STORIES OF OUR ANCESTORS:
INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND CHINESE-CANADIAN FAMILIES

by

Fred Chou

B.Sc., The University of Alberta, 2010
M.A., Trinity Western University, 2013

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Counselling Psychology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

February 2019

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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:

**Stories of Our Ancestors: Intergenerational Trauma and Chinese-Canadian Families**

submitted by Fred Chou in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology

**Examining Committee:**

Dr. Marla Buchanan, Counselling Psychology, University of British Columbia
Supervisor

Dr. Marvin Westwood, Counselling Psychology, University of British Columbia
Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Marvin McDonald, Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University
Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, Counselling Psychology, University of British Columbia
University Examiner

Dr. Laura Hurd Clarke, Kinesiology, University of British Columbia
University Examiner

Dr. Tom Strong, Counselling Psychology, University of Calgary
External Examiner
Abstract

Intergenerational trauma (IGT) is a distal determinant of mental health and has been examined in various populations, including Holocaust survivors and Indigenous peoples (Bombay et al., 2009). However, despite the significant historical traumas experienced by Chinese people in the twentieth century (e.g., the Great Famine and the Cultural Revolution), the research on IGT for this population has been limited. To address this gap in the literature, this study examined the following research question: *What are the narratives of IGT and resiliency among Chinese-Canadian families?*

Narratives of IGT among parental and offspring Chinese-Canadians were co-constructed utilizing an adapted version of Arvay’s (2003) Collaborative Narrative Approach. To affirm the multilingual aspect of storytelling, unique methodological considerations (i.e., the Linguistic Ecology Protocol) were integrated into the study. Eight participants took part in the study with four from two parent-offspring dyads. Participants who took part as family dyads shared their co-constructed stories to each other in a reflective dialogue. These dialogues were witnessed by the researcher and incorporated into the study as separate narratives. An across-narrative analysis was conducted utilizing Braun and Clarke’s (2003) thematic analysis. From the analysis ten themes were developed. Five themes were associated with parental experiences: (a) *Decimation of Social Structures*; (b) *Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse*; (c) *Desperation for Survival*; (d) *Personal Losses and the Denial of Education and Opportunities*; and (e) *Maintenance of Values and Emphasis on the Future*. While the next five themes consisted of trauma transmission processes and its impact on the offspring generation: (a) *Silence, Shame, and Disconnection*; (b) *Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of Interdependence*; (c) *Fear
and Discipline; (d) Education as Survival and Identity; and (e) Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage.

To understand the unique facets of history, trauma, and narrative presented in the analysis and co-constructed stories, a narrative model for Chinese-Canadian IGT is proposed. This model includes: (a) The remembered traumas and the social construction of Chinese-Canadian IGT; (b) intergenerational narrative pathways; and (c) intergenerational narrative identity construction and resilience. The study has implications for counselling psychology in the areas of narrative and multicultural research and family and trauma therapy.
Lay Summary

This study examined the research question: *What are the narratives of intergenerational trauma (IGT) and resiliency among Chinese-Canadian families?* Narratives of IGT among parental and offspring Chinese-Canadians were co-constructed utilizing an adapted version of Arvay’s (2003) Collaborative Narrative Approach. Eight participants took part in the study with four from two parent-offspring dyads. Participants who took part as family dyads shared their co-constructed stories to each other in a reflective dialogue. This dialogue was then documented as separate narratives. All the narratives were analyzed using thematic analysis and from the analysis ten themes were developed.

To understand the intersection between history, trauma, and narrative, a narrative model for Chinese-Canadian IGT is proposed. This model incorporates a discussion about silence, narrative pathways, and identity construction in relation to IGT. The study has implications for counselling psychology in the areas of narrative and multicultural research and family and trauma therapy.
Preface

This dissertation is the original intellectual work of the author, F. Chou. The research activities were approved by The University of British Columbia, ethics certificate number H16-01493. Research activities were partially funded by the Vancouver Foundation between UBC’s Centre for Group Counselling and Trauma and S.U.C.C.E.S.S., grant certificate # UNR15-0667. The research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant # 752-2015-2442.

Data collection was completed by the author with translation and interpretation support provided by the research assistant, C. Huang (Master’s student, Counselling Psychology). Additional recruitment support was provided by the research assistant S. Truong (Undergraduate student, Social Work, University of British Columbia). Interviews were transcribed by the author and the research assistants C. Huang and J. Chan (Master’s student, Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University), and with the use of professional transcription services. Translation services and cultural consultation was provided by V. Ng. Community and cultural consultations were provided by M. Kam (Program Director, Family and Youth Services, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.) and the Counselling Services team at S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
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List of Abbreviations

APA – American Psychiatric Association
CCP – Chinese Communist Party
CNM – Collaborative Narrative Method
CTSC – Cultural Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping
DSM – Diagnostic Statistical Manual
IGT – Intergenerational Trauma
KMT – Kuomintang
LEC-5 – Life Events Checklist–5
PTS – Posttraumatic Stress
PTSD – Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
TTRG – Transgenerational Trauma and Resilience Genogram
Glossary

Face: Refers to two associated concepts, lian (one’s personal integrity and moral character) and mianzi (one’s public self-image)

Filial piety: Behaviours, thoughts, cognitions, emotions, and intentions concerning respect and “being good” to one’s parents.

Guanxi: One’s personalized network of social relationships, similar to social capital.

Laogai: Also referred to as Chinese gulags. The laogai are labour reform camps.

Renqing: Favour and reciprocity in social relationships

Struggle sessions: Self-criticism in the form of public humiliation to shape public opinion.

The Lost Generation: The generation of students who lost time and education as they were sent to labour camps during the Cultural Revolution.
Acknowledgements

There are many who have been part of my PhD and dissertation journey and I do not believe I could have completed it without this community. This project is as much theirs as it is my own. Not being able to acknowledge everyone here is only indicative of vastness of this community of support.

First, I want to acknowledge the participants. Thank you for privileging me with your stories. Your stories are sacred and to share these stories in light of this topic is an act of courage. Your voice is important as it sheds light to the often-unspoken aspects of Chinese-Canadian life. By sharing your stories, you have inspired me, and I know will inspire other Chinese-Canadians.

To the dissertation committee that has guided me through every step of this project and my doctoral journey. Dr. Marla Buchanan, your kindness and warmth has taught me what it means to care deeply as a scholar and what it means to uplift those under your guidance and care. Dr. Marvin McDonald, for continuing to mentor me from my time at TWU till now and for your endless wisdom that has guided me through difficult periods in my own life. Dr. Marvin Westwood, for upholding my values as a clinician and researcher and for creating space for me to let the stories of my participants resonate with my own.

To the research team. C. Huang, I could not have completed this dissertation without the crucial role that you played. As you have allowed yourself to be impacted by these stories, I know that you will continue to dignify and impact others. V. Ng, it takes strength to hold these stories especially in the ways that it resonates with you. Your actions encouraged me to continue with humility, courage and strength. To the others who have helped with recruitment, transcription, and editorial support, thank you.
To the counselling team at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and the community stakeholders who shaped this project, thank you. Your guidance has helped ensure that this project was done with intentionality and cultural integrity. M. Kam, thank you for entrusting me to take on this project and for allowing me to utilize the space at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., but more importantly, for recognizing the value and vision of this endeavor.

To my academic and clinical colleagues, mentors, supervisors, and the many who work behind the scenes of these academic projects. Thank you for your guidance and support.

To my faith community for upholding me to a higher aspirational ethic of my faith.

To my family. Your lives have afforded me this opportunity to study a difficult subject matter in a society that honors academic freedom. You have raised me to be the person that I am today, and I hope that this project will make you proud.

Last, I want to acknowledge my wife, Candice. For walking with me in the everyday. The everyday is often left unspoken, lost in the “bigger” moments of success and difficulties. Yet, for me, it is in the everyday, the little moments of companionship that has been the most meaningful. Thank you.
In dedication to my 爺爺...
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational trauma (IGT) is part of my story. My grandfather was subjected to struggle sessions when he resided in China—how that impacted him, what it involved, and to what extent he witnessed and experienced other traumas is unbeknownst to me. Throughout my childhood, I would recall waking up in the middle of the night to the haunting cries of my grandfather’s night terrors. I remember hoping someone else would wake him, as the expression of fear and the cold sweat running down his forehead were difficult for me to bear. That image of fear contrasted so starkly with the image of warmth and gentleness that I was otherwise familiar with. What did those terrors entail? What did he experience? How can I piece his story together now that he is gone? Was I the one afraid to know what was once known?

My parents are part of China’s “Lost Generation”. They both worked in the laogai (Chinese labour camps) during their teenage years. Both were there for several years, occupying different jobs, while my father remained several more years than my mother. The extent to which these experiences influenced and shaped them is a curious matter. In chatting with my father, I learned he worked in the rice fields and that it was difficult and hard work. As a counsellor who works with people dealing with psychological trauma, I was curious to understand how my father conceptualized these events. I remember being befuddled to hear about his atrocious working conditions and to hear he had known friends who either had died or killed themselves during that time. Nonchalantly, he spoke of these events as being normal.

In the 1980s, my family immigrated to Canada. As a testament to their resilience, they were able to raise myself and my siblings with their limited ability to speak English, working several low paying jobs and being part of a land that was completely foreign to them. Despite my parents’ successful immigration and integration, I am still left with a sense of bewilderment
and incompleteness regarding my family narrative and history. Were these events that they experienced as immigrants traumatic? Is it disrespectful to dig further into their past, and were these difficult experiences meant to be kept silent? The challenges of these events, both in China and the difficulties related to immigration, are rarely spoken about. Yet, this silence continues to speak ever so loudly as I come to understand my own history and ethnic identity as a Chinese-Canadian.

These curiosities surrounding silence and trauma parallel some of the initial observations of IGT in research (Danieli, 1998). The concept of IGT was first developed to understand the impact of the Holocaust on the families of survivors (Danieli, 1998). During this period, there pervaded a silence related to the Holocaust, which Danieli refers to as “The Conspiracy of Silence.” IGT, as a construct, extends beyond individual psychology and intersects many discourses—contested histories, culture, politics, victimhood, and trauma, to name a few. These intersections illustrate the complexity, but also the importance, of understanding the generational past and its influence on the present as captured through psychological concepts such as mental health, stress, and coping (Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014). To an extent, the IGT construct can help navigate both systemic oppression and family histories often shrouded in politics and shame.

Despite my grandfather essentially serving as a surrogate parent, it was only in my late twenties, after my grandfather had passed away, that I learned more facets of his story. Why was his story kept silent for so long? It is ironic and disheartening at the same time, because I occupy a profession where I am privileged to know many stories, yet his story remains unknown to me. Having completed endless self-reflections and family genograms in my counselling training, how
could I have missed such a vital part of my own family history? Did this omission result from a lack of effort, or were there other factors influencing my lack of awareness?

The silence is not only personal, but also seems to be systemic. Despite a history of oppression and tragedy inflicted upon Chinese people in China and Canada during the twentieth century, the intergenerational effects of these events have scarcely been studied. This silence in the literature brings up many questions: Why has the literature been largely silent despite the use of IGT to study many other cultural groups? Is there something unique about Chinese people or the politics of these events that perpetuate this silence? Can this omission even be conceptualized as silence from within a Chinese worldview? How have these events impacted subsequent generations, and how can they be understood? Is this just my own story or a story shared among many Chinese-Canadians?

Counselling Psychology and the Intersection of Culture and Trauma

As a discipline, counselling psychology has historically supported research and practice concerning topics related to psychological trauma, culture, and narrative psychology, as well as mental health and the well-being of individuals, families, and communities (Canadian Psychological Association, 2009; Figley, 1988; Hoshmand, 2005). It is these broad theoretical perspectives that provide the foundations for this study. Trauma theory and cultural perspectives offer a theoretical lens for comprehending IGT in Chinese-Canadian contexts, while narrative psychology serves as a vehicle to understand its intersectionality and honours the idiographic, meaning-making dimensions of this phenomenon.

Trauma theory provides a basis for understanding the psychological impacts of traumatic events upon an individual, both intra-personally and inter-personally. Trauma can be defined as a “shock that is deemed emotional and substantially damaging over a long time period. It can...
have long-lasting effects such as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and somatic symptoms” (Gagne, 1998, p. 356). It is inherently linked with a stress and coping paradigm as illustrated by van der Kolk (1989) who states that “traumatization occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat” (p. 393). However, trauma theory and the stress and coping paradigm may be problematic, as they are historically grounded in a Euro-American perspective of psychology and psychiatry. Such a perspective runs the risk of an imposed-ethic application of psychological constructs (Hill, Lau, & Sue, 2010; Sanchez, Spector, & Cooper, 2006; Wong, Wong, & Lonner, 2006). Thus, IGT may not necessarily be an equivalent construct among non-European cultures.

The integration of cultural and multicultural perspectives in research and practice can be understood as the “fourth force” in counselling psychology (Pedersen, 1991). Broadly, culture can be defined as “a system of meaning with values, norms, behaviors, language, and history that is passed on from one generation to the next through socialization and participation in the group’s organizations and institutions” (Carter, 2007, p. 18). The study of culture in the field of psychology can be delineated into three perspectives: cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous (Greenfield, 2000). Cross-cultural psychology operationalizes culture as an antecedent variable that is outside of the individual, whereby “culture and human activity are seen as separable” (p. 223). Cultural psychology, on the other hand, conceptualizes culture as being inside the individual. In cultural psychology, culture, human activity, and behaviour are indistinguishable, as culture serves as a way of knowing and construing the world. Meanwhile, indigenous psychology is similar to cultural psychology in that meaning-systems are bounded by culture; however, it places an emphasis on formalizing folk theories of psychology into psychological
theories. The difference between these perspectives is a matter of ontology and epistemological positions (Greenfield, 2000).

There is a movement in the literature calling for the integration of cultural perspectives and trauma theory (Hill, Lau, & Sue, 2010). For instance, Hill et al. (2010) promotes indigenous perspectives informed by history, culture, and epistemology for understanding trauma, while Goodman (2014) endorses the perspective of decolonizing trauma-informed counselling theory and practices. Furthermore, Danieli (2007) proposes that culture plays a fundamental role for understanding IGT. The commitment to cultural perspectives in examining trauma is also a commitment towards social justice principles in research and practice (Goodman & Gorski, 2014). A social justice orientation affirms the systemic dimensions of oppression and is dedicated to emancipation and participatory principles in research (Vera & Speight, 2003). Taking these perspectives together, the study of IGT among Chinese-Canadians should be informed by social justice principles and Chinese cultural views, while recognizing relevant psychological variables that may interact with this phenomenon, such as acculturation.

**Narrative, Culture, and the Intergenerational Self**

Narrative psychology offers an approach that affirms cultural practices and socially situated settings to make sense of actions and events through narrative meanings (Bhatia, 2011; Bruner, 1991; Phillion, 2002). Both narrative and cultural psychology draw from Jerome Bruner’s (1991, 1993) writings that emphasize narrative meaning-making through the symbolic products of culture that shape, and are shaped by, the mind (Bakhurts & Shanker, 2001; Hoshmand, 2005). The self is apprehended as being dialogically and culturally constituted, and can be understood through narrative accounts (Hoshmand, 2005). As Bhatia (2011) contends, “narrative inquiry is fundamentally a cultural act and also rooted in a cultural psychology that
must aim to understand the constitution of self-other relationships by carrying out ‘thick descriptions’ of identity formation in diverse cultural settings” (p. 348). Hence, given my narrative commitments, I draw heavily from cultural and indigenous perspectives in psychology.

Narrative approaches also intersect with trauma discourse as they enable the exploration of meaning within oppressive realities (Keats, 2009). As Hsiao, Klimidis, Minas, and Tan (2006) contend, “the experience of suffering organized in narrative form can illustrate how narratives emerge within the frames of cultural values” (p. 1000). Furthermore, the use of narrative approaches is an exemplary strategy for studying experiences of trauma in a respectful and honouring way, allowing victims and survivors to tell their stories in ways they want them to be told (Durham, 2002; Liamputtong, 2006). As such, narrative approaches have been used widely, to study IGT in the families of Holocaust survivors and historical trauma in Indigenous Peoples (see Bar-On, 1995; Denham, 2008; Wiseman, Metzl, & Barber, 2006).

Lastly, the integration of narrative, culture, and family narratives can be understood from the perspective of narrative identity which forms the intergenerational self (Fivush, Bohanek, & Duke, 2008; McAdams, 2001; Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Narrative identity refers to the notion that individuals construct a sense of who they are—their life story—through personal and past experiences by “integrating reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose” (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 233). Fivush et al. (2008) propose that, as one becomes aware of their subjective self, he/she comes to understand that their lives can be understood through the lives of others, particularly their family. The co-constructed narratives of personal and familial experiences are vital for the construction of narrative identity—family stories become part of one’s own self-definition (Fivush et al., 2008). The self can therefore be understood intergenerationally through one’s narrative identity that develops
amid multiple generations of family story (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). This concept of intergenerational self and narrative identity is a culturally appropriate concept for understanding the narrative lives of the study’s participants, as it parallels the Chinese concept of the da wo, “the great self,” where the self is understood to include one’s family and is inherited from one’s ancestors (Bedford & Hwang, 2003).

**Context and Purpose of the Study**

Asians represent North America’s largest and fastest growing ethnic group, with the majority of Asian immigrants being of Chinese descent (Statistics Canada, 2004; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004). Canadians of Chinese descent make up about 1.5 million people. In Metro Vancouver (i.e. the area around the city), roughly 18% of the population is of Chinese heritage, with 48.5% in Richmond and 28.8% in Vancouver proper (Statistics Canada, 2013). This population has substantial social influence, as they are the highest-income, best educated, and fastest-growing racial group in North America (Pew Research Centre, 2012). However, this population has historically experienced significant injustices, where the oft-applied moniker of “successful” can silence the real social and psychological challenges that Chinese-Canadians still face (Aguirre & Lio, 2008; Chou & Feagin, 2008).

Studies show that Chinese-Canadians face unique stressors such as racism, bicultural conflict, and familial stress found to be linked with higher risk factors for anxiety, depression, and traumatic stress (Lee & Ahn, 2011; Wei, Wang, Heppner, & Du, 2012). Systemically, this population rarely seeks professional support, as there is substantial shame and stigma related to mental illness (Chen, Kazanjian, & Wong, 2009). There is also a lack of intervention and prevention planning because of their “model minority” status, a status which unduly diminishes and minimalizes these significant challenges (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Sue, Cheng, Saad, & Chu,
As racial discrimination is linked to vulnerabilities in mental health, it is important to recognize its historical legacy (Pieterse, Carter, Evans, & Walker, 2010). The link between the past and present can be understood through intergenerational and historical trauma research as a narrative that contextualizes current-day mental health, vulnerability, and resilience (Mohatt et al., 2014).

Despite the prominence of traumatic events in Chinese history and the growing population of Chinese in North America, there has been limited research on IGT among Chinese populations. The only research available has been To’s (2014) autoethnographic dissertation on Chinese-Canadians and Plänkers (2014), a study of IGT associated with the Cultural Revolution among people in China. While there is some emerging literature on the examination of traumatic stress in Chinese societies (see Tang, 2007), research on the manifestation of traumatic stress in Chinese-Canadians has been minimal. Furthermore, the research on trauma for Chinese populations has typically been limited to certain types of traumas, while other forms of trauma such as relational trauma and political oppression remain largely unexplored (Tang, 2007). To address these gaps in the literature, this study will be the first to explore both the parental and offspring IGT narratives with respect to Chinese-Canadians.

The purpose of this study is to comprehend the personal and familial stories of IGT and resiliency among Chinese-Canadian families. The study seeks to understand how trauma has uniquely impacted this diaspora through its use of narrative inquiry to affirm culture, history, and social context, all the while recognizing that this topic also intersects other concepts such as cultural identity, migration, and acculturation. As mentioned, the IGT construct utilizes a trauma discourse to link the past with the present. It affirms the realities of victimization and oppression.
that are foundational to psychological trauma, but also the co-occurrence of psychological resiliency (Carter, 2007; Wong et al., 2006).

