.2 Expectations for the family	e.g., family reunion, older children can look after the younger
3. Social interactions	
3.1 Resources for immigrant adaptation	e.g., more ESL classes, Chinese pamphlets at the airport
3.2 Professional resources for mothers	e.g., more access to information and professional advice specifically for parenting
3.3 Career related resources	e.g., job information and opportunities

您好:

感謝您接受我的訪談，讓我有機會深入了解您在溫哥華教養兒女的經驗。您與其他 14 位來自中國大陸或台灣的媽媽與我分享您認為有幫助及造成困難的一些關鍵事件。我們也談到您對子女教養的期望或在過程中希望得到的協助。我將我們的訪談逐字打成文字檔案之後一一進行分析，初步統整出 13 個有幫助的領域項目以及 7 個造成困難的領域項目。還有 3 大願望清單類別。以下向您報告初步分析結果。

關鍵事件指您與您的家人移民到溫哥華後教養子女及適應新生活的經驗。這些經驗可能發生在不同時間點，涵蓋不同的人事物。您透過這些經驗得到正面令人滿意或負面使人不悅的結果或身心感受。因為這是綜合所有訪談所得出的結果，有些項目您不見得有經歷過或在訪談中提及。

領域項目及定義說明是分析 15 份訪談之後總結歸納出來的。接著，我再將您在個別訪談中所提到的內容列舉在相應的領域項目中。我儘量保持您的原話，不過度解讀或改寫，補充或改寫的詞語會以[...]標註。請閱讀內容並檢視我目前的分類是否：

(1) 確實符合您的經驗及想要表達的意思？

(2) 有需要修正調整的地方？

(3) 有進一步的補充建議？

徐薇喬 敬上

英屬哥倫比亞大學諮商心理學博士候選人

初步分析結果

■您在個別訪談中提到 **10** 個有助教養的關鍵事件和 **7** 個阻礙教養的關鍵事件及 **0** 個願望項目。

結果一： 關鍵事件歸納 (各領域中的要項依訪談中提及該項目的人數由多至少依序排列)

有助教養的要項	您舉例的關鍵事件	阻礙教養的要項	您舉例的關鍵事件
領域一：個人內在經歷			
1.個人的適應力與復原力 (過去留學經驗，語言能力，轉換思考，對學習新文化採開放態度)		1.分身乏術 (多重角色多重責任，以孩子為主無暇照顧自己個人的需求且難兼顧兩地家人)	
2.認同為人妻母角色 (接受以家庭為主及以孩子為中心的人妻人母角色，並體會到母親角色的重要性而為自己感到驕傲)		2.個人經歷轉換期 (適應移民生活外也個人生涯與職涯之轉變)	
3.目標堅定毅然決然 (既來之則安之，不輕言放棄，願吃苦的態度)			

4.性靈依歸 (從本身的宗教信仰或開始接觸的信仰上獲得支持、撫慰或啟發)			
5.創意與省思 (面對教養不斷自我反思、調整與學習，保有彈性，根據孩子的回饋與反應自我調整)			
領域二：家庭外的社會互動			
6.友情 (當地好友鄰居提供資訊，生活協助及急難時的幫忙)		3.社群狹隘 (社交圈以移民媽媽為主，工作人脈打不開，且朋友間較少深度的心靈交流)	
7.社區參與 (包括學英文，當義工，參加家庭生活外的活動)			
領域三：家庭動力(互動)與歷程			
8.民主式親子溝通		4.夫妻間有距離	

(傾聽，尊重，平等且開放地與孩子溝通，無話不談)		(丈夫未能提供心靈上的支持與慰藉，遠距使雙方對對方生活不熟悉，丈夫參與有限)	
9.丈夫及家人支持 (家人的信念與價值觀一致，即使遠距也能相互了解支持)		5.教養期待與現狀有落差 (孩子學業、行為及態度表現與期待不同，產生親子衝突與溝通困難)	
10.孩子的發展與成長 (良好特質，行為上成長與進步，適應佳及對母親體貼親近)		6.孩子經歷轉變期 (初來乍到時的學業落後；進入青春期後親子互動模式有變，需重新磨合調適)	

11.教養一致性 (與丈夫有共識，家族長輩對於教養態度與方式也一致)			
領域四：外在條件或資源			
12.經濟自主 (財務來源穩定無後顧之憂)		7.文化隔閡 (語言及文化差異及對環境不熟悉或有些地方不認同)	
13.生活與教育型態 (滿意生活環境;對華人家長圈的教育態度感到放心)			