Narrative methodology was chosen for this study given its emphasis on culture, identity, sociality, and temporality (Clandinin, 2013; Hoshmand, 2005). IGT is a generational construct that is inherently relational and intersects with culture and identity (Danieli, 1998), while the study itself emphasizes a cultural position. There exists a fundamental link between narrative and culture, as culture provides the symbolic systems to construct meaning and the interpretive tools for understanding narratives (Bruner, 1991, 1993). As the study examines the connection of trauma between generations, it emphasizes weaving temporal and social experiences into narrative form (Clandinin, 2013). Narratives must be used to understand the connection of stories between generations and how it shapes identity (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Lastly, given the examination of traumatic and oppressive experiences, a narrative approach is valuable for creating a respectful space for understanding participants’ meaning construction (Keats, 2009). It provides an ethical opportunity for silenced stories to be told. These rationales for utilizing narrative inquiry are expanded upon in Chapter 3.

In the tradition of narrative inquiry, personal reflexivity and the use of “I” and personal language are used to position myself as a participant in the interactive dimension of this study (Chase, 2005). This study is a dialogue, not only for reading communities, but also between myself and participants, myself and readers, and participants and readers, all within the discourse of IGT. The research elucidates as much the participants’ story as my own, and our collaborative story is reflected throughout this study. Therefore, as it is our narrative, stories are meant to be constructed in a manner that honours and affirms the cultural understandings and social contexts
of participants. It is my hope that the use of personal language can also connect readers to their own histories and family narratives.

**Research Question and Dissertation Chapters**

The main research question examined in this study is thus: *What are the narratives of intergenerational trauma (IGT) and resiliency among Chinese-Canadian families?* Along with this question are sub-questions that will also be explored: (a) *How does the experience of pre- and/or post-migratory trauma impact first generation immigrants and their interactions with their family?* (b) *How has trauma in the first generation influenced growing up as a second-generation Chinese-Canadian?* (c) *How does psychological trauma transmit intergenerationally in Chinese-Canadian families?*

To explore this topic, this dissertation will be broken down into several chapters. The first chapter is an introduction, providing an overview and rationale for the study. The second chapter consists of a literature review, outlining the intersecting discourses and research literature associated with IGT and Chinese-Canadians. Chapter Three is the methods chapter, detailing the paradigmatic foundations of the study, its research context, and design. Chapters Four and Five comprise result chapters and include the demographic information of the participants, the participant narratives within the family dyads, and an across-narrative analysis. Please note that the narratives of participants not associated with any family members in this study are included in Appendix A. Lastly, Chapter Six contains a discussion that reflexively connects the narratives and their analysis with the broader literature and continues the conversation about IGT in Chinese-Canadian families.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review involves an overview of trauma theory and intergenerational trauma (IGT), the relevant historical and contextual dimensions for understanding IGT among Chinese-Canadians, and the Chinese-Canadian “stress and coping” and mental health literature. This study draws from cultural, narrative, and trauma psychology and frames culture as an implicit dimension of psychology. These perspectives will be the framework for understanding the broader literature. In alignment with social constructionism, the historical overview, one grounded in understandings across multiple social sciences, in this chapter provides a backdrop for understanding the context of IGT.

Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational Trauma (IGT) refers to the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next (Goodman, 2014). It is the notion that “traumatic experiences endured during childhood or adulthood might profoundly influence the well-being of [parents’] offspring” (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009, p. 15). The process of IGT can be summarized in the following manner: (a) parents who have experienced psychological trauma develop distorted practices for human relations, (b) these distorted practices impact and disrupt the parent-child relationship, and (c) the disrupted parent-child relationship results in specific and defined experiential outcomes for their children and subsequent generations within that family (Sigal, 1973). According to this model, IGT considers: (a) the degree and nature of parental traumatization, (b) the intergenerational transmission process of trauma, and (c) the behavioural and experiential characteristics of their children and subsequent generations (Felsen, 1998).

Although there are many terminologies similar and/or associated with IGT, such as multigenerational, transgenerational, historical, and cultural trauma, each term comes from
different disciplines that emphasize a particular dimension of IGT (Bar-On et al., 1998; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Kellerman, 2001). These constructs capture the individual or collective experience of trauma passed on from one generation to the next. Each uses trauma theory to understand the impact of significant events related to human suffering and their long-term generational consequences. To understand IGT and how it applies to the Chinese-Canadian diaspora requires an overview of trauma theory, an explication of IGT and related constructs, and an overview of the theory and research regarding the three core components of IGT (parental traumatization, transmission process, and effect on subsequent generations). A cultural critique will also be engaged, to understand of the means by which IGT can be applied cross-culturally.

**Trauma Theory and Intergenerational Trauma**

The history of trauma theory can be traced back to Jean Martin Charcot, a French physician working with traumatized women, and Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot who studied dissociative and traumatic memories (Ringel, 2012). Charcot first hypothesized that hysterical symptoms may be psychological, rather than physiological in nature. Sigmund Freud was later influenced by Charcot’s writings, and both Freud and Janet concluded that hysteria was caused by psychological trauma (Ringel, 2012). Although Charcot was the first to formalize trauma and hysteria, other perspectives as early as the 1800s similarly connected catastrophic accidents and child abuse to hysteria (Weisaeth, 2014). However, debates emerged, regarding whether an organic or social etiology was sufficient to explain to psychic trauma (Weisaeth, 2014). Unfortunately for the continued development of trauma studies, Freud drew back on trauma theory in favor of “seduction theory,” which would prove to be problematic. It would not be until the 1970s that research on childhood sexual abuse traumas would re-emerge (Ringel, 2012; Weisaeth, 2014).
The interest in psychological trauma was spurred on during and after World War I, to understand so-called “shell-shock” or “soldier’s heart” in soldiers returning from war (Weisaeth, 2014). During this time, trauma theory began to shift towards a recognition of how trauma often re-enacted itself. Scientific debates focused on whether it was therapeutic to invoke traumatic memories (Ringel, 2012). After World War II, perspectives from Holocaust survivors and the women’s rights movement emerged and contributed to contemporary trauma theory (Ringel, 2012).

It was not until the 1980s that the diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was developed and included in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-III, American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1980; Ringel, 2012). This inclusion occurred largely as a response to the Vietnam War, whose veterans presented with severe psychological symptomology. The development of PTSD was politically inundated and was utilized to advocate for different victims. Advocates for veterans, battered women, rape survivors, and abused children contributed politically to the inclusion of PTSD in the DSM (Jones & Wessely, 2006). This formalized diagnosis signified a shift in the understanding of psychological trauma, from victim-blaming toward recognizing the impact of traumatic events upon survivors (Jones & Wessely, 2006). The development of PTSD as a diagnosis underlines the sociohistorical tensions related to understanding human suffering during a period of significant turmoil and the growing prominence of psychological and psychiatric research (Young, 1995).

Contemporary perspectives understand psychological trauma as stress responses. The perspective delineates regular stressors (ordinary and expected experiences in life) from traumatic stressors, events outside of the normal range of an individual’s experience that are
considered to be exceptional mental and physical burdens (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995). This concept is summarized in the following quotation by Denham (2008):

> It is important to recognize that traumatic events do not always result in psychiatric distress; individuals, as well as societies, differ in the manner in which they experience, process and remember events. Thus, distress resulting from a trauma experience is not due to the traumatic event per se, but the response attributed to, or meaning derived from the trauma experience. (p. 395)

The DSM-5 defines trauma within a PTSD framework as the exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, and/or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s). (APA, 2013, p. 271)

Due to the prominence of the DSM, the construct of PTSD has become the dominant perspective on psychological trauma, potentially resulting in the denial of other forms of trauma such as racial discrimination (Carter, 2007). Furthermore, the DSM’s definition of trauma is culturally framed from a Eurocentric worldview. The definition narrowly determines trauma as being highly individualized and does not necessarily consider its ecological dimensions (Carter, 2007; Goodman, 2014; Young, 1995). Gone (2013) argues that PTSD as a construct is insufficient for understanding the complexities of the social, historical, and political dimensions of human suffering for ethnic groups, especially those who have been oppressed.
The plethora of theories about trauma highlights the plurality of perspectives and debates in the literature that attempt to expand the DSM model of PTSD and trauma. For instance, “complex trauma” extends the definition beyond a singular trauma and affirms the impact of multiple traumas from a developmental model (Herman, 1992; van der Kolk et al., 2005). Alternative perspectives also include systemically-orientated trauma theories that emphasize the ecological dimensions of trauma (Goldsmith, Martin, & Smith, 2014). In this vein, IGT has contributed significantly to the development of contemporary trauma theory; it extends beyond the limitations of DSM-defined trauma, as it includes the intergenerational, systemic, and relational aspects of trauma, as well as a conception of “resiliency” (Danieli, 1998; Goodman, 2014). The multidimensionality of IGT may explain the popularity of its application to human suffering among various populations and ethnic groups; such multidimensionality allows a more holistic understanding of trauma (Danieli, 1998).

**Intergenerational Trauma and Historical Trauma.** The concept of intergenerational transmission of trauma was first noted by Canadian clinicians in 1966 who were concerned about the children of Holocaust survivors seeking treatment (Rakoff, 1966; Rakoff, Sigal, & Epstein, 1966). Since then, the literature on IGT has proliferated, with over 500 published articles on Holocaust-survivor families alone (Kellerman, 2008). Although the research started with the families of Holocaust survivors, IGT has been utilized to comprehend human suffering and distress for multiple populations and ethnic groups: North American Indigenous Peoples (Bombay et al., 2009, 2014; Brave Heart, 1999), Japanese-American survivors of internment camps (Nagata, 1998), the Armenian holocaust (Karenian et al., 2010), Cambodian genocide survivors (Field, Muong, & Sochanvimean, 2013), South East Asian refugees (Han, 2006); African-American slaves (Leary, 2005), and combat veterans (Dekel & Goldblatt, 2008).
Unfortunately, the historical-empirical research on IGT has been problematic. Critics of its methodology have argued an insufficient rigour in the research, given its ostensibly biased samples, lack of control groups, and over-reliance on clinical anecdotes (Solkoff, 1992). Yet others have argued that the tools used to study IGT may not be sensitive enough to capture the phenomenon of interest, and further, that there are many other factors to consider when studying IGT (Felsen, 1998; Danieli et al., 2015). For instance, IGT can be understood through developmental-socioemotional domains as opposed to psychopathology (Bar-On et al., 1998).

The development of the IGT discourse has also spurred on the development numerous other theoretical constructs. When mapping out the theoretical frameworks for understanding IGT, it is important to understand there are different models, emerging from different disciplines, that serve a multiplicity of purposes in the extant literature. Table 1 provides an overview and a brief description of some of the key models related to and/or part of IGT, which will be referred to throughout this review.

Table 1. Theoretical models related to Intergenerational Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Key Author(s)</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multilevel Framework for Historical Trauma</td>
<td>Evans-Campbell (2008)</td>
<td>A framework for understanding the impacts of IGT situated at the individual, family, and community-levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgenerational Transmission of Historical Trauma</td>
<td>Kirmayer et al. (2014)</td>
<td>Highlights trauma’s multiplicity of pathways that impact multiple systems from nation, community, family, to individual. These processes include epigenetics, psychological well-being, self-esteem, self-efficacy, family function, community integrity, cultural identity, and the identity and collective efficacy of a people group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma and the continuity of self: A multidimensional, multidisciplinary integrative (TCMI) framework</td>
<td>Danieli (1998)</td>
<td>The model proposes that trauma creates a psychological rupture individually and systemically. The post-victimization traumata, which include silence, determine the degree and severity of the rupture. Trauma impacts all related dimensions of an individual’s life. Its intergenerational impact results in vulnerability and resilience in subsequent generations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Systemic Trauma Models
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Trauma</th>
<th>Sztompa (2000)</th>
<th>Trauma has sociological roots and can be understood as a wound experienced in the collective memory of a cultural community.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Trauma</td>
<td>Brave Heart (1999)</td>
<td>A collection of features associated with cumulative trauma across generations. This construct has been utilized to understand indigenous mental health and healing (see Maxwell, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational,</td>
<td>Sigal &amp; Weinfield (1989),</td>
<td>Interchangeable terminologies referring to the transmission of trauma generationally. Different terminologies highlight differences regarding generational focus. “Intergenerational” involves two or more generations in activities that enable them to be more aware of different generational perspectives; whereas “multigenerational” has a broader focus (Villar, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multigenerational,</td>
<td>Danieli (1998),</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross-generational,</td>
<td>Lowin (1983),</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transgenerational trauma</td>
<td>Felsen (1998)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Based Traumatic</td>
<td>Carter (2007); Goodman (2014)</td>
<td>Formalizes the notion that systemic oppression in the form of racial discrimination can cause suffering and result in PTSD symptomology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress / Systemic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oppression Trauma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex Trauma</td>
<td>Ford &amp; Curtois (2014); Herman (1992)</td>
<td>Exposure to multiple traumatic experiences, often interpersonal and during childhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disenfranchised Grief and</td>
<td>Doka (1989); Neimeyer (2002)</td>
<td>When a loss is experienced and the grief is not openly acknowledged or publicly mourned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatic Loss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttraumatic Stress</td>
<td>DSM-III, III-R, IV, IV-TR, 5</td>
<td>The experience of actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence, with the presence of intrusive symptoms, avoidance of related stimuli, negative cognition and mood, and/or alterations to arousal and reactivity with associated stimuli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Traumatization</td>
<td>Keilson et al. (1992)</td>
<td>The long-term effects and damage from a sequence of negative traumatic events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivor Syndrome</td>
<td>Niederland (1968)</td>
<td>A group of symptoms that appeared to be consistent for Holocaust survivors. This included anxiety, disruption to cognition and memory, depressive states, isolation and withdrawal, alterations to identity, and psychosomatic conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma Transmission Theories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Model of</td>
<td>Kellerman (2001)</td>
<td>An integrative model for understanding trauma transmission as comprised of psychodynamic, sociocultural, and familial systems, as well as biological theories with corresponding mediums for transmission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma Transmission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epigenetic transference</td>
<td>Yehuda et al. (1998)</td>
<td>A biological theory that trauma impacts heritable DNA sequences through epigenetics; trauma modifies the functional expression through latent trauma transmission that may express itself under stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of trauma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment theory</td>
<td>Bar-On et al. (1998); Siegel (2003)</td>
<td>provides a model for understanding the continuous and cumulative nature of the parent-child interaction and how trauma can compromise these interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Traumatization</td>
<td>Rosenheck &amp; Nathan (1985)</td>
<td>Namesake results from a close emotional connection and caring for an individual with PTSD or knowing about the traumatic events suffered by a significant other.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Secondary Traumatic Stress**  
Figley (1988, 1995)  
Details consequence of secondary traumatization. As a construct, secondary traumatic stress is often used interchangeably with secondary traumatization.

| Vicarious Traumatization | McCann & Pearlman (1990) | Often referring to helpers of individuals who are traumatized. Includes the cumulative effects of helping an individual who is traumatized. |

**Historical trauma.** One of the more prominent and contemporary perspectives emerging from IGT literature is historical trauma. Historical trauma refers to the collective, multigenerational experience of trauma and distress inflicted upon a group of people who share a specific group identity such as ethnicity, nationality, or religious affiliation (Evans-Campbell, 2008). It is defined as the “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences” (Brave Heart, 2003, p. 7). The scholarship on historical trauma originated from an application of IGT, developed in Holocaust literature, to Indigenous people in North America (Ehlers, Gizer, Gilder, Ellingson, & Yehuda, 2013). Thornton (1987) was the first to parallel the Holocaust and the experience of North American Aboriginal peoples, referring to the latter’s experiences as the “American Indian Holocaust.”. Later, Brave Heart (1993, 1999) developed the term, “historical trauma,” by integrating historical oppression and psychological trauma under the construct, while Duran and Duran (1995) created a similar construct known as the soul wound (Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses, 2014).

According to Elias et al. (2012), historical trauma differentiates itself from IGT in that it is not confined to a singular large-scale event, rather it comprises a cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over generations. Historical trauma involves a collective experience of trauma or wounding that spans multiple societal generations, whereas IGT refers to an experience of trauma located within familial generations that can, but does not necessarily, involve a larger, collective experience (Mohatt et al., 2014). Historical trauma, as in a colonized
history, can be viewed as an emancipatory construction, because it aims to contextualize Indigenous health problems within the spectrum of post-colonial suffering, to de-stigmatize recovery and self-blame, and legitimize cultural practices as therapeutic interventions (Gone, 2013). However, there are tensions between the two discourses—emancipatory and pragmatic realism—of which historical trauma is comprised (Kirmayer et al., 2014). The former aims to re-socialize medical views of trauma and affirm social, cultural, and psychological contexts, while the latter medicalizes the social and contributes to the presumption of universal trauma responses (Kirmayer et al., 2014).

In a recent special issue of Transcultural Psychiatry, Maxwell (2014) and Kirmayer et al. (2014) critically examine the theory of historical trauma. Maxwell (2014) notes that the trauma discourse is well accustomed to legitimized individual or social suffering and seems to have greater social currency than discourses concerning collective struggles against colonialism. To support her position, Maxwell expounds the history of professional colonial discourse which tended to pathologize Indigenous values and family practices. However, she also notes that the uncritical applications of historical trauma oversimplify the suffering of Indigenous parents and families. In doing so, they can move the healing discourse away from the proximal challenges related to the impact of colonialism. Kirmayer et al. (2014) argue there are similar issues with applying the IGT construct to Indigenous peoples, as there are many cultural, historical, and political dimensions of the suffering caused by the Holocaust that differ from the suffering under colonization for Indigenous peoples. For instance, there has been longstanding recognition of the Holocaust as genocide, whereas only in the last decade have events like the residential schools begun to garner societal recognition for the plight of Indigenous people in North America. Nonetheless, though the application of IGT to Indigenous peoples’ stories may have
its limitations, the paradigm remains an important tool to recognize the forms of impact from the aftermath of oppression and trauma, and its experience in subsequent generations.

Proponents of the historical trauma perspective emphasize that it (a) provides an alternative to understanding mental health in Indigenous peoples that extends beyond PTSD; (b) affirms the role of colonization to counterbalance propositions of mental health problems being purely biological; (c) preserves relational dimensions within Indigenous perspectives; and (d) supports the efforts of Indigenous revitalization and reclamation, affirming Indigenous ways of healing (Gone, 2014). As a construct, historical trauma may be more relevant than PTSD, as it affirms the complex, collective, cumulative, and intergenerational impacts of colonization (Gone, 2013). Bombay et al. (2014) contend historical trauma does not deny proximal stressors, rather it can provide greater understanding of all the other variables that impact health. It is thus a distal determinant of health that may also be foundational to other more proximal determinants (Bombay et al., 2009). Suffice it to say there are continued debates regarding the value of the “historical trauma” construct. These debates illustrate the issues and challenges of applying a psychological construct, even IGT that shows itself to be rooted in a particular cultural framework, to different cultural groups (Kirmayer et al., 2014).

**Parental Traumatization in Intergenerational Trauma: Theory and Research**

The initial foray examining the characteristics of the parental generation in IGT research began with Holocaust survivors. It unearthed the concept of “Survivor Syndrome,” characterized by multiple symptomologies such as a chronic depression and anxiety, unresolved morning, nightmares, and somatizations (Eitinger, 1961; Niederland, 1968). As the theory and research on psychological trauma continued to emerge from research with Holocaust survivors, veterans, and
child- and domestic abuse survivors, terms were developed to explain other trauma syndromes such as sequential traumatization (Keilson, 1992) and disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989).

The most prominent overview of the impact of trauma on the parental generation was a meta-analysis conducted by Barel, Van IJzendoorn, Sagi-Schwartz, and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2010), examining the long-term sequelae of the Holocaust. This meta-analysis included 71 samples with 12,746 Holocaust survivors, which were compared to controlled counterparts in the areas of physical health, psychological well-being, posttraumatic stress symptoms, psychopathological symptomatology, cognitive functioning, and stress related physiology. The researchers found that, generally, holocaust survivors did not adapt as well as their counterparts ($d = 0.24$). Those who participated in convenience samples had medium-significant effect size ($d = 0.45$) in comparison to non-select samples ($d = 0.22$). When specific symptomology was examined, there emerged a large effect size for PTSD symptoms ($d = 0.72$) and smaller effect sizes for both psychopathological symptoms ($d = 0.24$) and psychological well-being ($d = 0.14$). There were, however, no significant impacts on physical health, cognitive functioning and stress-related physiology. This meta-analysis suggests detrimental psychological symptoms for Holocaust survivors and large effects for PTSD symptoms, however it also indicates that resiliency is a vital dimension to consider, as not every survivor developed PTSD.

The interplay between resiliency and vulnerability among the parental generation is consistent throughout the literature. For instance, Cassel and Suedfeld (2006) compared 45 Holocaust survivors to 21 Jewish individuals who had not experienced Nazi persecution. They found that Holocaust survivors demonstrated higher Posttraumatic Stress (PTS) symptoms, but also scored higher in salutogenic (health-enhancing) outcomes. Bar-On and Gilad’s (1994) narrative study utilizing the “life story method” interviewed a Holocaust surviving family of
three generations—grandmother, mother, and daughter. The stories portrayed how the grandmother established a secure foundation for her family in the harsh conditions after World War II. Both studies above illustrate how, amid significant trauma, trauma survivors emerged with both psychological vulnerabilities and resiliencies.

Currently, most IGT research characterize parental traumatization by connecting parental traumatization to subsequent generations through correlational research, family outcome research, or qualitative research. Most studies identified parental trauma as presenting PTSD or PTS symptoms (Daud et al., 2005; Lev-Wiesel, 2007). However, in cases where parents were unavailable to take part, their offspring’s perceptions of their PTSD/PTS symptoms were used to identify PTSD/PTS in the parental generation (Han, 2006; Yehuda et al., 2014).

To determine the presence of parental traumatization, PTSD/PTS was measured using clinical interviews and measures designed to assess the impact of, and exposure to, trauma. These models were based on a stress model of trauma (Bombay et al., 2014; Song, Tol, & de Jong, 2014). Other researchers adhered to a more flexible trauma criterion, which presumed that exposure to a particular traumatic episode or membership in a sub-group, such as being an attendee of residential school (Pearce et al., 2008; Ehlers et al., 2013; Elias et al., 2012), being a refugee (Lin, Suyemoto, & Kiang, 2008), or being a Holocaust survivor (Weinberg & Cummins, 2013), was sufficient enough to warrant the determination of parental traumatization.

**Conspiracy of silence: Silence as post-victimization trauma.** *The Conspiracy of Silence* was developed by Danieli (1998) during her phenomenological study of Holocaust survivors. Her study describes the notion that traumatic experiences are kept silent from family and society, because these experiences were either not believed or could not be understood by those who did not experience the Holocaust (Danieli, 1998). This construct highlighted how
Holocaust survivors were often neither listened to nor believed by their families or the rest of society, even among mental health professionals. According to Danieli (2007), silence was detrimental to survivors as it challenged social reintegration and intensified a profound sense of isolation, mistrust, and loneliness. Thus, silence could be understood as a post-victimization rupture or trauma.

Building on this concept of the post-victimization rupture and the role of silence, Nagata (1998) proposed that, for Japanese-American internment camp survivors, reluctance to discuss their internment experience might be related to earlier ages of mortality, with nearly twice as many men who experienced internment dying before the age of sixty compared to those not interned. Pennebaker, Barger, and Tiebout (1989) suggested that avoidance of talking about traumatic experiences contributes negatively to physical health. This notion aligns with Kleinman and Kleinman’s (1995) research that proposed the silencing related cultural and political traumas contributed to somatic symptomology among Chinese people. Similarly, in a study examining the war memories of Ugandans, Tankik (2006) found that people were silent about these experiences as it was deemed unsafe and understood to cause illness. From these studies, silence can be understood as both part and perpetuator of post-victimization trauma.

**Mechanisms of Intergenerational Trauma Transmission**

To understand the mechanisms related to the transmission of trauma, Felsen (1998) offers a broad perspective of the transmission process as being *direct and specific* and/or *indirect and general*. *Direct and specific* transmission processes were ascertained as the parent having a direct impact leading to a specific syndrome in the child, while *indirect and general* models viewed transmission as an indirect impact on a child due to trauma-impaired functioning of the parent (Felsen, 1998). Kellerman (2001) critiques this model, arguing its lack of a specific
etiology for IGT, and proposes that there is a difference between the content and process of trauma transmission (Kellerman, 2001).

Kellerman’s (2001) integrative perspective on trauma transmission notes that the actual transmission process involves an interplay between four different theories: psychodynamic, sociocultural, family-systemic, and biological. Each theory has a different medium (process) and core transmission factors (content): (a) psychodynamic theories typically propose that unconscious displaced emotions and unintegrated trauma experiences are transmitted through interpersonal relations; (b) sociocultural theories emphasize how the parental and social environment impacts the child and is transmitted through modelling; (c) family-systemic theories place emphasis on communication patterns, namely, what is being communicated and transmitted through the degree of enmeshment and/or avoidance; and (d) biological theories emphasize genetics and hereditary vulnerability to PTSD in the form of epigenetics (Kellerman, 2001). Kellerman’s integrative model is consistent with the current literature that has examined and employed the following theories to understand trauma transmission: attachment (Bar-On et al., 1998; Daud et al., 2005; Han, 2006; Scharf, 2007; Song et al., 2014), parenting (Field et al., 2013; Palosaari, Punamäki, Qouta, & Diab, 2013), communication patterns (Lin et al., 2008; Nagata & Cheng, 2003; Scharf, 2007; Wiseman et al., 2006), secondary traumatization (Lee & Clarke, 2013; Karenian et al., 2011), and epigenetics (Yehuda et al., 2014).

Psychodynamic or attachment-focused theory. Bar-on et al. (1998) proposes that attachment theory is an appropriate model for understanding IGT transmission, as it extends beyond psychopathology to a more encompassing relational perspective. An attachment perspective suggests the relational connection that caregivers provide to children, especially at vital developmental periods, serve to regulate the child’s affective state, which in turn
contributes to the developing brain, social bonds, and long-term development of stress response systems (Schore, 2010). Caregiving, which can be compromised by trauma, may have a profound impact on all aspects of a child’s development (Schore, 2010). As Bar-On et al. (1998) theorizes, “lack of resolution of mourning might have led survivors as adults to exhibit frightened/frightening, helpless, and unexpected parental behaviour, hence enhancing the likelihood of a disorganised attachment relationship to develop in the parent’s own child” (p. 321).

To support the attachment theory of IGT, Bar-On et al. (1998) examined the attachment-related child-rearing patterns of Holocaust survivors in Canada. Based on 67 responses, Bar-On and colleagues found that the second generation was preoccupied with the pain experienced by their parents and the feeling that they were not entitled to happiness—a form of survivor guilt. The researchers proposed that there were four paradoxes: (a) guilt experienced by the second generation because their circumstances were better than their parents, as opposed to the parents’ insecurities resulting in wanting to foster an over-secure life for their children; (b) the children learned about the importance of material possessions and received many material goods growing up, but learned a lot less about other values; (c) although participants were accomplished, they felt their upbringing was flawed and felt that their parents rarely praised them, contrasting with their parents’ views that the second generation’s accomplishment were due to a good upbringing; and (d) the participants received “implicit messages about the past, while trying to live up to the explicit messages of the present” (p. 327). Taken together, these paradoxes highlighted how children had to carry a burden from the past through a quest for success, despite the mystery of their parents’ histories.
**Sociocultural theory.** A sociocultural perspective explains how society and collective memories shape IGT narratives that can also underlie mechanisms of parenting (Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014; Rousseau & Drapeau, 1998). An example of a sociocultural perspective is Rousseau and Drapeau’s (1998) study that examined the culture’s impact on the transmission of trauma by researching refugee children who escaped from war traumas in Cambodia or Central America and were currently residing in Canada. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, and researchers found differences in trauma transmission mechanisms between the two cultures. Among the Cambodian participants, trauma was not discussed, while for the Central American participants, war traumas were discussed explicitly and explained to their children. Both cultures converged in their desire to pass on values of their culture of origin onto their children. The study illustrates the importance of sociocultural and familial context as a key component of the transmission process.

**Family systems/communication theory.** Communication theory intersects with both attachment and sociocultural perspectives in an intricate way that cannot be teased apart. Often, communication of trauma is found to be either in overabundance or in severe lack, otherwise only certain themes related to the trauma are reflected in the content of communication. For instance, Nagata’s (1993) study found an absence of communication about internment camp experiences in families of Japanese-Americans who were interned during World War II. Nagata and Cheng (2003) explain that, in the Japanese context, this lack of communication may be framed within a cultural model where emotional topics are often communicated in an indirect manner. However, such an omission of explicitness created a sense of shame in subsequent generations, as traumatic experiences became mired in silence (Nagata, 1993; Nagata & Cheng, 2003).
Similarly, Wiseman et al.’s (2006) study examines anger and guilt in children of Holocaust survivors by discussing their interpersonal relationships with their parents. The researchers describe a “knowing-not-knowing” pattern of familial communication, where paradoxically there was significant noise in relation to the Holocaust trauma that coexisted alongside silence regarding parents’ personal traumatic experiences, as these were not often shared openly. This research highlights both a sense of anger and guilt among the offspring of Holocaust survivors, directed toward their parents. Responses of anger were in relation to controlling parental responses, yet this anger was not externalized, in order to protect their parents. Guilt was associated with perceptions of parents as vulnerable; such guilt led toward avoidance of conflict with parents. Both studies emphasize communication’s impact on trauma and influence on subsequent generations by creating a sense of incoherence, shame, and guilt, as well as a sense of confusion.

**Biological/epigenetic theories.** Lastly, significant movement has mounted in the literature to understand trauma transmission through biological perspectives in the form of epigenetics, which integrate both hereditary and environmental factors to understand the transmission of trauma (Kellerman, 2013). The epigenetic perspective builds on Lamarckian evolutionary principles and postulates that DNA sequences can be modified in response to environmental influences (e.g., trauma) thereby altering its functional expression (Kellerman, 2013). When passed down from one generation to the next, the subsequent generation may be more susceptible to traumatic responses’ resulting in PTSD symptomology, or else, develop a vulnerability to mental health issues. The reason is offspring of traumatized parents inherit a genetic disposition that is more vulnerable to psychological trauma. The epigenetic theory provides a latent model for understanding the trauma responses in subsequent generations,
capable of explaining why PTSD symptoms among Holocaust survivors’ offspring are more prevalent compared to others also exposed to circumstances such as combat stress (Solomon, Kotler, & Mikulincer, 1988) or cancer (Baider et al., 2000).

Yehuda and her colleagues have pioneered the epigenetic research on the intergenerational transmission of trauma (Yehuda et al., 1998). These studies have found that the offspring of Holocaust survivors have greater glucocorticoid receptor sensitivity (Lehrner et al., 2014), which contributes to greater sensitivity to stressors (Yehuda & Brierer, 2008). In a recent study, Yehuda et al. (2014) found that the adult offspring of Holocaust survivors had different maternal and paternal epigenetic regulation of the glucocorticoid receptor gene, implying a differential impact on vulnerabilities and resiliencies in subsequent generations depending on maternal and/or paternal PTSD.

All these models highlight the multiple, and often overlapping, ways in which trauma can be transmitted from one generation to the next. There may not be a way to tease apart all these processes, nor may there be a fundamental transmission mechanism. However, it remains important to recognize that there are etic-dimensions (e.g., epigenetics), as well as highly situated and culturally framed emic-dimensions of trauma transmission.

Transmission of silence and continuity of the Conspiracy of Silence. According to Danieli (1998), silence is a normal process that often follows psychological trauma. This idea is evident in some aforementioned studies such as Bar-On et al.’s (1998) research, where the traumatic episode seems to speak loudly, yet the ensuing experiences were silent. Likewise, Danieli (2007) notes:

[B]oth intrapsychically and interpersonally protective, silence is profoundly destructive, for it attests to the person’s, family’s, society’s, community’s, and nation’s inability to
integrate the trauma. They can find no words to narrate the trauma story and create a meaningful dialogue around it. (p. 66).

Silence can be transmitted through non-verbal and everyday interactions that highlight the existence of something problematic in the past not able to be spoken about (Bar-On et al., 1998; Kidron, 2012). The transmission of silence thus creates an “inability or reluctance of the [offspring] to stimulate their parents to communicate openly about the horrific events” (Bar-On et al., 1998, p. 331). Transmitted silence contributes to disrupted attachments between parent and child, as parents may appear distressed due to their traumas but not express why that is the case (Bar-On et al., 1998). Offspring are therefore are left to their own devices to try to understand what happened.

Silence can be framed within a cultural perspective, as illustrated in Nagata’s (1993) and Rousseau and Drapeau’s (1998) studies, which portray silence as being a characteristic part of Japanese and Cambodian culture. It can also be maintained and transmitted systemically, as is the case in Tankik’s (2004) research. Tankik found the lack of public space to discuss Ugandan war experiences perpetuated silence and influenced economic, political, and psychological dimensions of everyday life. Taking these perspectives together, the conspiracy of silence is therefore maintained through the ecological, cultural, and relational ways in which silence is transmitted generationally (Danieli, 1998).

**Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on Second and Third Generations**

Most of the research on IGT hinges on examining its consequential impact on subsequent generations. These studies show that subsequent generations are more vulnerable to PTSD, anxiety, depression, general psychological distress, difficulties in coping with stressful experiences, and poor attachment styles, along with tendencies toward resiliency and post-
traumatic growth (Baider et al., 2000; Bombay et al., 2009; Danieli, 1998; Sigal & Weinfeld, 1989; Yehuda et al., 2014). There are broad implications for the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next, as the intergenerational consequences of trauma is theorized to impact ecological levels from the individual and the family, to the community (Evans-Campbell, 2008).

Generally, in the literature, the most common approach to studying the impact of IGT on subsequent generations is through a psychopathology model. Psychopathology can be determined by addictions (Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, & Adams, 2004), suicidality (Elias et al., 2012), depression (Bombay et al., 2014), traumatic stress (Yehuda et al., 2014), and anxiety (Field et al., 2013). Outcomes include risk factors, such as sexual vulnerability (Pearce et al., 2008) and susceptibility to violence (Spencer & Le, 2006). The literature on IGT finds that trauma impacts the sense of coherence (Han, 2006), subjective well-being (Weinberg & Cummins, 2013), and perceived discrimination and threat (Bombay et al., 2014).

Challenges abound in IGT research when it comes to establishing psychopathological outcomes with the offspring generation due to IGT. For instance, van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, and Sagi-Schwartz (2003) conducted a meta-analysis incorporating 32 studies ($N = 4418$) involving Holocaust survivor families and examined the: (a) role of secondary traumatization, (b) quality of research design and its impact on results, (c) clinical samples versus nonclinical samples, (d) effects found when both versus one parent was a survivor and (e) secondary traumatization between groups raised in Israel versus other contexts. The researchers found there was an effect size for participants within clinical populations ($d = .35$, $p <0.001$), although no effect size for non-clinical samples. van IJzendoorn et al. argue the meta-analysis shows resilience in those parents who protected their children from being affected by the Holocaust. Utilizing a biopsychosocial stress-diathesis model, the researchers explain the lack of
secondary traumatic stress among these offspring as resulting from: (a) the traumatic experiences of the parental generation were not inflicted by their own parents or other attachment figures, and several years of security were sustained after the Holocaust to form secure attachments; (b) the children may not have had a genetic predisposition to PTSD; and (c) they may have received sufficient supports to mitigate trauma symptomology. The researchers propose the possibility for the clinical populations that there may be a predisposition to secondary trauma, which emerges when faced with stressful conditions.

For the third generation of Holocaust survivors, Sagi-Schwartz, IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg (2008) examined tertiary traumatization with a meta-analysis examining 13 non-clinical samples involving 1012 participants. These studies were quasi-experimental investigations that compared third generation Holocaust survivors with their peers who were not Holocaust survivors. There were mixed results in the analysis, with some results showing IGT’s negative impact, while others showed forms of resiliency. Likewise, to van IJzendoorn et al.’s study, the researchers interpreted these results as being indicative of resilience in the Holocaust survivors themselves—survivors protected future generations from their own psychological trauma, and the Holocaust did not undermine feelings of basic trust towards attachment figures.

It is important to note that both van IJzendoorn et al.’s (2003) and Sagi-Schwartz et al.’s (2008) studies were only focused on Holocaust families. Sub-groups may yet exist within Holocaust families that are more susceptible to trauma transmission. According to Kellerman’s (2001) review, the offspring of Holocaust survivors who were more impacted by IGT included: (a) those born early after parent’s trauma; (b) the first or only child; (c) those for whom both parents were survivors; (d) “replacement” children for children who had perished earlier; (e) those whose parents had endured extraordinary suffering and significant loss; (f) participants in
enmeshed family relationships; and (g) those members of a family that talked about trauma too much or too little. As an addendum, other populations have demonstrated the effects of IGT. For instance, Dekel and Goldblatt (2008) reviewed the intergenerational effects for military veterans and found that fathers who had more severe PTSD symptoms impacted their children’s experience of distress.

Another possibility that extends beyond van IJzendoorn et al.’s (2003) findings is the notion that parent’s diagnosed with PTSD is a better predictor of IGT than parental exposure to traumatic events. In Lambert, Holzer, and Hasbun’s (2014) meta-analysis involving 42 studies ($N = 12,118$ parent-child dyads) examining parental PTSD’s association with child psychological distress and problem behaviours, the researchers established an overall significant effect size of $r = .35$. Their study found that individuals exposed to interpersonal trauma ($r = .46$) had the largest effect size, compared to veterans ($r = .27$) and parents exposed to war ($r = .25$), who also had significant effect sizes. These studies indicate that the outcomes of IGT are nuanced, beyond the sole consideration of parental exposure to potentially traumatic events.

Danieli et al. (2015) suggests that the contrasting literature on IGT outcomes may be due to multiple factors: differences in exposure and survival of circumstances, individual differences in the survivors, the passage of time, different dimension/s of what was studied, and the diverse methods and measures used. Danieli et al.’s proposition is fairly consistent with the limitations of meta-analytic research, being that meta-analyses (a) depend on quantitative results, which is only a subset of the literature on a topic; (b) are based on a collection of rough replications; (c) depend on the quality of the research reported; and (d) are predominately correlational rather than causational, and so do not capture other facets of a phenomenon (Bangert-Drowns, 2005).
The above challenges to the post-positivist research on IGT highlight the value of qualitative research that affirms the unique situational, contextual, and cultural dimensions of IGT (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The qualitative work on IGT, when applied to different cultural groups, has drawn significantly from social constructionism and narrative forms of research. It seeks to understand how IGT uniquely shapes familial and individual experiences and identity (Kidron, 2003, 2012). The outgrowth of these approaches to study IGT in the literature demonstrates the limitations of past research, but also emphasizes the need to have a cultural frame of reference and the importance of not applying IGT universally (Kidron, 2012).

One example of culturally informed qualitative research is Denham’s (2008) ethnographic study utilizing narrative analysis. Throughout the study, Denham offers a historical contextualization of the constructs presented. He presents the context of the Coeur d’Alene people, an Indigenous group in America, where their understanding of traumatic past frames the transmission of resiliency and family identity. Denham (2008) concludes that historical trauma viewed from a lens of vulnerability is insufficient for understanding the Coeur d’Alene people. Instead, readers are invited to see a distinction between historical trauma and historical-traumatic responses—the pattern of responses that may result from the exposure to historical trauma—which creates space for narratives of resilience.

**Vulnerability or Resilience.** The meta-analyses of van IJzendoorn et al. (2003) and Sagi-Schwartz et al. (2008) advocate for a resiliency perspective. A resiliency approach proposes that coping well with trauma will strengthen one’s character and resistance to future adversity and trauma (Danieli, 1998, p. 10). Related to resiliency is the notion of Post-Traumatic Growth, which refers to the fundamental positive changes in personality and cognition after a traumatic event (Joseph & Linley, 2008). Advocates for a resilience perspective argue that
vulnerability models perpetuate victimization mentality (Danieli, 1998, 2007). The research on IGT and trauma is often understood one dimensionally, where there is a need to examine resilience in the forms of identity, community, and adaptation (Kirmayer et al., 2014; Waldram, 2014).

The conflicting literatures highlight the debate between vulnerability and resiliency perspectives and may provide a rationale as to why there are conflicting outcomes in the literature (Danieli, 1998, 2007). Perhaps a better way to understand IGT is to recognize that the trauma theory paradigm can result in both vulnerability and resiliency (Danieli, 1998, 2007). Both Wong, Wong, and Scott (2006) and Denham (2008) support the position that trauma and resiliency are in a state of co-existence. Similarly, from a Post-Traumatic Growth paradigm, both PTSD and Post-Traumatic Growth can occur in conjunction (Joseph & Linley, 2008).