結果二：願望清單

領域	清單
1. Personal process 個人規劃	

2 Family process 家庭歷程	
2.1 對子女的期望	
2.2 對家庭生活的期望	
3. Social interactions 社會互動	
3.1 增加協助移民適應的資源	
3.2 幫助媽媽的專業資源	
3.3 求職相關資源	

您好:

感谢您接受我的访谈，让我有机会深入了解您在温哥华教养儿女的经验。您与其他 14 位来自中国大陆或台湾的妈妈与我分享您认为有帮助及造成困难的一些关键事件。我们也谈到您对子女教养的期望或在过程中希望得到的协助。我将我们的访谈逐字打成文字档案之后一一进行分析，初步统整出 13 个有帮助的领域项目以及 7 个造成困难的领域项目。还有 3 大愿望清单类别。以下向您报告初步分析结果。

关键事件指您与您的家人移民到温哥华后教养子女及适应新生活的经验。这些经验可能发生在不同时间点，涵盖不同的人事物。您透过这些经验得到正面令人满意或负面使人不悦的结果或身心感受。因为这是综合所有访谈所得出的结果，有些项目您不见得有经历过或在访谈中提及。

领域项目及定义说明是分析 15 份访谈之后总结归纳出来的。接着，我再将您在个别访谈中所提到的内容列举在相应的领域项目中。我尽量保持您的原话，不过度解读或改写，补充或改写的词语会以[...]标注。请阅读内容并检视我目前的分类是否：

- 1) 确实符合您的经验及想要表达的意思？
- (2) 有需要修正调整的地方？
- (3) 有进一步的补充建议？

徐薇乔 敬上

英属哥伦比亚大学咨商心理学博士候选人

初步分析结果

- 您在个别访谈中提到 10 个有助教养的关键事件和 5 个阻碍教养的关键事件及 4 个愿望项目。

结果一： 关键事件归纳 (各领域中的要项依访谈中提及该项目的人数由多至少依序排列)

有助教养的要项	您举例的关键事件	阻碍教养的要项	您举例的关键事件
领域一：个人内在经历			
1.个人的适应力与复原力 (过去留学经验，语言能力，转换思考，对学习新文化采开放态度)		1.分身乏术 (多重角色多重责任，以孩子为主无暇照顾自己个人的需求且难兼顾两地家人)	
2.认同为人妻母角色 (接受以家庭为主及以孩子为中心的人妻人母角色，并体会到母亲角色的重要性而为自己感到骄傲)		2.个人经历转换期 (适应移民生活外也个人生涯与职涯之转变)	
3.目标坚定毅然决然 (既来之则安之，不轻言放弃，愿吃苦的态度)			
4.性灵依归 (从本身的宗教信仰或开始接触的信仰上获得支持、抚慰或启发)			

5.创意与省思 (面对教养不断自我反思、调整与学习·保有弹性·根据孩子的回馈与反应自我调整)			
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领域二：家庭外的社会互动			
6.友情 (当地好友邻居提供资讯·生活协助及急难时的帮忙)		3.社群狭隘 (社交圈以移民妈妈为主, 工作人脉打不开, 且朋友间较少深度的心灵交流)	
7.社区参与 (包括学英文·当义工·参加家庭生活外的活动)			
领域三：家庭动力(互动)与历程			
8.民主式亲子沟通 (倾听·尊重·平等且开放地与孩子沟通·无话不谈)		4.夫妻疏离 (丈夫未能提供心灵上的支持与慰藉·远距使双方对对方生活不熟悉·丈夫参与有限)	
9.丈夫及家人支持 (家人的信念与价值观一致·即使远距也能相互了解支持)		5.教养期待与现状有落差 (孩子学业·行为及态度表现与期待不同·产生亲子冲突与沟通困难)	

10.孩子的发展与成长 (良好特质，行为上成长与进步， 适应佳及对母亲体贴亲近)	6.孩子经历转变期 (初来乍到时的学业落后；进入 青春期后亲子互动模式有变， 需重新磨合调适)
--	--

11.教养一致性 (与丈夫有共识·家族长辈对于教 养态度与方式也一致)			
领域四：外在条件或资源			
12.经济自主 (财务来源稳定无后顾之忧)		7.文化隔阂 (语言及文化差异及对环境不 熟悉或有些地方不认同)	
13.加国生活与教育型态 (满意生活环境;对华人家长圈的 教育态度感到放心)			

结果二：愿望清单

领域	清单
1. 个人规划	
2. 家庭历程	
2.1 对子女的期望	

2.2 对家庭生活的期望	
3. 社会互动	
3.1 增加协助移民适应的资源	
3.2 帮助妈妈的专业资源	
3.3 求职相关资源	