Furthermore, a more nuanced understanding that captures both vulnerabilities and resiliencies is often found in the qualitative research on IGT. For instance, Bar-On (1995) examined the life stories of three generations in five Holocaust survivor families, documenting the tensions between fear and hope among all the participants. Interviews were conducted with at least one representative from each generation, inquiring about their life stories. Afterwards, researchers asked questions related to families’ transmitted values, myths, and objects. Throughout each story, Bar-On documents the on-going tensions of loss, fear, resiliency, and hope, challenging the reductionist perspectives of IGT that propounded either trauma or resilience.

Another qualitative study was conducted by Song et al. (2014), who explored the transmission of trauma and resiliency amidst former Burundian child soldiers using a grounded theory method. They employed semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and content analysis. Song et al. theorized that former child soldiers transmit trauma to their
offspring through: (a) child-raising practices; (b) severe parental emotional distress; and (c) community effects, whereby the community stigmatized these families given their members’ historical roles as child soldiers. The study also reported that child-raising practices, known as *indero*, embodied a cultural pathway of passing on norms, values, and social navigation lessons, all this despite the challenges of being former child soldiers. The participants felt that through *indero* they could support and build up the next generation.

As indicated in these qualitative studies, the currents of resiliency are part of the processes that make up IGT, challenging any reductionist profiling of trauma descendants. Factoring in resiliency, the stories of trauma can also be understood as a counter-narrative to dominant perspectives of survivors being vulnerable. Thus, showing the impact of both trauma and resilience recognizes the atrocities survivors have endured while also emphasizing their strength, rather than merely perpetuating victimhood or pathologizing families (Maxwell, 2014). Qualitative research, specifically narrative research, can be transformative as it has the potential to create alternative, lived discourses related to traumatic events (Bar-On, 2006).

**Cultural Critique of Intergenerational Trauma**

Culture plays a significant role as a transmitter, buffer, and healer with respect to IGT (Danieli, 2007). However, according to Kidron (2003), IGT in its original conception can be understood as being a Jewish construct (Kidron, 2003). Kidron (2003) argues that the experience of trauma is often framed within culturally constituted meaning systems. She proposes that to comprehend IGT requires an understanding of the grand narrative of Israel—the Jewish religious narrative of exile that parallels the diasporic suffering of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and the formation of the nation state of Israel. Furthermore, Kidron highlights how the transmission process is aligned with a Jewish cosmology and praxis of responsibility towards parents and
ancestors, resulting in the second generation’s accepting their roles as carriers of Holocaust memories.

To illustrate cultural differences related to IGT, Kidron (2012) conducted a comparative ethnography between descendants of the Holocaust and descendants of the Cambodian genocide from the Khmer Rouge Regime. Kidron conducted 55 in-depth interviews with children of Holocaust survivors and 23 in-depth ethnographic interviews with Cambodian-Canadian descendants. Overall, there were differences in the areas of self-perceived emotional vulnerability, resilience, memory, and silence. With vulnerability and resiliency, the Cambodian participants resisted the stigma of emotional distress and drew from a Buddhist notion of suffering and being, while Jewish participants regarded the emotional scars of the Holocaust as experiences that could be commemorated and remembered. In both cases, participants understood their trauma-legacy as normative within their cultural frame of reference. With memory and silence, Cambodian participants understood silence as a cultural way of being, one not related to forgetting but understood as a choice—a form of Asian silence or Buddhist acceptance. The Jewish participants affirmed the global recognition of the Holocaust and understood it as something to be remembered in an embodied way—a Jewish burden of memory. Resultingly, Kidron (2012) argues that the therapeutic discourse around trauma comes from a Eurocentric view that oversimplifies the multifaceted cultural responses to genocide.

To an extent, trauma theory and IGT can be understood as a form of moral economy that has helped legitimize past experiences of oppression and abuse through the moniker of “traumatic” (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Maxwell, 2014). This then begs the question as to whether applying the terminology of posttraumatic stress is practically and/or ethically useful. There is leverage in employing this discourse, as it can positively legitimate historical and
present-day suffering, using terms such as “mental illness” (Maxwell, 2014; Waldram, 2014). However, given the popularity of psychological discourses and the emergence of helping professions and technologies, it is important to understand the extent to which these terminologies perpetuate understandings of cultural groups from positions of professional privilege (Maxwell, 2014). Despite well intentioned helping professionals, these views maintain power differentials that may be inherently oppressive. By taking part in a healing discourse, practitioners often align their perspectives with a medically-based model, one which limits the dimensions of trauma as delineated in the DSM-5 to PTSD. Yet, taking part in this medical discourse can also legitimate forms of suffering that may historically have been neglected because of politics, oppression, or silence.

The critiques of the cross-cultural application of IGT can challenge certain presumptions of trauma theory, specifically viewpoints that adhere to “a singular understanding of history that universalizes indigenous experiences” (Waldram, 2014, p. 427). As a researcher, I believe that caution is wise in applying IGT to understand the generational impacts of culturally-contextualized suffering. At the same time, I do not deny the practical realities, nor the functional value of IGT for the scholarly community that seeks to understand the psychosocial challenges facing Chinese-Canadians. The above critiques illustrate that IGT and trauma theory cannot simply be applied to cultural groups without co-opting cultural values. Rather, cultural integration, alongside historical understandings, needs to frame and comprehend how the presumptions of IGT can be adapted. Adaptation of IGT must occur to understand Chinese-Canadian families, while respecting possible alternative worldviews’ understanding of intergenerational forms of suffering.
The Past: The Historical Traumas of Chinese-Canadians in the Twentieth Century

The potential for exposure to psychological trauma during immigration occurs during pre-migration (experiences of trauma and conflict previous to relocation), migration (experiences and stressors during the process of migrating), and post-migration (acculturation stress, oppression, and mental/physical health problems; see Foster, 2001; Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008). When examining the possible immigration-related traumas for Chinese people, it is important to comprehend the historical events that may impact individual and collective well-being. This section provides a historical contextualization of the sociopolitical turmoil and collective traumatic events to which a Chinese individual migrating from China to Canada might be exposed in the twentieth century.

China is one of the earliest recorded civilizations, one whose history spans over several thousands of years (Zhang, 2015). According to Wong (2009), to be Chinese means at least three things: (a) being descendants of the Chinese race, (b) bearers of Chinese history, and (c) recipients of fundamental Chinese cultural beliefs. Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are understood to be the main global Chinese communities (So, Lin, & Poston, 2001). Both Hong Kong and Taiwan were historically part of China (Tseng, Lin, & Yeh, 1995). Hong Kong was surrendered during the Opium War of 1839, rendered a British colony, and returned under China in 1997; Taiwan was given to Japan after the Sino-Japanese war in 1894, returned to China in 1945 after World War II, and separated from communist China in 1949 under the Kuomintang government, which maintained being referred to as “the Republic of China” in Taiwan (Tseng et al., 1995). Despite this shared history, Chinese identification amongst these communities is contested, especially given on-going political tensions and debates defining Chinese nationalism (Chang & Wang, 2005; Hughes, 2013). These sociopolitical contentions reflect the historical
turmoil behind modern China and the challenges of determining Chinese nationalism and ethnic identity (Chang & Wang, 2005; Hughes, 2013).

**Chinese Twentieth Century History and Trauma**

China in the twentieth century was rife with turmoil and atrocities, a situation which can be understood as an extension of a declining China at the time. Prior to the twentieth century, China was impacted by overpopulation, natural calamities, and by opium trade, as well as wars and a deteriorating Qing dynasty (Plänkers, 2011). China’s lost wars included the first Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95, which resultingly ceded Taiwan to Japan, and the Opium Wars in 1839-42 and 1856-60, which forced China to yield Hong Kong to Britain and submit to European economic domination (Plänkers, 2011; Scharff, 2011). The loss of the first Opium War started the “The Century of Humiliation” (1839-1949), a period which saw mass importation of opium into China, the Boxer Rebellion (an anti-foreign uprising), and imposed and unequal trade treaties resulting in China, once the “powerful, proud, and unified state… [to be] ‘carved up like a melon’ (guafen) by foreign powers” (Kaufman, 2010, p. 5). China’s pursuit for re-unification with Hong Kong and Taiwan under a single unified China can be understood as a meta-narrative in response to the “The Century of Humiliation.”

Table 2 provides an overview of the key events and historical atrocities that have taken place in China in the twentieth century. As a collective, China has been repeatedly traumatized and disintegrated as a country. The failed imperialism of the Qing Dynasty led to Dr. Sun Yatsen’s revolution, which resulted in the formation of the Republic of China under the National People’s Party or the Kuomintang (KMT; Plänkers, 2011). However, this revolution would be short lived, as another civil war with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would emerge in 1927 and coincide with the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937 (Wright, 2015). The second Sino-
Japanese War ended with the conclusion of World War II in 1945—but nearly 20 million people perished and nearly 100 million people were dislocated (Dobbs & Tucker, 2012; Plänkers, 2011). The civil war between the CCP and KMT resumed, and by 1949, Mao’s CCP had overturned Chang Kai-Shek’s KMT government and proclaimed the founding of the People’s Republic of China. The KMT government would end up retreating to Taiwan later that year to maintain Taiwan as the Republic of China (Dikötter, 2013; Li, 2012).

Table 2. Relevant Traumatic and Key Events in 20th Century China

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Sun Yatsen’s Revolution</td>
<td>Ending of the Qing Dynasty&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt; Beginning of the Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party (CCP) founded</td>
<td>Formation of the Chinese Communist Party&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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| 1927-1936| Civil War between Chang Kai-Shek’s Kuomintang (KMT) and Mao’s Communists (CCP) | Start of the Nanjing Uprising, Autumn Harvest Uprising, and Guangzhou Uprising in 1927. Formation of the CCP Red Army in 1928 and guerilla warfare against the KMT.<sup>9</sup> | Civil War and Sino-Japanese War II:  
  ▪ 3 million soldiers deaths<sup>1</sup>  
  ▪ 9 million civilians caught in cross-fire<sup>1</sup>  
  ▪ 8 million non-military related deaths<sup>1</sup>  
  ▪ 95 million displaced<sup>1</sup> |
| 1937-1945| Second Sino-Japanese War                                             | Chinese largely defeated by warring Japan. Period includes the infamous “Rape of Nanjing.” After the war, Taiwan was returned to China.<sup>12</sup> |                                   |
| 1946-1949| Continuation of civil war between Shek’s Kuomintang (KMT) and Mao’s Communists (CCP) | CCP overturns the current KMT government. Mao proclaims China is now “The People’s Republic of China,” while Shek’s KMT government (The Republic of China) retreat to Taiwan.<sup>10, 11</sup> |                                   |
| 1949-1975| Labour Camps / “Laogai” Camps                                        | Throughout Mao’s regime, Gulags or Forced labour camps were utilized.<sup>5</sup> | 15-20 million deaths<sup>3, 7</sup> |
| 1950     | People’s Liberation Army invades Tibet                                | CCP invasion of Tibet seeks to reclaim territory and terminate the 1911 Tibetan declaration of independence. |                                   |
| 1950-1952| Land Reform                                                           | Land reform implemented under the guise of Agrarian Reform Law. Land was redistributed to peasants, while rich peasants and landlords were expropriated and subjected to “struggle sessions.”<sup>10</sup> | 10 million landlords expropriated<sup>11</sup>  
  ▪ 40% of land changed hands<sup>11</sup>  
  ▪ 1.5 - 2 million deaths<sup>11</sup> |
<p>| 1956-1958| Hundred Flowers Movement and the Anti-Rightist Campaign               | Movement based on “let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend,” which focused on allowing liberal opinion and citizens’ views of the regime to be expressed. However, these expressions were soon denounced, ushering in the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1958). The Campaign targeted intellectuals, members of democratic parties, and some communist party members. | 500 000 punished (included apologies, dismissals from employment, and exile to labour camps)&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt; |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| 1958-1962   | The “Great Leap Forward” and the Great Chinese Famine                 | Imposition of radical, but ineffective, agricultural policies which lead to the world’s greatest famine. | ▪ 5-6 million killed for political reasons 5 ▪ 30-40 million deaths from famine 1  
|             |                                                                       |                                                                                              |                                                                      |
| 1966-1976   | The “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”                            | The cultural revolution can be broken down into four time periods:  
• The Red Terror  
• All-round civil war  
• Killing for and by the powers  
• Endless Killing  
Revolution addresses “four old evils:” old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits. This focused on elimination of class enemies, dissidents, and intellectuals. | ▪ 2.95 million deaths 1  
▪ 100 - 125 million people suffered, were persecuted or went through struggle sessions 2  
▪ 30 million subjected to struggle sessions 3  
| 1949-1976   | Mao Zedong’s regime                                                  | The period under Mao’s regime, which includes land reforms, famine, cultural revolution.      | ▪ 44.5 million-72 million deaths 2, 5, 8  
▪ 100-125 million people suffered in one way or another 2  
| 1976        | Death of Mao and Arrest of the Gang of Four                           | Arrest and persecution of the “Gang of Four” (Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen). Mao was largely venerated. 10  
| 1989        | Tiananmen Square strikes                                             | Also known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, this incident was in response to the Pro-Democracy movement in 1989. As demonstrations were winding down and hunger strikes called off, the government declared martial law. Orders were given to put down the pro-democracy movement with lethal force. 10  
| 1997        | Hong Kong returned to China                                           | Hong Kong returned to China by Britain, under Chinese policy of “One Country, Two Systems,” guaranteeing Hong Kong people will have a degree of autonomy for the next 50 years. 11  

*Note. Taken and adapted from Plänkers (2011); Chang and Halliday (2005); Song (2006); Scharff (2011); Rummel & Horowitz (1994); Eastman (1986); Courtois & Kramer (1999); Li (2012); Sullivan (2007); Dikötter (2013); Roberts (2012); So (2011).*

**Mao’s Regime: Revolution or the Chinese Holocaust?** According to Plänkers (2014), Mao’s Communist Party’s radical policies would bring about a series of catastrophes: The Chinese Gulags or *Laogai*, “The Great Leap Forward,” “The Great Chinese Famine,” and the “Great Proletarian Revolution”. In the period from 1949 until the official end of the Cultural Revolution marked by Mao Zedong’s death in 1976, it is estimated that 100 to 125 million people were scarred physically and mentally, and between 44.5 and 72 million people died, with the possibility of higher numbers (Chang & Halliday, 2005). Uncertainty and debate surrounding
the numbers are due to differences in opinion regarding what constitute “official” or “unofficial” accounts of history, a debate which intersects discourse on propaganda and information availability (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2012).

There is much debate surrounding the merits and truthful reporting of Mao Zedong’s regime and the Cultural Revolution. This is largely due to the contested interpretations, historiography, and politics that beset this topic (Cheek, 2010; Dikötter, 2013; Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2012). Significant silence prevails when it comes to discussions about Mao’s era, as well as much confusion, given the propaganda that has distorted depictions and understandings of that period (Dikötter, 2013; Plänkers, 2014). Proponents of Mao tended to argue that Mao’s implemented societal changes contributed to the current prosperity in China (Cheek, 2010). They argued that the communist government acted as a saviour to the declining state and was largely responsible for ending the “The Century of Humiliation” (Kaufman, 2010). On the other hand, Dikötter (2008) argues that China was progressing under the KMT’s republican government and was pursuing openness in its governance, education, and economy. Dikötter (2010, 2013, 2016) historical analysis contends that Mao’s regime was corrupt from the very beginning.

**The Communist Revolution and consolidation of power.** The Communist Revolution and the first decade of Mao’s regime can be characterized as one of the worst tyrannies in the twentieth century (Dikötter, 2013). Mao had succeeded in ascending into power in 1949 and declared that China was liberated by the Communist regime (Dikötter, 2013). Afterwards came a period of economic reconstruction and political consolidation (1950-1957; Sullivan, 2007). During this period (1950-1952), land reform was implemented, resulting in the redistribution of land to peasants. Rich peasants and landlords were stripped of their properties and subjected to
“struggle sessions” (Dikötter, 2013). This period was characterized as chaotic, as people turned on one another. Victims were buried alive, tied up, and dismembered, and even children were slaughtered (Dikötter, 2013). Nearly two million people were murdered during this initial reign of terror; several million people were sent to labour camps; tens of millions were branded as ‘landlords,’ ‘rich farmers,’ ‘counter-revolutionaries,’ and ‘criminals,’ that is, opposition classes to the communist government (Dikötter, 2013).

Soon after, Mao implemented The Hundred Flowers Movement (1956-1957), a period permitting liberal opinion to be shared and citizens’ views of the regime to be expressed. However, these opinions were soon denounced, and the government ushered in the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1958). The Anti-Rightist Campaign targeted intellectuals, members of democratic parties, and some communist party members (Sullivan, 2007). More than half a million were labeled as anti-rightist, and many were falsely accused, leading to significant suicides amongst this group (Dikötter, 2013). The Hundred Flowers Movement appeared an ostentation, set up to identify potential enemies of the state (Dikötter, 2013; Sullivan, 2007).

The laogai and struggle sessions. To deal with dissidents, criminals, and political prisoners, individuals were viewed as members of classes, classes officially defined as oppositional to the Communist regime (Dikötter, 2013). These individuals were sent to labour camps (laogai) and/or struggle sessions. Laogai, also known as Chinese gulags, served as labor reform camps for criminals to become “new men” through enforced manual labour (Dikötter, 2013). The gulag system was originally implemented in the Soviet Union to suppress political dissidents and to force prisoners into forced labour (The Laogai Research Foundation [LRF], 2008). Chinese laogai were similarly implemented throughout Mao’s regime, resulting in nearly 20 million deaths (Courtois & Kramer, 1999). Most who were subjected to laogai remained for
one to five years, and some for more than a decade (Dikötter, 2010). The laogai system not only maintained order and punished “criminals,” but was also used to protect the dictatorship and promote its policies through thought reform and forced labour (LRF, 2008). Indeed, thought reform characterized the laogai as distinct from the Soviet Gulag system, focusing on remolding “criminals” into “new socialist beings” through forced confession, endless self-criticism, struggle sessions, and collective labour in brutal conditions (LRF, 2008, p. 11). Components of the laogai system consisted of prisons, reform-through-labour detachments, re-education-through-labour facilities, forced job placements, detention centres, custody and repatriation activities, shelters and investigations, and juvenile offender facilities (LRF, 2008).

Struggle sessions started in the 1950s alongside land reforms; it was a means of public humiliation and torture to shape public opinion and persecute both counter-revolutionaries and counter-revolutionary thoughts (Sullivan, 2007). The concept of “struggle sessions” was based on the Soviet Union’s use of “criticism and self-criticism” to eliminate reactionary thinking (Priestland, 2009). During struggle sessions, victims were forced to admit crimes (whether they occurred or not) to crowds of people while being verbally or physically abused until they confessed (Lipman & Harrell, 1990). These sessions were often conducted at workplaces or even in stadiums, depending on the individual’s fame (Lipman & Harrell, 1990). Often, family members were forced to witness these events, many of whom were driven to suicide from these sessions (Dikötter, 2013).

The Great Leap Forward and The Great Famine. The period known as The Great Leap Forward was an attempt to achieve rapid industrialization (Sullivan, 2007). From 1958 to 1960, radical policies sought to increase production. However, their results ultimately led to a massive reduction in food output, leading to The Great Famine also known as the “The Three Bitter
“Years” (1960-1962), and resulting in 35 to 45 million deaths (Dikötter, 2010; Scharff, 2011; Yang, 2012). According to Dikötter (2010), emerging evidence also indicated that many also died through the collectivization efforts of the Great Leap Forward—civilians were subjected to coercion and systemic violence, at least 2.5 million of whom were tortured to death or killed. According to Dikötter (2010), the Great Famine was largely manufactured, and a result of the decisions made by the communist government. The catastrophe that was the Great Leap Forward and the Great Famine led to significant structural and economic damage, with nearly thirty to forty percent of all housing turned to rubble in order to make fertiliser, build roads, or to punish occupants (Dikötter, 2010; Xun 2013). Vulnerable groups (women, children, and elderly) were subjected to abuse and neglect, while society as a whole decayed in order to survive. In certain regions, cheating and stealing became commonplace. Bartering anything, from clothing and children, to sex, for currency to purchase food became the norm, and eating rats, soil, animal hides, and even human flesh was seen as a necessity (Dikötter, 2010; Xun 2013).

Weigel-Schwiedrzik (2003) examines the question of how public discussion of the deaths of roughly five percent of the total peasant population was largely silenced. She notes that the silencing is connected to psychological trauma as well as cultural particularities, such as the collective, cultural focus on forgetting past suffering. Political factors also contributed to the famine’s becoming a largely taboo subject in public space. Lastly, the silencing of The Great Famine owes itself to the fact that bearers of its memories were largely peasant groups, whose voices were easily dismissed.

**The Cultural Revolution.** The Great Proletariat Revolution, or the Cultural Revolution, started in 1966, as did the formation of the Red Guard, Mao’s student army focused on fighting capitalist-conspirators (Dikötter, 2016). Between 12 to 17 million teenagers would end up
joining the Red Guards (Plänkers, 2011). The Cultural Revolution focused on the slogan 破四旧 (Pò sì jiù), about a declaration of “destroying the four olds”—old ideals, old culture, old customs, and old habits (Gao, 2008). Essentially, the slogan celebrated destruction of the traditional values of China and annihilation of traditional social identity. Dikötter (2016) estimates that, during this period, nearly two million people’s lives perished. Chaos ensued from the destruction of a society’s fundamental trust within human relationships, given endless denunciations, falls from dignity, struggle sessions, persecution campaigns, and false confessions. Nearly 30 million people were subjected to struggle sessions (Chang and Halliday, 2005). With the focus on terminating rightists and “class enemies,” a class of intellectuals was nearly eliminated on a national scale (Plänkers, 2011).

The Cultural Revolution is also known as the “ten years of chaos” and can be broken down into four periods: The Red Terror (1966), All-round Civil War (1967), the New Organs of Power (1968-1971), and Endless Killing (1972-1977; Song, 2011; Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2012). The Red Terror period can be characterized by the establishment of the Red Guards, who subjected academics and teachers to struggle sessions, humiliation, and physical abuse (Song, 2011). The Red Guards also targeted households with “bad” family backgrounds or with any associations to bourgeoisie. Class enemies were besieged, ransacked, driven to suicide, sent to the laogai, and some even murdered (Song, 2011). Finally, in 1967, civil war broke out, defined by a split in the allegiances of the Red Guards that reflected the split in the political party. Soon after, the military were involved, resulting in over 200 000 people dead and 730 000 permanently disabled (Song, 2011).

The New Organs of Power period shifted power and roles from persecutors to victims, eventually dispatching with the Red Guards (Dikötter, 2016). From 1968 to 1980, 17 million
teenagers and former Red Guards were sent to the countryside to work in labour camps (Dikötter, 2016; Plänkers, 2011). This generation of teenagers would end up being known as “The Lost Generation.” Characterized by their loss of time and education, they were written off by then-current leadership and older intellectuals (Bonnin, 2006; Gentz, 2014). Subsequently, The Endless Killings period was characterized by power struggle within the government party and campaigns to purge enemy classes (Song, 2011). Eventually, in 1976, the Cultural Revolution would end with the death of Mao. In the aftermath, the revolution was viewed as a mistake and a result of the political elite’s manipulating the masses (Gentz, 2014). Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, blame was allocated to the “Gang of Four” (Jiang Qing [Mao’s wife], Zhang Chunquio, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen). Mao was painted as tragic hero, who, near the end of his life, could not distinguish right from wrong (Gentz, 2014). He was, as the communist party proposed, “70% positive and 30% negative” (Gentz, 2014, p. 6).

**Twentieth century Chinese history and narrative research.** Weigelin-Schwiedrzik (2006) discusses finding a master narrative for Chinese history in the 20th century, comparing the responses of postbellum Germany and China. Both nations wanted to move forward after a destructive episode in their histories. However, public inquiry into the past was only established in Germany, inquiry that led to its collective and public historical examination’s fostering an official master narrative. China, unfortunately, has not taken part in this process, instead ignoring this process of inquiry. Public Chinese discourse has largely shifted blame onto Japan’s actions during World War II, with silence on any possible self-critique associated with the Cultural Revolution. This silence results in complicity and a lack of official public engagement when it comes to reflecting upon the 20th century Chinese narrative (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2006).
The lack of an official master narrative or any reconciliation with past wrongs has created a sense of ambiguity for victims and victimizers (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2006). Nonetheless, this void has also fostered counter-narratives in the form of unofficial histories and critiques. Counter-narratives depict alternative stories set before the backdrop of the master narrative; they run counter to the dominant discourse engendered therein (Bamberg, 2004). In China, these counter-narratives can be understood as responses to the silence following the events of the Twentieth century. They include works found in the “scar” and autobiographical literature and in academia.

After the death of Mao, a moment passed when people were, in fact, able to discuss their experiences of trauma and oppression resulting from the Cultural Revolution led by Mao’s regime (Gentz, 2014; Pong, 2009). These periscopes were known as “scar literature” (Pong, 2009). Key pieces that started this movement included Liu Xinwu’s (1977) *The Class Teacher*, which criticized educational and cultural policies, followed by Lu Xinhua’s (1978) *The Scar*, which dealt with the emotional and domestic tragedies of the Cultural Revolution (Pong, 2009). This literature was read widely, enabling collective catharsis (Gentz, 2014).

Scar literature, to an extent, played a role in restoring human dignity to the masses, by enabling people to discuss themes of trauma and oppression, as well as love and personal relationships (Gao, 2008; Gentz, 2014). This literature comprised both fictional and non-fictional genres; it reflected a generation trying to make sense of their experiences (Gentz, 2014). Autobiographies published in China tended to focus on four themes: (a) narratives of good people becoming the victims of malevolent ones, (b) stories of morality, (c) portrayal of the absurdity of the events and developments, and (d) tales of misunderstandings (Xu, 1998; as cited in Gentz, 2014, p. 13). Scar literature was originally supported by the paramount leader, Deng
Xiaoping. However, much like the Hundreds Flower Movement, this too was short lived and resulted in the government’s shutting down these literary conversations in the 1980s, in favour of writing that supported government initiatives (Gentz, 2014; Harding, 1987; Pong, 2009).

Autobiographies and oral histories of individuals in Chinese diasporas also followed the themes of scar literature, continuing to depict the tumultuous periods in Chinese history after their ban. These diasporic literatures portrayed individuals’ experiencing tumultuous history as victims and as perpetrators alike (Gentz, 2014). The most widely known was Jung Chang’s (2003) *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, which depicted the biographies of Chang’s mother and grandmother as they lived through the period prior to the formation of the People’s Republic of China and afterwards. Other prominent books include Nien Cheng’s (1987) *Life and Death in Shanghai*, which details her persecution and imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution, and Jan Wong’s (1997) *Red China Blues*, depicting the Chinese-Canadian journalist’s experience of taking part in the Cultural Revolution, and later, witnessing the Tiananmen Square massacre. Themes typically represented in these stories from the Chinese overseas parallel those published in China. These themes include (a) peaceful childhood and politically aware student-life, (b) state manipulation, (c) awakening from the nightmare, and (d) finding salvation, expression, and freedom by heading to the West (Zarrow, 1999). As these books tended to be tailored towards western audiences (Zarrow, 1999), they contributed to shaping Western public opinion regarding modern Chinese history (Gentz, 2014).

Academic discourse that attempts to apprehend the impact of Mao’s regime on Chinese people can be found in the works of Arthur Kleinman and his late wife, Joan Kleinman, who integrate sinology (the academic study of China through language, history, and literature), anthropology, and psychiatry to understand contemporary China. Kleinman and Kleinman
(1995) write about the Cultural Revolution as a political trauma. They argue its tumultuous events contribute to a bodily experience of suffering and embodied memories. The authors further propose the distinct expressions of mental health and illness in Chinese people, being highly somaticized, have become deeply rooted in an indigenous Chinese worldview. These perspectives continue in Kleinman, Yan, and Jun’s (2011) *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person*, which examines how morality, self, and social identity has shifted, changed, and conflicted with historical Chinese identity, since the formation of the People’s Republic of China.

Other works by Weigelin-Schwiedrzik (2012) have framed the Cultural Revolution as a trauma process, specifically as cultural trauma. This framing entails applying a victimization paradigm to understanding the effect of the Cultural Revolution. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik argues that the process of working through the trauma of the Cultural Revolution has not come to an end, both because individual and cultural memories have become fragmented and understanding of these events has lacked consensus. Until such history is open to the public sphere to discuss and debate about its events, the past will continue to impact subsequent generations.

**Chinese-Canadian History, Immigration, and Policies**

The modern history of China presents a backdrop for understanding those circumstances Chinese immigrants may have experienced prior to migration. However, in Canada, a history of oppression also potentially contributes to the continued silencing of Chinese-Canadians. Significant push and pull factors prevailed that contributed to the voluntary and forced migration of Chinese people to Canada and other countries in the world. Prior to World War II, migrants from Southern China left to escape poverty and turmoil; they were drawn to working overseas by the prospect of finding gold (Collections Canada, 2011; Yu, 2008). Sociopolitical events also
contributed to the mass migration of Chinese people, for example, during the period between the Sino-Japanese war, the civil war, and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, nearly 3 million citizens left for Hong Kong and Taiwan (Skeldon, 1996).

The Chinese-Canadian diaspora is connected to the history of Chinese emigration and formation of Chinese diasporas at large (Tan, 2013). The Chinese diaspora is the largest in the world, with around 40 million people (Li & Li, 2013). Chinese emigration can be divided into four periods based on social and economic development: (a) the Twelfth to Sixteenth century, defined by merchant trade missions; (b) the latter half of Sixteenth century to the beginning of the Opium War in 1839, where industrialized nations in the West were gaining prominence; (c) 1840 to the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, which was characterized by the massive emigration of Chinese labourers; and (d) from 1949 to the present, which early on can be understood as a response to the changing political discourse in China, including Chinese minorities’ gaining equal rights (Li & Li, 2013). An overview of the significant events and governmental policies in the histories of Chinese-Canadians are presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>First arrival of Chinese workers</td>
<td>Chinese workers arrived in British Columbia to help build trading posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>First wave of Chinese immigration</td>
<td>First wave of Chinese immigrants came to join the gold rush in British Columbia—migration to work on the Gold Mountain (Gum San)¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Qualification and Registration of Voters Act</td>
<td>British Columbia passed the Qualification and Registration of Voters Act which excluded “Chinese” and “Indians” from provincial elections.⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-1885</td>
<td>Second wave of Chinese immigration</td>
<td>Immigration was to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway, which was completed in 1885.²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885, 1900, 1903</td>
<td>Chinese Immigration Act (Head Taxes)</td>
<td>Head tax was implemented in 1885, which levied $50 on any Chinese coming to Canada. In 1900, the Head Tax was raised to $100, and in 1903, the Head Tax increased to $500.¹ ³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Vancouver anti-Asian riot</td>
<td>Riots took place with a mob of several thousand white men vandalizing and destroying property in Vancouver’s Chinatown.⁵ ⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The Chinese Immigration Act</td>
<td>The 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, prohibited Chinese people from immigrating to Canada.¹ ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>The Chinese Exclusion Act repealed in federal government</td>
<td>Efforts by Chinese-Canadian soldiers and veterans contributed to repealing the Chinese Exclusion Act.¹, ⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Point System for immigration policy adopted in Canada</td>
<td>Canada adopts a universal point system, a skills-based system, which treated all immigrants equally and not based on nationality¹, ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Canada recognizes the People’s Republic of China</td>
<td>Prior to 1970, there were tensions between China and Canada, given the context of the Cold War. Diplomatic relationships were established in 1970 between the two countries.²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Multiculturalism policy adopted in Canada</td>
<td>Principles of multiculturalism were adopted as a policy in 1971, with the intention of continued discussion as to how multiculturalism would materialize in Canadian society.⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>The Canadian Multiculturalism Act adopted in Canada</td>
<td>The adoption of the Multiculturalism Act gave formal and concrete meanings to ideas related to cultural diversity and preserving cultural heritage.⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Head Tax Redress</td>
<td>Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, officially apologizes for the Head Tax, with financial compensation.¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Official apology to Chinese Canadians from the British Columbia legislature</td>
<td>On May 15, 2014, the British Columbia legislature officially apologizes to Chinese Canadians for historical wrongs.⁹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Canada, the first wave of Chinese-Canadians came in 1859 with the discovery of gold in the Fraser Valley (Li, 2008). The early migrants to Canada were mainly male sojourners seeking wealth from the “Gold Mountain” (Yu, 2013). Globally, this coincided with what was known as the Chinese “coolie emigration” from 1845-1874 (Ching-Hwang, 2013). Between 1881 and 1885, another influx of Chinese workers was spurred on to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway (Li, 2008). During this period, the Chinese became a target for racial discrimination and institutional racism (Li, 2008). The influx of Chinese immigrants was met with the passing of the several Chinese Immigration Acts, to restrict immigration and to curtail the rights of the Chinese in Canada (Li, 2008). The first act was implemented in 1885, which levied $50 on any Chinese person coming to Canada, a sum representing nearly a quarter of a year’s wage for an average Chinese labourer (Li, 2008). In 1900, the Head Tax was raised to
$100, and by 1903, the Head Tax was increased to $500, more than a year’s wage for the average worker (Li, 2008).

During the early Twentieth Century, Chinese-Canadians were the largest non-European or First Nations ethnic group in Canada (Mar, 2007). To stifle this growth, anti-Asian sentiments eventually led to the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited the Chinese from immigrating to Canada (Holland, 2007; Li, 2008). From 1923 to 1947, fewer than 100 Chinese could enter Canada, and it would not be until 1947 that the Exclusion Act would be repealed by the federal government, resulting in changes to legally binding policies of discrimination and exclusion (Li, 2008; Wat, 2014). Partially fuelling this change was the advocacy of Chinese-Canadian soldiers who enlisted to fight in World War II (Wat, 2014).

Eventually, by 1967, Canada adopted a “universal point system,” which was a skills-based, rather than a nationality-based system that treated all immigrants equally (Holland, 2007). Unfortunately, even following this adoption, Canada sought skilled labour while it remained very expensive for low-income Chinese people to migrate (Holland, 2007; Li, 2008; Wat, 2014; Yu, 2008). In 1970, diplomatic relations were established between Canada and the People’s Republic of China (Holland, 2008; Yu, 2008). However, it was not until 1977 that the People’s Republic of China relaxed its emigration policies, resulting in an influx of Chinese migrants in the 1980s (Holland, 2007; Wat, 2014; Yu, 2008). It is important to note that, although the People’s Republic of China had earlier restricted emigration prior to 1977, Chinese people were able to come to Canada from other Chinese communities such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, and through illegal means (Holland, 2007; Mar, 2007).
Several policies further contributed to Canada’s becoming a welcoming country to Chinese people. In 1971, Canada adopted a policy of multiculturalism, which improved the quality of intercultural relations by (a) supporting the maintenance and development of cultural communities (cultural component) and (b) promoting intercultural contact and reducing barriers for participation (intercultural component; Berry, 2013, p. 663). In 1988, the Multiculturalism Act (1988) was adopted, providing formal and concrete meanings to ideas related to cultural diversity and preserving cultural heritage (Berry, 2013). The act focused the efforts of Canada to “recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance, and share their cultural heritage” (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988, p. 3). Furthermore, by 2005, Canada ratified the United Nations’ Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Berry, 2013).

**Racial discrimination and institutional racism.** Meanwhile, Stanley (2014) contests that racism, Chinese exclusion, Anti-Asian sentiments, and white supremacy are deeply rooted in Canadian history. As indicated in Stanley’s article, John A. MacDonald, the first Prime Minister of Canada, introduced the concept of biological racism during debates over the 1885 Electoral Franchise Act. During these debates, MacDonald referred to the Chinese as “Chinamen” not equivalent to “Englishmen” or “Americans,” while claiming the Chinese and Europeans were of separate species (Stanley, 2014). These sentiments reflected the global discourse at the time, one rooted in colonial practices and European dominance (Ching-Hwang, 2013).

Anti-Chinese politics continued to be fostered in British Columbia (BC) and other provinces. A year after BC had joined the Confederation, it passed the *Qualification and Registration of Voters Act* (1872), which disenfranchised Chinese and Aboriginal Peoples,
excluding them from provincial electoral franchise (Road to Justice, 2011). These policies were adopted in other provinces, and Chinese-Canadians continued to be segregated from Westerners (Wat, 2014). Furthermore, without political cloud, the Chinese became scapegoats and targets for political movements (Stanley, 2014). With the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Chinese labourers were paid significantly lower than their European counterparts, given the most dangerous tasks, poorly treated, and provided with inadequate food and medical support (Collections Canada, 2011; Wat, 2014). Until the end of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923), anti-Chinese legislation continued to pass, with Chinese people being the only ethnicity taxed with a head tax, along with other acts that segregated Chinese-Canadians economically, personally, and educationally (Li, 2008; Wat, 2014).

When immigration policies changed in 1967, racism continued to be rampant (Collections Canada, 2009; Con & Wickberg, 1982). Exclusionary perspectives would continue in the 1970s, with disparaging statements referring to University of British Columbia (UBC) as the “University of a Billion Chinese” and unfavourable portrayals of Chinese-Canadians in media (Holland, 2007). However, by the 1990s, Chinese-Canadians had become known as a “Model Minority.” Seemingly positive, the label also carried a pejorative connotation (Holland, 2007). In 2006, an official apology for the Chinese Head Tax was tendered to Chinese-Canadians by Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada at the time (Li, 2008). Unfortunately, the circumstances surrounding advocacy for the apology was mired with the politics of the upcoming federal election at the time (Li, 2008; Road to Justice, 2011), rendering the apology’s authenticity problematic.

The above discriminatory history provides a foundation for understanding racism that continues in the form of micro-aggressions—daily, normalized, racial discrimination (Huynh &
Woo, 2014; Lee & Ahn, 2011). Historical racial sentiments also obscure the past and present for Chinese-Canadians with lost histories and continue to foreground challenges in defining Chinese-Canadian identity (Li, 1998; Mar, 2007). These obfuscations are reflected in the ‘hyphenated Canadian’ label (Chinese-Canadian)’s connotation that somehow Chinese people in Canada remain foreigners in their own land (Li, 1998). Furthermore, the difficulty of defining “Chinese-Canadian” endures, given the Canadian residency of multiple generations of Chinese migrants from various Chinese societies. Ethnic definitions with ancestral roots coming from China are valid, yet insufficient (Li, 1998; Yu, 2013). Contested histories continue to contribute, shape, and obscure cultural and ethnic identity among Chinese-Canadians (Li, 1998; Stanley, 2011).

**Chinese-Canadian migration and narrative research.** A prominent example of narrative research that captured the experience of Chinese-Canadian migration is He’s (2002, 2002a, 2002b) narrative inquiry of three Chinese female teachers migrating from China, adjusting to life in Canada, and developing in an Academic community. He (2002, 2002a, 2002b) captured the cross-cultural identity development of the women by utilizing a life-based narrative inquiry approach. The first study examined the lives of the teachers before, during, and after the Cultural Revolution and how life experiences impacted their identities as educators. To actualize her findings, He (2002) uses a river metaphor, a concept deeply grounded in Chinese historical identity, to understand the teachers’ experiences of in-betweenness—fully belonging, neither in Canada nor in China.

He (2002) describes that, as children, they were taught how Mao became a revolutionary hero, and focused their education on the history of the formation of the Chinese Communist Party. During the Cultural Revolution, the women learned to shout slogans, such as, “Long Live
Our Chairman Mao Zedong!” Unfortunately, the participants were viewed as “dog’s daughters,” or part of bourgeois families. Collectively, they witnessed family members physically assaulted by the Red Guards, relatives sent to the laogai, household belongings desecrated, and kin forced into struggle sessions. Educationally, books were banned, and only state authorized books could be read. When the Revolution ended, these women were able to re-engage in education. These disruptions would continue to shape their current lives and how they perceived curriculum should be taught (He, 2002).

The next study focused on the teachers’ experiences in Canada, with respect to their enculturation and acculturation (to be differentiated below) and moving back and forth between Canada and China (He, 2002a). These participants shared how their pre-revolution experiences were based on a historical Chinese identity rooted in Confucian societal values. Tensions emerged throughout the stories—old China versus new China, Western educational beliefs versus modern Chinese education. As acculturative experiences that created a sense of displacement, He (2002a) notes, these individuals’ Chinese “rivers” joined the “rivers” and the multicultural flow of Canada.

Lastly, He’s (2002b) study explores the cross-cultural lives of the teachers in the North America academy, focusing mainly on the author’s experience of her PhD program and her adopting an inquiry-orientated approach to research. He (2002b) illustrates the use of narrative to bridge the tensions between her Chinese identity and Canadian or Western values, by linking narrative threads with strands from the past. These three studies conducted by He (2002, 2002a, 2002b) provide an encompassing example of navigating culture and trauma through narrative research.
Chinese and Chinese-Canadian Intergenerational Trauma

Drawing from the literature on Chinese and Chinese-Canadian history in the Twentieth century makes clear that Chinese people were situated in contexts of significant turmoil, oppression, and trauma. It is important to note that not all Chinese-Canadians were traumatized, given both the multiplicity of migratory generations and the non-homogeneity of Chinese-Canadian communities (Yu, 2014). Thus, a Chinese-Canadian migrant could be exposed to different social contexts, pre- and post-migration. However, it is difficult to believe an individual would face no exposure to trauma in Chinese-Canadian contexts, given the scale of these historical events and the close, communal nature of Chinese-Canadian communities (Con & Wickberg, 1982; Li, 1998).

There have been several papers based on archival data that frame Twentieth century events in China as collective and cultural traumas. The events studied are thus: The Great Famine (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2003), Sino-Japanese War and class struggle during Mao’s regime (Gao, 2015), and the Cultural Revolution (Heberer, 2009; Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2012). Nonetheless, research that has attempted to understand the intergenerational effects of these events is scarce. Currently, there has been published a single research project examining IGT in China (Plänkers, 2014), as well as an autoethnographic dissertation on Chinese-Canadians (To, 2014).

The research examining IGT in China was conducted through the Sigmund Freud Institute, in partnership with professors in China whose names were intentionally omitted for political reasons (Plänkers, 2014). Plänkers’ (2014) project is captured in the book, Landscapes of the Chinese Soul, which includes interviews and analyses of survivors and their families written by several authors. This project was framed as “the China Project” of the Sigmund Freud
Institute, part of a larger initiative to bring psychoanalysis to China (Plänkers, 2014). Plänkers’ (2014) project integrates psychoanalytic, sinological and social-scientific lines of investigation. It utilizes semi-structured life-history interviews and psychoanalytic analysis on the first ($n = 7$) and second generations ($n = 7$) in their respective families. The analysis involved five psychoanalysts familiar with Chinese culture. Each used evaluative questionnaires to guide their analysis and work towards a consensual assessment. These themes stood out from the first generation: significant violation of private life, destruction of careers, persecution, public humiliation, jailing, “brainwashing,” and torture. From these interviews, the researchers noted that five first-generation participants could be diagnosed with PTSD; they proposed these traumas were related to shame and were much more significant because of the Confucian culture.

The second generation had scattered understandings of the Cultural Revolution. Only three of seven participants knew quite a bit about their parents’ experience (Plänkers, 2014). These themes emerged relating to trauma transmission: (a) parents’ child-rearing practices were strict and achievement-oriented, (b) separation trauma, and (c) trauma witnessed early in childhood related to the Cultural Revolution (Plänkers, 2014). Plänkers noted that based on the psychodynamic assessment, there is a parallel process occurring in both the first and second generations, with identifications and repetition of traumatizing behaviours. Markert (2014) provides a deeper analysis of one the families, proposing that Confucian thoughts continue to pervade intergenerational relationships, but have become disrupted by the Cultural Revolution.

In the Canadian study, To (2014) utilized a critically reflexive, autoethnographic approach to understand how the fragmented and silenced memories of previous generations can be understood by second generation Chinese-Canadians. To (2014) argues that trauma transmits through silence and remembrances, expressed through forms such as “moral lessons” that
embody shame, honour, and Confucian virtues. To’s (2014) approach is interdisciplinary. He contends such an approach is necessary in order not to promote essentialist viewpoints on such a complex phenomenon. Therefore, he frames IGT differently than traditional psychological literature; To proposes that IGT is a mediated perception of invisible, silent trauma that intersects with power, memory, communication, and media—it is “haunted history”. Throughout the dissertation, To (2014) provides an overview of his process through reflective montages made up of performative writings. In so doing, he illustrates his reflexivity, as well as lessons learned through his engagement with history, media, and oral testimonies with his peers. To (2014) concludes that trauma continues through silence and through both macroscopic and individual histories; its resources can be tapped through engagement and reflexivity in current Chinese diasporas.

IGT is a construct that binds the past with the present. Patterns of behaviours in the present can be understood by examining the generational past. For instance, Haubl (2014) illustrated the parallels between past self-criticism, as seen in struggle sessions, and criticism and shaming in present Chinese parenting behaviours. To understand IGT, one must highlight historical and political dimensions, as well as the proximal factors that contribute to the present psychosocial challenges of Chinese-Canadians. It may be most beneficial to understand IGT’s relation to present-day health as both a distal determinant of mental health (Bombay et al., 2009) and a form of public, historical narrative (Mohatt et al., 2014). By framing IGT as a public narrative, Chinese-Canadians can understand their corresponding individual and family narratives.
The Present: Chinese-Canadian Stress, Coping, and Mental Health

This section overviews Chinese cultural worldviews as they relate to stress and coping, followed by reviewing relevant literature on stress, coping, and mental health for Chinese-Canadians. As the literature on these topics for Chinese-Canadians are limited, most of the research in this review is drawn from Asian-American, Chinese-American, Asian-Canadian, and Chinese population. Although there are shared characteristics amongst these groups, there remain many distinct cultural differences, as these groups are not monolithic. I have chosen to utilize the term Chinese-Canadians as a broad generalization, while recognizing these generalizations do not reflect the psychosocial realities of all Chinese-Canadians.

Asian and Chinese mental health is distinct from dominant cultural expressions of mental health and can be understood as an intertwinement of culture, stress, and coping (Chun, Moos, & Cronkite, 2006; Wong, 2009). There may be a sociohistorical link between the unique expression of mental health and the historical traumas experienced by Chinese people (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1995). Therefore, to understand IGT as a distal determinant of mental health, as well as a form of public and historical narrative, it is important to elaborate on the key characteristics of present-day Chinese-Canadian worldviews, stress and coping, and mental health, and the ways IGT may intersect these social realities.

Chinese Worldview and Social Being

Culture is multidimensional and cross-generational; it can predispose individuals to patterns of thought and behaviour that are historically, geographically, politically, economically, and philosophically constituted (Kitayama & Uskul, 2011; Wong, 2009). Historically, China’s peoples have been subjected to a significant history of tragedy, turmoil, and extreme adversity throughout its six-thousand-year history (Li, 2012; Wong, 2009). Today, these hardships shape
an understanding of the social world, given philosophies, religious teachings, and social structures developed to cope with the constantly changing dynamics of life (Wong, 2009).

**Religious worldviews.** Teachings from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism provide lessons and wisdom to cope with the vicissitudes of life in Chinese societies (Wong, 2009). Confucianism was founded by Confucius (551–479 BC) and is based on the notion of fostering social stability through cultivating individuals’ virtues (Wong, 2009). Buddhism places emphasis on the cause of suffering being imbalances in the individual’s mind (Wong, 2009). The best way to mitigate stress is to be mindful of one’s psychological state and transform it into constructive thoughts (Cheng et al., 2010, p. 400). Lastly, Taoism, as founded by Lao Tze, places emphasis on acceptance, contentment, and non-intervention in relation to stressors (Cheng et al., 2010). Taoism does not promote passivity, rather it is concerned with understanding the way nature changes in order to be harmonious with the environment (Cheng et al., 2010). Taoism focuses on duality, the recognition that nature and reality are always in a pattern of change (Wong, 2009).

These foundational teachings, as well as historical suffering and cosmological beliefs, characterize a Chinese way of thinking, whose points may be enumerated: (a) *uncontrollability of the world*, the external world is beyond one’s control; (b) *ubiquity of change*, the external world is unpredictable; (c) *fatalism*, there are unexplainable forces that alter the fates of individuals; (d) *dualism*, the co-existence of opposites in the external and internal world as characterized by the Yin-Yang symbol; (e) *collectivism*, the necessity of maintaining and building relationships to survive in challenging circumstances; and (f) *utility of efforts*, affirmation that through personal efforts and responsibilities one can still exercise some sense of control (Wong, 2009).
Confucian social relations. That the teachings of Confucius are most prominent in shaping Chinese societies and social relations and can be understood as a foundation of Chinese psychology (Hwang, 2011). The Confucian conception of society—*wu lun* or the five cardinal relationships—highlights the fundamental social dyads that determine social order in interpersonal relationships. These relationships are hierarchical and intertwined with ethics dictating decorum in relationships (Hwang, 2011). In relationships of individuals with lesser social power, they are to obey and respect those with more power. Individuals with higher social power must treat their subordinates with benevolence and support (Yang, 1995)—benevolence being a broad set of moral values such as difference, kindness, loyalty, and forgiveness (Cheng et al., 2010).

Yang (1995) proposed that patterns of Confucian-based social relating can be typified as social orientations. These include the relationship orientation, authoritarian orientation, familial (group) orientation, and “other” orientation. Interspersed among these social orientations are concepts such as “filial piety” in the familial and authoritarian orientations, the concept of *guanxi* (network of social connections), and *face* (reputation and public self-image in the other orientation; Chen, Lai, & Yang, 2013; Yang, 1995).

Filial piety and intergenerational relations. An authoritarian orientation, that is, a pattern of relating with social authorities, can be understood as an extension of filial piety (Kwan, 2000; Yang, 1995). Filial piety refers to a “specific, complex syndrome or set of cognition, affects, intentions, and behaviours concerning being good or nice to one’s parents” (Yang, 1997, p. 252). The notion of filial piety is based on Confucian teachings which normalize the communal and interdependent relationships between parent and child, a relationship whereby physical and emotional needs are provided to one another at various points in time (Kwan, 2000,
Filial piety occurs “in relation to one’s obligations, respect, obedience, and duty to parents,” based on values of hierarchy, reciprocity, and benevolence (Kwan, 2000, p. 24).

Hierarchy extends intra- and intergenerationally, whereby children and the younger generation are expected to submit and respect their parents and elders. Reciprocal behaviours can be understood as an expression of filial piety, behaviours which include providing for the material and non-material needs of parents, thus reciprocating the care and support of parents that was received by the offspring. However, filial cognitions, emotions, and behaviours may not be consistent, whereby one may engage in filial behaviours out of obligation rather than being driven by filial emotions (Kwan, 2000). Again, benevolence refers to a broad set of moral values such as difference, kindness, loyalty, and forgiveness (Cheng et al., 2010). It relates to the parent’s protective and altruistic behaviours toward their children (Kwan, 2000). Overall, filial piety is an embodiment of the Confucian principles of ren (benevolence), yi (righteousness), and li (propriety; Hwang, 2011). It serves as a foundational component for understanding intergenerational relationships within Chinese families. Furthermore, since one’s life can be understood as the da wo or the “great self”, the family is understood to be part of one’s self identity, and the self is also an inheritance from one’s ancestors (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). Thus, filial piety is, in essence, part of one’s identity (Bedford & Hwang, 2003).

The notion of filial piety may be subject to changing cultural perspectives. Yan (2011) notes that, in China, notions of filial piety are shifting from self-sacrifice towards self-development, where in contemporary China filial piety concerns children’s attaining happiness and comfort, which later reciprocates to happiness in their parents. Acculturation may also impact one’s understanding of filial piety (Hsueh, Hu, & Clarke-Ekong, 2008). Hsueh et al.’s (2008) qualitative study of 21 Chinese immigrants acculturated to American society found that
participants still maintained filial practice but accepted new practices and notions as to how to approach filial piety in an American society.

**Social networks, face, and shame.** The “other orientation” is comprised of concern for others’ opinions of oneself, conformity to social norms, harmony in relationships, and high regard for reputation—it refers to one’s internalized social audience that can be actual or imaginal (Yang, 1995). Hwang (2011) notes that the core of “other orientations” is the concept of *mianzi* and *lian* (face), *renqing* (favour and reciprocity), *ganqing* (subjective measure of affection towards the other in interpersonal relations), and *guanxi* (personalized network of social relationships).

*Guanxi* is essentially one’s social network and represents one’s social capital (Chen et al., 2013). Family is understood to be at the core of one’s *guanxi* that extends to an outer network (Chen et al., 2013). Within these networks are reciprocal actions characterizing relationships predetermined in intimacy (Yang, 1995; Chen et al., 2013). This intimacy is based on both subjective-sense (*ganqing*) and formally defined relationality, as in family (Chen et al., 2013). Social exchanges are reciprocated based on the principle of *renqing*, although the level of reciprocity and appropriateness of the social exchange is dependent on *ganqing* and the social roles of individuals in relation to one another. Those with family-like status (*shuren*) or family status (*jiaren*), have privileged social exchanges and reciprocity (Chen et al., 2013).

“Face” is deeply embedded in the social structure of Chinese relations (Chen et al., 2013). With face, there are two connected concepts: *lian*, which is related to personal integrity and moral character (moral face), and *mianzi*, which is related to the public self-image of respect (social face; Yang & Kleinman, 2008). To lose face not only means the loss of social status, but also of integrity, and at extreme forms, is perceived as “social death” (Chen et al., 2013; Yang,
Face’s application extends beyond the individual to include family; therefore, it is vital for one to protect individual face as well as his/her family’s (Chen et al., 2013; Yang & Kleinman, 2008).

Face is linked with the notion of shame and guilt (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Yang & Kleinman, 2008). Generally, guilt is related to one’s actions, whereas shame is about one’s self. With guilt, self-image is intact, while with shame one’s self-image is questioned (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). For Chinese people, guilt often manifests in the form of failing to fulfill one’s duty and obligations, while shame is associated with the loss of face or loss of social place in the eyes of others (Hsiao, Klimidis, Minas, & Tan, 2006). These notions are supported in Li, Wang, and Fischer’s (2003) study examining native Chinese people’s understanding of shame. The researchers found that shame was related with losing one’s face, the feelings associated when face was lost, and guilt. Shame and guilt are felt when one does not meet their moral obligation, an obligation embedded in the processes of social exchange found within one’s social networks, such as filial piety (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). Violating one’s obligation is connected to losing face and can threaten both private and public identity (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Yang & Kleinman, 2008).

**Collectivism and individualism.** Broadly speaking, the above Chinese cultural perspectives and worldviews can be subsumed under the umbrella of collectivism. Collectivism and individualism as cultural constructs are linked with behaviour, cognition, emotion, motivation, and personalities of groups and individuals (Hofstede, 1980, Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In cultures orientated towards individualism, the self is the central unit in society, whereas in cultures orientated towards collectivism, the in-group forms the central unit of society (Chun et al., 2006, p. 31). Though there are many other binary frameworks in which to
understand culture, collectivism/individualism has been the most studied phenomenon (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Individualism and collectivism each emphasize one normative set of values, attitudes, and behaviours, as ascribed to the self, or in contrast, to the ingroup (Hofstede, 1980). Another way to understand individualism/collectivism is through self-construal theory (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In individualistic cultures, the self is construed as independent, while in collectivistic cultures it is interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). An independent self-construal emphasizes internal attributes and the uniqueness of individuals; the interdependent self-construal focuses on the self in relation to others, social contexts, and relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Within Chinese contexts, the family serves as the locus of self-construal and forms the fundamental in-group (Yang, 1995). As Chinese cultures are collectivistic, concepts of face, shame, and filial piety, along with the core values of Eastern philosophies, are integral for understanding both historical and present-day mental health, stress, and coping (Hwang, 2011).

**Chinese-Canadian Stress and Coping**

Lazarus and Folkman’s transaction theory of stress has been one of the most prominent theories for understanding stress and coping (Chang, Tugade, & Asakawa, 2006). It explains how stress is appraised, offering two dominant strategies used in coping, *problem-focused* and *emotion-focused coping* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). *Problem-focused coping* refers to coping mechanisms that focuses on altering the stressor or event, while *emotion-focused coping* refers to individuals’ changing their reactions to the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). To understand stress and coping in Chinese-Canadians, it is vital to acknowledge the following assumptions: (a) stress and coping cannot be separated from cultural context; (b) cultural values and beliefs influence the interpretation of respective stressors; and (c) stress and coping should be
understood from a collectivistic perspective that affirms the systemic and sociocultural context (Inman & Yeh, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

“Psychological stress refers to a relationship with the environment that the person appraises as significant for his or her well-being and in which the demands tax or exceed available coping resources” (Lazarus & Folkman 1986, p. 63). Stress from this standpoint is evaluated based on how the individual perceives and appraises the situation, a concept which is dependent on cognitive and ecological structures. Stressors are unique to the sociocultural context an individual lives within, thus Chinese-Canadians face stressors different from other cultural groups’ (Carr & Umberson, 2013; Chun et al., 2006). These specific stressors are both external, due to the unique circumstances of Chinese-Canadians, and internal, due to the cultural references that define stressful (Chun et al., 2006).

To understand the intersection of stress and coping from a cultural perspective, Chun et al.’s (2006) Cultural Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (CTSC) builds on Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model. They incorporate several social-psychological principles into an integrative framework based on five panels. Panel I, the environmental system, emphasizes events and issues that are unique stressors in Chinese-Canadian contexts. Panel II, the personal system, denotes individual factors such as self-esteem and identity that frame how an individual can cope with stress. Panel III, transitory conditions, stipulates what is threatening or stressful for a Chinese-Canadian based on their cultural values. Panel IV, cognitive appraisal and coping skills illustrates how certain coping strategies are favoured over others due to one’s cultural identity. Lastly, panel V, health and well-being, determines valued outcomes for Chinese-Canadians. For example, lower stress may not be as important for an individual compared to the outcome of preserving relationships or social harmony. According to the CTSC, culture
permeates all the panels related to stress and coping. It influences what stressors are relevant, how individuals view themselves, and the outcomes of stress (Chun et al., 2006).

**Acculturation and biculturalism.** A core facet of stress for immigrants and their families is acculturative stress, which impacts health and well-being outcomes (Berry, 2006; Miller, Yang, Hui, Choi, & Lim, 2011). Acculturation refers to “the process of adapting to the norms of the dominant culture” (Kim, 2007, p. 143). Berry’s (2006) framework for acculturation extends Lazarus and Folkman’s stress and coping model to the cultural/group level. According to Berry (2006), adapting to a new culture involves the use of acculturative strategies, which depend on cultural and psychological factors. The cultural factors are reliant on how the two cultural groups interact, where there is usually some premise for the interaction (e.g., colonialism, migration, refuge). Typically, one group is dominant to the other (Berry, 2006).

The interaction of cultural groups impacts the individual level of acculturation, also known as psychological acculturation (Berry, 2006). In Berry’s (2006) model, the intersection of cultures has three outcomes on an individual: behavioural shifts, acculturative stress (also known as culture shock), and psychopathology. Behavioural shifts involve changes to the individual’s behaviour that take place in a non-problematic manner. With acculturative stress, appraisals and reactions are related to the acculturation process, which includes difficulties with social, familial, environmental, and cultural domains (Miller et al., 2011). Lastly, in a person’s life, psychopathology potentially occurs when acculturation is problematic and results in insurmountable stress (Berry, 2006).

The current direction of acculturation theory supports a multidimensional and bilinear model (Kuo, 2014; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Yoon, Langrehr, & Ong, 2011). The multidimensional aspect of acculturation involves the internal domain, those psychological
aspects of an individual’s cultural orientation such as values, knowledge, and identity, as well as the external domain, the behavioural presentation of an individual’s cultural orientation, including patterns of language use (Chia & Costigan, 2006; Yoon et al., 2013). According to Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik (2010), these dimensions of acculturation can also be summarized as cultural identity (inclusive of cultural practices), values, and identifications. With respect to linearity, unilinear models of acculturation are based on a single continuum (Yoon et al., 2013). However, the current direction of the literature increasingly supports a bilinear paradigm that encompasses both acculturation and enculturation, where these constructs are represented on two orthogonal continua (Yoon et al., 2013). Enculturation can be understood as a form of cultural maintenance where one maintains the norms of one’s indigenous culture and/or undergoes a process of (re)socializing to one’s indigenous cultures (Inman & Yeh, 2007; Kim, 2007).

There is a correlational relationship between degree of acculturation and mental health outcomes. In Yoon et al.’s (2013) meta-analysis of 325 studies (N = 72,013) examining the relationship between acculturation, enculturation, and mental health, researchers found that acculturation was favourably associated with both negative and positive mental health, while enculturation was associated with positive mental health, but was unfavourably associated with negative mental health. The most favourable association with positive mental health outcomes involved external acculturation (e.g., adopting language and behaviours) and internal enculturation (e.g., understanding identity). These results illustrate the value of connecting to one’s own ethnic identity, while maintaining the capability to interact with the dominant culture.

* Biculturalism. Biculturalism can be understood as “comfort and proficiency with both one’s cultural heritage and the culture of the country or region of settlement” (Schwartz &
Biculturalism applies to immigrants, their children, ethnic enclaves, and visible minority groups (Schwartz & Unger, 2010). Being bicultural refers to simultaneous immersion in two differing cultures, which has implications for stress in reconciling differences in relation to one’s identity (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009). A bilinear model that encompasses acculturation and enculturation can successfully understand the dynamics of biculturalism (Kim, 2007; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009). From this framework, adherence to one culture does not imply no adherence to another, rather one can be both highly enculturated and acculturated (Miller et al., 2011). In navigating between different cultures, a bicultural individual may move between two groups depending on his or her situation (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009).

According to Schwartz and Unger’s (2010) synthesis of the literature, the development of biculturalism occurs through two means: the socio-cultural context, where both heritage and dominant culture are emphasized and valued, and the intentional efforts of parents to enculturate their children. The impact of these factors is dependent on the particular context, including whether enculturation processes are encouraged. How one navigates multiple cultures and one’s bicultural competency has implications for whether this navigation is considered a stressor or resource (LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993). Six factors are deemed important for developing bicultural competence: (a) knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, (b) positive attitude towards both groups, (c) belief that one is able to function effectively within both cultures, (d) ability to communicate within both cultures, (e) ability to behave appropriately within both cultures, and (f) secure social networks within each culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). However, the adaptive value of biculturalism may be dependent on the context’s historical and political climate which yield its valuation (Schwartz & Unger, 2010).
Research exists supporting the positive benefits of being bicultural. Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2013) examined the link between biculturalism and adjustment in a meta-analysis involving 83 studies \((N = 23,197)\) and found a significant and positive association between the two constructs. High association with both dominant and indigenous culture was associated with positive psychological adjustment (psychological and emotional well-being) and sociocultural adjustment (behavioural competence). Meanwhile, overall adjustment was stronger for individuals with bicultural identification than individuals who only had stronger associations with one culture. These results generally show that concurrent identification with dominant and heritage groups is associated with favourable outcomes.

**Asian-American and Chinese-Canadian stressors.** In the Asian-American literature on stress, unique cultural stressors can be broken down into these categories: familial and intergenerational stress, cultural conflicts and bicultural identities, model minority stress, and stress related to racism and discrimination (Inman & Yeh, 2007). All these stressors are connected to the experience of acculturation.

Familial and intergenerational stress is connected to the stress of adapting to new social roles, family expectations, and values (Inman & Yeh, 2007). Family expectations consist of parental concerns that their subsequent generations will lose ethnic roots and related concerns that other socializing agents are influencing their children. The rate of acculturation also plays a role, as children who quickly adopt North American culture tend to experience increased acculturative conflicts and stress with their parents, who typically acculturate more slowly (Inman & Yeh, 2007).

Cultural conflicts and bicultural identities refer to the inconsistencies in dealing with cultural expectations which may lead to cultural conflicts, intra-psychically and interpersonally,
within families (Berry, 2006; Inman & Yeh, 2007). Individualistic values of North American culture are different than those of a collectivist Asian culture. For example, Inman and Yeh (2007) purport that American cultures value assertiveness, while Asian cultures tend to value modesty and social restraints. This process of negotiating two significantly contrasting cultures can be understood as part of acculturative stress and the challenges of biculturalism (Inman & Yeh, 2007).

The model minority stress refers to the notion that Asians embody the “American dream,” namely that they are commonly hard working, high-achieving individuals, who can achieve despite linguistic and ethnic barriers. Although the notion of “model minority” may seem flattering, this view problematically reduces multiple cultural groups into a particular positive façade. It inaccurately depicts Asians in North America as always successfully integrating into dominant culture, without affirming the reality of the challenges this group also faces, challenges which result in this population being taken advantage of (Inman & Yeh, 2007).

Lastly, in regard to stress associated with racism and discrimination, such are historically evident, from anti-Chinese sentiments in the 1800s to racist policies in the 1900s; however, such attitudes remain evident in today’s contexts, manifesting in the form of micro-aggressions (Inman & Yeh, 2007; Li, 2008). For example, in a focus-group study conducted by Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino (2009), researchers found that racial micro-aggression were experienced as: (a) feeling alien in one’s own land, given the assumption that all Asians are foreigners; (b) ascription of intelligence due to ethnicity; (c) exoticization of Asian women; (d) invalidation of ethnic differences; (e) denial of racial reality, or the dismissal of micro-aggressions as racially discriminative; (f) pathologizing of cultural values; (g) second-class citizenship; and (h) invisibility, or being overlooked on issues related to race and ethnicity.
The literature on Chinese-Canadian stressors parallel the Asian-American literature. However, the research on Chinese-Canadians is limited in contrast. Most of this research focuses on Chinese-Canadian students and university students. Research on Canadian contexts emphasize stressors related to bicultural identity, family conflicts and expectations, and racism (Costigan, Su, & Hua, 2009; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009). In Costigan, Hua, and Su’s (2010) review, the stressors experienced by Chinese-Canadian students typically involved familial challenges, peer discrimination, and pressure for high achievement, as well as the high standard set by the “model minority” stereotype.

**Traumatic stress and Chinese-Canadians.** Traumatic stress can be understood as a subset of stress within the stress and coping paradigm (Carr & Umberson, 2013). However, the research on the manifestation of traumatic stress in Chinese-Canadians is minimal. There is emerging literature examining traumatic stress in Chinese societies (Tang, 2007). These studies that have examined traumatic stress in earthquake survivors (Tang, 2007), child maltreatment (Shen, 2009; Tang, 2007), traffic accidents (Tang, 2007), and intimate partner violence (Chan, Tiwari, Fong, & Ho, 2010). Nonetheless, there are limitations on this research, as these studies tend to privilege Eurocentric models of trauma for studying these populations, resulting in an imposed-etic approach to research (Tang, 2007). In addition, trauma research among Chinese societies is limited to certain types of traumas, while other forms of trauma such as relationally-based trauma and political oppression are largely unexplored (Tang, 2007).

**Immigration trauma.** According to Foster (2001), immigration trauma is composed of three stages: (a) pre-migration trauma—experienced prior to migration, often the determinant of relocation; (b) migration trauma—trauma during transit that could include the experiences of escape and crossing borders, often through illegal means; and (c) post-migration trauma—
occurring during asylum or temporary resettlement, where experiences might include challenges in dealing with uncertainty, fear, and overcrowding. During settlement in the host country, there may be inadequate supports, challenges in rebuilding social networks, and racial discrimination (Foster, 2001). These traumatic experiences can impact an individual’s adjustment to a new country and may result in subsequent mental health problems (American Psychological Association, 2012; Kirmayer et al., 2011). Fazel, Wheeler and Denesh (2005)’s meta-analysis (n = 6743) examined the prevalence of serious mental health disorders in refugees. They found that about one in ten adults developed PTSD. This post-migration trauma may have been perpetuated by the lack of social networks and different social structures, where as a result interpersonal violence and domestic abuse within immigrant communities has been found to be problematic (American Psychological Association, 2012).

With on-going research on immigration trauma and Chinese-Canadians, there have been explorations of its connection with pathological gambling (Lee, Solowoniuk, & Fong, 2007). To explore this link, Lee et al. (2007) used a comparative case study research design to inquire into childhood experiences, motivating factors for immigration, anticipation of immigration, thoughts and feelings prior to immigration, and internal and external factors that made it difficult for immigration. Traumas that were experienced among the participants came in the form of loss/abandonment, neglect/deprivation, socio-political oppression, and physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Despite significant traumas, participants denied a link between childhood traumas and their current pathological gambling. The researcher attributed this denial to the participants’ understanding that their gambling was due to more proximal factors, as opposed to distal, early-life factors. Other possibilities include cultural connotations of stress and trauma, as well as resiliency and post-traumatic growth related to immigration experiences (Weiss &
The challenges associated with migratory trauma extend the typical scope of trauma. It is these associated challenges, along with migration trauma, that participate in the broader Chinese-Canadian diasporic narrative.

**Chinese coping.** The literature on coping has generally characterized Chinese people in the following manner: (a) a tendency to use avoidant or emotion-focused coping, (b) greater flexibility in strategy distribution across stressful situations, and (c) propensity to seek and utilize less social support (Cheng et al., 2010, p. 399). Although there may be “empirical” support for these claims, the literature’s implications are generally pejorative. They denote the idea that Chinese people utilize ineffective coping strategies, since emotion-focused coping is linked with worse outcomes (Penley, Tomaka, & Wiebe, 2002). However, such assertions are problematic, given the coping research reflects individualistic or Eurocentric values.

Evidence can be found that challenges these predominant views of coping among Chinese people and people from collectivistic cultures. For instance, Jose and Huntsinger (2005) found that avoidance strategies were more effective for mitigating stress under high stress levels, while problem-focused coping led to more maladjustment for Chinese-American adolescents in comparison to European-Americans. In another study, Chang (2001) found that when Euro-American students utilized passive and avoidance-based coping strategies, these strategies were associated with lower life satisfaction and depression, which was not the case for Chinese-American students. These studies indicate that Chinese people are not necessarily more maladjusted merely because they employ emotion-focused coping, but rather, these coping strategies may be congruent with their worldview (Cheng et al., 2010). The bias of “perceived control” (below) in relation to problem-focused coping is reflective of Euro-American values of individualism, and not Chinese values of collectivism (O’Connor & Shimizu, 2002).
An explanation that may explain these differences is found in Rothbaum, Weisz and Snyder’s (1982) Two-Process Model of Perceived Control, which proposes that control can be environmental (primary) or individual (secondary). In this case, individualists tend to exercise primary control by trying to change the environment, while collectivists utilize secondary control strategies by changing their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Chun et al., 2006). Although emotion-focused coping may seem passive from an individualistic standpoint, Chinese people may be actively gaining perceived control through indirect means by using secondary control strategies (Cheng et al., 2010, p. 403). As Cheng et al. (2010) further propose, it is not that Chinese people do not use problem-focused strategies, rather they use a balance of both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies.

**Asian-American and Chinese-Canadian coping.** A Chinese-Canadian may not necessarily adopt an indigenous Chinese worldview when it comes to coping, depending on their level of acculturation and enculturation. For example, a study conducted by Miller et al. (2011) examined the level of acculturation, enculturation, and mental health, as well as attitudes towards help-seeking for Asian-American college students. The researchers found enculturation and acculturation held vital roles in determining coping and social support. Similarly, in a study that compared Asian, Asian-American, and European-American coping, Taylor et al. (2004) found that Asians and Asian-Americans utilized less social support than European-Americans, because of factors related to social harmony and face. However, when Asian-Americans were compared to Asians, they were more susceptible to seeking social support, a fact which may be related to acculturation (Taylor et al., 2004). Greater adoption of acculturation-derived values and lesser adoption of enculturation-derived values were related to a more positive view of professional support.
Within a Canadian population, Kuo and Gingrich (2005) compared the degree of independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, and coping strategies between Asian International, Asian-Canadian and Caucasian-Canadian undergraduates, based on 174 participants (46 Asian Internationals, 63 Asian-Canadians, and 65 Caucasian-Canadians). The researchers found that individuals who adopted an interdependent self-construal utilized more collective coping strategies, while individuals who adopted an individualistic self-construal used more individualistic coping strategies. Taking these studies together, coping among Chinese-Canadians can be understood as an integration of individualistic, collectivistic, and indigenous dimensions, related to the individual’s degree of acculturation and enculturation.

**Chinese-Canadian Mental Health**

A significant relationship persists between stress and mental health (Ingram & Luxton, 2005). Prominent theories such as Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, and Mullan’s (1999) Stress Process Model conceptualize the consequences of compounding stressors as impacting the physical, emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of an individual’s life. Similarly, the diathesis-stress model denotes how vulnerabilities or predispositions, paired with stress, can result in the development of psychological disorders (Ingram & Luxton, 2005). There is also enough evidence to support an epigenetic basis for IGT and the increased risk of depression (Nestler, 2015), providing further support for the intergenerational and historical connection between stress and present-day mental health outcomes.

There are unique cultural expressions of mental health problems among Chinese-Canadians: depression is typically expressed somatically or else denied altogether; distress can manifest as neurasthenia; and mental illness is associated with shame and the loss of face (Parker, Gladstone, & Chee, 2001; Ryder et al., 2008). Neurasthenia is a culturally-bounded
construct found in Chinese societies, characterized by mental and physical fatigue, weakness, concentration issues, and aches and pains (Sue et al., 2012). The expression of psychological distress through somatic means may be due to the social acceptance of physical pain rather than of mental illness (Parker et al., 2001; Ryder et al., 2008).

Racial discrimination is another distinct dimension found to impact mental health outcomes for Chinese-Canadians. Lee and Ahn’s (2011) meta-analysis, based on 23 studies examining racial discrimination and mental health outcomes in Asian heritages, found the relationship between racial discrimination and mental health was statistically significant \( r = .23 \), while anxiety \( r = .28 \), depression \( r = .26 \), and psychological distress \( r = .17 \) were all positively associated with each other. The researchers also found that individual’s resources (personal constructs and strengths, social support, cultural identity, and coping strategies) were negatively associated with racial discrimination and mental health challenges. Overall, this study highlights the impact of racism on individuals, rooted as it is in historical and political dimensions of the cultural landscape. It also illustrates the potential benefits of fostering culturally sensitive resources for this population.

Systemically, Chinese-Canadians’ mental health is mired with distinct challenges. For instance, there endures a lack of service utilization, despite their experiencing similar rates of mental distress as North Americans of European descent (Chen et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2014; Spencer et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2008). Asian-Canadians/Americans are often neglected in intervention and prevention planning because of their “model minority” status, the “immigrant paradox,” and the misinterpretation of prevalence rates, all of which inadvertently diminishes the significant challenges they are perceived to face (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Vô, 2004). The “immigrant paradox” refers to the notion that, as acculturation increases, health
and mental health problems increase (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Although mental health problems for immigrants may presently be lower than in general populations, over time these problems manifest to levels equal to the general populations’ (Kirmayer et al., 2011). These challenges have accumulated to the extent of recent calls to action in the APA and in US mental health policies, each seeking to address the real needs of Asian-Americans (Hall & Yee, 2012; Sue et al., 2012).

The prevalence of mental health challenges for Chinese-Canadians conflict with the epidemiological research on Asian-Americans. Although American studies of Asians showed that generally mental illness is lower than in other ethnic groups, rates remained higher than those specified in Canadian studies (Sue et al., 2012; Tiwari & Wang, 2006). For example, The National Latino and Asian American Study \((N = 2095)\) found that Asian Americans have 17.3% lifetime prevalence for mental illness and 9.2% over a span of 12-months, while Canadian studies indicated that the lifetime prevalence for depression or anxiety was 8.5% for Chinese-Canadians (Takeuchi et al., 2007; Tiwari & Wang, 2006). According to Sue et al. (2012), the discrepancy in the numbers may be due to methodological issues. Reliability and validity may be questionable due to culturally-based reporting biases and cultural biases of how mental disorders are conceptualized. Furthermore, these measures were based on an imposed-etic application of psychopathology criteria, which presumed that psychopathology presents identically across cultures (Sue et al., 2012). Furthermore, cultural dimensions may also contribute to the under-reporting of mental illness, as an affirmative report would be damaging to one’s social network \((guanxi)\) where it might be more important to preserve face (Chen et al., 2013). With Chinese-Canadians, the issue of model minority status and the associated stigma related to mental health problems’ shattering this myth can create further ostracization and
silence. This issue therefore contributes to under-reporting of distress (Lee et al., 2008). Though the reporting of mental health concerns and service utilization is lower for Chinese-Canadians, these statistics may not reflect the actual psychological distress experienced by this population (Chen et al., 2009).

**Summary of Chinese-Canadian Stress, Coping, and Mental Health**

Adhering to a stress and coping model to understand mental health can help negotiate the roles of culture and acculturation. Doing so can negotiate how distal determinants, such as IGT, may contribute to current mental health outcomes. Furthermore, drawing from Chinese cultural perspectives can provide interpretations that are respectful to Chinese-Canadian heritage, and ensure perspectives are not based on an imposed-etic viewpoint (Wong et al., 2006). As illustrated in the literature, there is a multiplicity of processes involved in Chinese-Canadian stress, coping, and mental health, whether they be acculturation, encountering conflicting values, or confronting the unique stressors that face this population.

The literature review provides the contextual and academic backdrop for reading the narratives containing IGT in Chinese-Canadians. It links the narrative of historical traumas in particular Chinese sociopolitical contexts with the current presentation of mental health and coping for Chinese-Canadians. Positing correlational connection is not the purpose of the study, rather it is, as Mohatt et al. (2014) contend, to understand IGT and historical trauma as a broad, temporal narrative, one able to frame an understanding of the present Chinese-Canadian diasporic narrative. The discussions presented in this literature review illustrate the highly interconnected nature of IGT as it intersects historical, social, cultural, and psychological discourses. The next chapter describes the methods used to investigate the narratives of IGT, including how they were constructed within the participants’ situated lives.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The aim of the study is to understand intergenerational trauma (IGT) and resiliency within Chinese-Canadian families by utilizing narrative inquiry through a critical theory paradigm. Specifically, I adapted Arvay’s (2003) Collaborative Narrative Method (CNM) and utilized Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis. Moreover, given the linguistic (Mandarin, Cantonese, and English) and cultural dimensions of this study, a multilingual research design for transcription and translation was integrated into the project in the form of the Linguistic Ecology Protocol (McDonald & Chau, 2008; see Appendix B).

Narrative inquiry refers to the study of experience as story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It adheres to the understanding that stories are a form of action and a way in which people understand and experience their lives and identities (Bruner, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988; Reissman, 2008). To inquire narratively involves living, telling, retelling, and reliving; people live out stories and tell stories of their living. By conversing with people, stories are then retold and relived (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative inquiry involves attending to three commonplace dimensions of narrative: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013). Temporality, attends to “the past, present, and future of people, places, things, and events under study” (p. 39); sociality refers to, “the [social] conditions under which people’s experiences and events are unfolding” in terms of social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives (p. 40); and place, the landscape and physical boundaries by which inquiry and events had taken place (Clandinin, 2013).

In this study, the stories of the participants are understood and examined from these three commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place. Trauma as inflicted in the past is understood in the present through parent and offspring narratives (temporality). These narratives are
bounded by social conditions (e.g., cultural traumas, institutional politics, migration) and are shaped relationally and generationally (sociality). While, China and Canada, along with associated migratory experiences, serves as situated contexts by which the stories are bounded (place). The stories of the participants have been lived and told through their constructive understanding of their lives. Through the co-constructed process within this narrative study, their stories are then retold and relived. This chapter details the process of co-construction that involves the retelling and reliving of participants’ narratives of IGT and resilience.

**Paradigmatic and Epistemological Foundations of the Research Project**

Although narrative theorists do not necessarily deny material and social reality, they do not confirm it either, and instead privilege the narrative form of knowing as the reflective site of identity and mimesis of life (Bruner, 1991; Clandinin, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1988). As such, there are diverse ways in which narrative inquiry has been established in the literature, with realist, postmodern, and constructionist strands that contend over its precise ontological and epistemological basis (Clandinin, 2013; Reissman & Speedy, 2007). This contention offers flexibility to theoretical perspectives that can be applied to narrative research (Kim, 2015). In the case of this study, I ascribe to a “critical theory” or “critical social theory” paradigm that highlights issues of power and justice, and acknowledges the reality of power structures, including race, class, and gender (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Kincheloe and McLaren’s (1994, 2005) broad reconceptualization of critical social theory serve as a guide for social research and emphasizes the following: (a) thought is mediated by power relations that are constructed within sociohistorical contexts; (b) facts can never be isolated from the values placed upon them; (c) language is central to the formation of subjectivity; (d) oppression can come in many different forms and occurs at the expense of a
group/individual; and (e) mainstream research generally reproduces systems of class, race, and gender oppression. The intersection between critical theory and narrative inquiry highlights how storytelling can provide insight into the lived forms of oppression to challenge dominant hegemonic narratives (Kim, 2015). This intersection is important, as a limitation to contemporary critical theory is found in its disconnect between theorizing and lived forms of oppression (Peters, 2005). A critical perspective is appropriate for this study given the role of silence regarding IGT among the Chinese-Canadian diaspora. Silence perhaps can be understood as a consequence of oppression, whether it be cultural or trauma-based (Danieli, 1998).

Social constructionism serves as the epistemological foundation for this study. As a broad theoretical framework, social constructionism encompasses the following shared-assumptions: (a) a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge; (b) historical and cultural specificity; (c) knowledge is sustained by social processes; and (e) knowledge and social action are reciprocal (Burr, 2015). At the core of social constructionism is the notion that knowledge is constructed and maintained by social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Crotty, 1998). Thus, the multiple voices that shape this project are interweaved together. The project is influenced by my own beliefs and assumptions, by participants’ beliefs and assumptions about their experiences, and they together are situated within larger sociocultural narratives.

Social constructionism can be aligned with critical theory given its “critical stance towards taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves” (Burr, 2015, p.2). Its approach to critical theory promotes the notion that power relations and structures in the social world determine how our understanding of the world is constructed and reproduced (Kim, 2015). These social structures can be understood as discourses, “a set of meanings, metaphors,
representations, images, stories, statements . . . that produce a particular version of events” (Burr, 2015, p. 75), a social web constructed from linguistic structures to understand the social world that it replicates. Discourses “regulate our knowledge of the world” and hence relate to the social structures of the world that are intimately tied with knowledge and power (Burr, 2015, p. 79). Truth, as understood from a social constructionist perspective, is in constant flux and is historically and culturally constituted (Burr, 2015).

Adhering to a critically-informed narrative approach would then aim to understand how people make sense of their experience framed within institutional power discourses. Stories are understood to be socially constructed and “situated in social and institutional realms” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163). Thus, the constructed stories of IGT are not only individual and dialogical, but are woven and stem from historical, social, and political structures. These sociohistorical contexts, along with individual and collective narratives, are part of the IGT discourse. They contribute to both a collective memory and collective amnesia of the events that precipitate psychological and collective trauma.

**Narrative inquiry.** Narrative inquiry is interdisciplinary in nature and is a subtype of qualitative inquiry (Reissman & Speedy, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). It can be understood as an umbrella term for narrative-based research, which includes narrative analysis, life history, life story, oral history, and testimonials, all of which have different historical roots and strategies for inquiry and interpretation (Chase, 2005; Goodson & Gill, 2011; Mishler, 1995). The premise of narrative inquiry is that people create meaning framed in the narrative form (Reissman, 2008)—they “construct their realities through narrating their stories” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 157). Therefore, what is important in narrative inquiry is not only the story itself, but also the storyteller and how the story is told or constructed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).
The “narrative turn” in social sciences began to gain momentum in 1980s as a response to the reductionism of positivist and realist foundations for social research (Chase, 2005; Goodson & Gill, 2011; Reissman, 2008). As a methodology, its theoretical basis draws from a multiplicity of theorists including John Dewey, Jerome Bruner, David Carr, Donald Polkinghorne, Mary Catherine Bateson, Elliot Mischler, and Robert Cole (Reissman, 2008). Bruner (1986) argues that there are two ways of cognitive functioning: (a) a logico-scientific or a paradigmatic mode, which is grounded in formal logic utilized in positivistic social sciences that seek to explore scientific and universal truth; and (b) a narrative mode, the exploration of connections between life events, which replicates or aims for verisimilitude with life and the experience of life. The narrative mode is inextricably linked with language as the form and vehicle for understanding life experience. In Bruner’s (1986) case, this distinction from science denotes that the rich phenomena of life are represented in the narrative form, which is unlike the positivistic notion that aims to uncover universal truth. The positivistic form focuses on verification determined through falsification; the narrative form can only achieve “verisimilitude” or “a likeness to the truth” (Bruner, 1991).

Narratives organize human existence, activities, and actions in a meaningful way, situated in the temporal dimension (Polkinghorne, 1988). They can expand beyond personal stories as larger frameworks within which personal narratives are embedded, such as the narratives constructed by identity groups, communities, and organizations (Reissman, 2008). These macroscopic understandings of narrative refer to the notion of “master narratives,” “meta-narratives,” or “grand narratives,” whose terminologies are used interchangeably in the literature. As meta-narratives are supported through power structures, some can be hegemonic (Bamberg, 2004; Lyotard, 1984). Narratives that have a liberating and emancipatory agenda countering
dominant and hegemonic meta-narratives are referred to as counter-narratives (Bamberg, 2004). According to Bamberg (2004), counter-narratives can be found in personal stories. In the case of this study, personal narratives of IGT and resilience can be understood as counter-narratives to other broader discourses or meta-narratives such as the model-minority myth.

Following Reissman’s (2008) continuum of narrative forms, this study is aligned with a middle-ground form of narrative—narrative as a discrete story that involves extended accounts of lives in context. Narrative is thus dialogical and polyphonic (Reissman, 2008); the narratives shared in this study are co-constructed and reflect an interactional reality that is a component of the relational nature of IGT and resilience. The study itself involves a plurality of voices (polyphony) that shape narrative accounts, including my voice as a researcher, while the dialogical nature of narratives emphasizes the active role that everyone involved in this study played in narrative construction (Kim, 2015).

**Rationale for narrative inquiry.** There are several reasons why a critical approach to narrative inquiry is most appropriate for this study. First, it challenges “imposed-etic” in cross-cultural research, where a psychological principle from one cultural worldview is imposed upon another culture (Wong, Wong & Scott, 2006). Moreover, it challenges deficit-based social science storytelling, whereby deficiency models are used to explain cultural differences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Examining psychological constructs, in this case IGT, has been problematic in post-positivist cross-cultural research in its privileging one cultural framework over another (Wong et al., 2006). It is important to approach this construct in a manner that does not further perpetuate deficit-based explanatory models, and instead can be used as a form of story-telling resistance (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Accordingly, I argue the central importance of having narratives and counter-narratives’ challenging dominant ideologies (Milner, 2007).
Second, narrative research is helpful for studying participants’ experiences of violence, trauma, or genocide as it enables the exploration of personal meaning and narrative coherence (Keats, 2009). A narrative approach can create space to acknowledge the oppressive realities of traumatic experiences. The meaning of these experiences can be understood in a way that gives “greater equality and closeness, and gives primacy to human action and lived experience” (Durham, 2002, p. 430). As a discourse genre, narrative offers a form of knowledge that is fluid and direct, constructing cultural nuances as understood by individuals and the collective (Bamberg, 2004). Hence, the study of narratives is valuable for exploring social change and identity (Elliott, 2005)—concepts that are rooted in IGT. Narratives can also serve as a bridge over generational gaps and can have a reparative function (Danieli, 2007).

Third, narrative provides a form of research practice that can honour cultural understandings and privilege relationships (Barton, 2004). According to Bruner (1991, 1993) narrative is central to mediating human experience and action, while culture provides the symbolic systems to construct meaning. Mattingly, Lutkehaus and Throop (2010) propose a fundamental link between Bruner’s conception of narrative and culture, as culture offers the interpretive tools to understand narrative schemas; culture itself is also narrative in nature. For indigenous cultures, storytelling is a fundamental part of cultural identity, teaching, and transmission of values and knowledge (Benham, 2007). Likewise, the narrative form is appropriate for this study as storytelling can also be understood as a fundamental way of knowing and valuing transmission in Chinese cultures (Boerdahl, 1999).

Fourth, the literature on IGT emphasizes the importance of recognizing relational and cultural knowledge (Denham, 2008; Lev-Wiesel, 2007). Narrative research has been used to study the families of Holocaust survivors (see Bar-On, 1995) and serves as a foundational way of
knowing in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s testimonials from Indigenous peoples in Canada (see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Furthermore, narratives are helpful for understanding the intra-familial context of IGT and intergenerational identity and self identity (Fivush, Bohanek, & Duke, 2008; Wiseman et al., 2006). As narrative research is aligned with principles of relationality—the development of narratives being shaped by relationships—examining narratives can be helpful to understand intergenerational narratives within a family and the ways personal narratives influence one another (Clandinin, 2013). The intersection of relationality, family stories, and personal narrative contributes to understanding the intergenerational narrative identity (Fivush et al., 2008).

Lastly, the narrative form creates space that acknowledges contextualized understandings and can enable nuanced understandings to tease apart the “conspiracy of silence” in families and in society (Danieli, 2007). Teasing apart silence, in this case, is to clarify the distinction between being silenced and being silent for personal narratives; whereas the former is in reference to silence imposed, the latter refers to silence as a form of resistance (Fivush, 2010). Both forms of silencing in relation to IGT are examined through narratives in this study.

**Research Design and Context**

This study consists of a collaborative co-construction of written narratives in relation to IGT among Chinese-Canadian families. It involved eight participants—two offspring-parent dyads from two different families, one unrelated parental participant, and three unrelated offspring participants—who took part in individual narrative interviews. Narratives were drawn from the parental participants, regarding their pre- and post-migration trauma and how these experiences impacted their children, and from the offspring participants, as to how their parental traumas impacted them as they were growing up in Canada. Throughout the study, participants
served as co-editors, actively shaping the representation of their stories in text form as well as my interpretation of their stories. At the end of the study, individuals from the family dyads were invited to share their stories with each other (parent-to-offspring and offspring-to-parent) within each respective family. A narrative of the family dialogue was documented to understand the process of autobiographical storytelling in families and to illustrate my perspective as a narrative researcher.

An adaptation of Arvay’s (2003) Collaborative Narrative Method serves as the method for this study. CNM is located within narrative inquiry and, as a critical approach to narrative research, is appropriate for this study because of its emphasis on power relations in the social world, emancipation, and its recognition of the dialogical nature of knowledge (Arvay, 2003). Its principles align with the paradigmatic and epistemological foundations of this study. The collaborative process is imbued within CNM and ensures that the represented stories contain not just the researcher’s interpretations but embody the polyphonic nature of narratives by incorporating the perspectives of participants into the interpretive process (Arvay, 2003). Power, in this sense, is balanced between researcher and participants through CNM’s collaborative dimensions. Furthermore, the dialogical foundations of CNM fit with the relational aspect of intergenerational narratives formation (McLean, 2015). Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic-analytic sensibilities are incorporated into the methodology to help supplement Arvay’s approach for analyzing themes across the co-constructed narratives.

Adaptations have been made to CNM to accommodate the theoretical perspectives of this study, along with its practical (e.g., translation) and cultural dimensions (e.g., multilingual commitments). Multilingual and cultural aspects of translation, transcription, and interpretation were integrated using the Linguistic Ecology Protocol (McDonald & Chau, 2008; see Appendix
B). A brief description of CNM’s seven stages along with my adaptations are described in Table 4. The steps taken in each of the adapted stages are detailed in the next section.

Table 4. Adaptations to the Collaborative Narrative Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborative Narrative Method (CNM)</th>
<th>Adaptations made to CNM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Setting the stage - A reflexive preliminary conversation to establish the groundwork for the research relationship between researcher and participants.</td>
<td>1. Setting the stage – Same as Arvay’s approach, but incorporates community consultation with stakeholders to ensure cultural appropriateness of study. As Arvay (2003) describes, “this first stage of the method could be modified to be more participatory and emancipatory from the start…” (p. 165).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The performance: Co-constructing the research interview - The invitation to co-investigate and co-construct narratives through the research interview.</td>
<td>2. Co-constructing narratives – Same as Arvay’s approach. The initial narrative interviews with participants for the co-constructive narratives. Interviews with Chinese-speaking participants involved a translator.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The transcription process – an interpretive practice that underscores the researcher’s theoretical and epistemological assumptions about research. The researcher is involved in multiple transcription drafts—a rough draft, stanza form, and identifying narrative episodes.</td>
<td>3. Transcription and translation: The multilingual protocol – Same as Arvay’s approach, but with intentional integration of a multilingual research protocol to affirm the multicultural/multilingual commitments of the project. Translation processes also underscore my theoretical and epistemological assumptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Four collaborative interpretive readings – Involvement of participants (co-investigators) to collectively engage in four separate readings of their transcripts: reading for content, reading for self of the narrator, reading for the research question, and reading for relations of power and culture.</td>
<td>4. Researcher’s interpretation: Four interpretive readings – Differentiates from Arvay’s approach in that the four interpretive readings of transcripts are done by myself as the researcher. This adaptation was made to accommodate the additional steps required to engage in a multilingual research project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The interpretive interview - Reflective conversations with the participants regarding the interpretations of the four readings and responses to collaborators’ interpretations.</td>
<td>5. Writing narratives and collaborative verification – Based on the transcripts and interpretive readings, narratives are written sequentially and thematically by the researcher in English as the target-language. For Chinese-speaking participants, their narratives were then translated into Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Writing the narratives – Drafting of stories based on interpretive readings into a sequential narrative. The narratives as understood as a joint construction between researcher and participants.</td>
<td>6. Narrative analysis – Categorical-content analysis across all the narratives were conducted. A summary of the analysis was completed and sent to participants for member checking. A final verification of the narratives was completed at this point.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Sharing the story – Story is shared with the participants and with the audience (i.e., public)

7. Family dialogue – For participants who took part as a family dyad, their narratives (offspring and parent) were translated into both English and Chinese. A family dialogue that involved sharing their narratives was conducted for each respective family dyad. This dialogue was captured as part of my narrative as a researcher and witness.

Research context. The study was conducted in partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. through UBC’s Centre for Group Counselling and Trauma with a joint grant from the Vancouver Foundation (Grant # UNR15-0667). Vancouver Foundation is an organization that aims “to bring together community assets to address current and emerging community needs” (Vancouver Foundation, 2015). S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is a social service provider that works to support immigrants and multicultural communities through provision of settlement services, counselling, and employment support (S.U.C.C.E.S.S., 2014). The partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is appropriate for this study as the organization is equipped to understand the complexities of psychological trauma and has been working with the Chinese-Canadian community for over 40 years.

The premise of the joint grant with the Vancouver Foundation was to conduct a participatory study exploring the stories of Chinese-Canadian families who have experienced IGT. Through S.U.C.C.E.S.S., I worked with M. Kam, Director of Family and Community Services, who has worked extensively with the Chinese-Canadian community in her practice through S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Given the participatory nature of the study, key stakeholders such as staff, clinicians, and family members with lived experiences were consulted as part of the community consultation process. These stakeholders were consulted throughout the project to ensure that the ethical goals of the community were being met.
Prior to the start of the project, I met the director of family and youth services at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in January and February 2016 to arrange logistics and to build an initial understanding of the community. Upon receiving ethics approval, I started recruitment in September 2016, which involved meeting with stakeholders, distributing recruitment material, and conducting phone pre-interviews for interested participants (see Stage 1 in the next section). The first round of interviews began in November 2017 and were conducted at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and at the UBC Centre for Group Counselling and Trauma, whichever location was most convenient for participants. The second round of interviews involved members’ checking of their drafted, co-constructed narratives. Individuals who were involved in the study as a family dyad took part in a family conversation where they shared their stories with one another (offspring to parent and vice-versa) within their respective family. Data collection, analysis, and credibility checks were completed by August 2018.

To complete the research project, I assembled a research team consisting of co-researchers who were involved in recruitment, data collection, language interpretation, translation, and transcription. The members of the team were all trained by myself regarding narrative research and theory and were assigned different tasks including: Interpretation and Chinese-to-English transcriptions (C. Huang), translation (V. Ng), and recruitment (S. Truong). English-to-English transcriptions were completed by myself, another co-researcher (J. Chan), and by a professional transcriptionist. Relevant details regarding linguistic and cultural competencies for members involved in translation, interpretation, and Chinese-to-English transcription were provided in the Linguistic Ecology Protocol (see Appendix B).

Cultural, multilingual, and ethical considerations for research design. Given the critical and cultural foundations of the research project, along with the ethical-relational
dimensions of narrative research (see Josselson, 2007), the study incorporates trauma-informed and cultural-reflexive components into the research design. Cultural considerations are explicitly integrated into the project through intentional interpretive strategies for transcription, translation, and interpretation with the use of the *Linguistic Ecology Protocol* (McDonald & Chau, 2008). Meanwhile, I engaged in a continual cultural-reflexive process regarding my positionality, as described in Milner’s (2007) article, through field notes, journaling, member checking, and reflexive conversations with my research committee and my co-researchers. These areas of cultural reflexivity included: (a) *researching the self*—self-reflection regarding my racial and cultural heritage and the ways in which it influences this research and worldviews; (b) *researching the self in relation to others*—acknowledging the cultural and racial heritage and historical landscape of the participants, as well as the ways that taking part in this study, along with my influence, could shape these landscapes; (c) *engaged reflection and representation*—the joint reflection about race and culture between myself and my participants regarding the concept of IGT; and (d) *shifting from self to system*—which involves shifting the process of inquiry to consider the sociohistorical and political issues that shape systems of knowledge as they pertain to IGT in Chinese-Canadian families (Milner, 2007).

Narrative research is linguistically and culturally bounded, therefore interpretation of interviews must take into consideration the way in which language and culture shapes narrative (Reissman, 2008; Temple & Young, 2004). Often monolingual perspectives are privileged in research designs, and knowledge construction operates from a predominantly Anglophone framework (Temple & Young, 2004). This latter framework can be problematic when it comes to translation and can become misaligned with the ethical commitments of narrative research when it comes to representation (e.g., by drawing from a monolingual Anglophonic framework
for translation and interpretation, translated narratives may misrepresented the original intentions of the narrator). Furthermore, the mutually enriching activities and shared knowledge construction that come from a multilingual perspective can be lost by adherence to a monolingual approach (McDonald & Chau, 2008). Thus, in alignment with my theoretical and epistemological commitments, I utilized the *Linguistic Ecology Protocol* to accentuate ecological validity and multicultural viewpoints by affirming the naturally multilingual aspects of knowledge construction. Specific aspects of this protocol are illustrated in Appendix B and are integrated and referred to throughout the adapted CNM.

A multilayered consent was utilized to address the ethical dimensions of this research project (Josselson, 2007; Kaiser, 2012). Interested participants who took part in the pre-interview process signed a consent form, as they would be asked to discuss their experiences of trauma (for parental participants) or how their parent’s traumas impacted them (for offspring participants). Another consent form was signed for those who met the inclusion criteria and took part in the project. Participants’ identities remained anonymous and were referred to by pseudonyms in the written component of the study. They were informed of the potential risks, that they might be identifiable based on the information provided in their story. Participants were all given the opportunity to remove any identifying information in their narrative drafts. Those who took part in a family dyad were informed that they would be identified by their family member who would also be taking part in the study.

Given that the focus of the study is on IGT, trauma-informed research protocols were followed to create a safe environment that allowed the facilitation and expression of fearful feelings and events (DePrince & Freyd, 2004; Durham, 2002). During the interview, I gauged participants’ levels of distress by tracking their non-verbal and para-verbal expressions and
provided an empathic presence. Participants were aware that they could choose not to answer any questions and could take a break at any time during interviews. These interpersonal strategies were drawn from my experience as a counsellor working with clients from traumatized backgrounds. Participants were provided with resources in the community should they choose to self-refer (see Appendix J). They were also offered the opportunity to debrief after each interview. As the research might be emotionally saturated, I offered each participant an optional one-hour debriefing meeting within three months of the study’s end (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2007; Josselson, 2007). Furthermore, the counselling team at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. offered each participant an optional one-hour counselling session within 6 months of the study’s end. None of the participants reported the need to utilize these respective supports. Lastly, as the project could be an emotionally-laden process, research partners debriefed with myself about any emotional processes that were elicited during the narrative constructions (i.e., interviews, transcription, translation). These debriefings took place in the form of team meetings, along with team debriefings with Dr. Marvin Westwood. The research partners were also aware that they could debrief with me at any point during the research project.

**The Collaborative Narrative Method: An Adaptation**

Presented below are the procedural steps taken for my adaptation of Arvay’s (2003) Collaborative Narrative Method (CNM) to fit the research design and theoretical commitments of the study. Details regarding recruitment, data collection, and data analysis are embedded within the seven stages of CNM and are described below.

**Stage 1: Setting the stage.** This stage involved *community consultations, recruitment,* and *pre-interview conversations* with participants to build rapport and outline the research project and purpose. The purpose of community consultations was to elicit feedback, criticism,
and suggestions so that the study would be conducted in a manner that is both respectful and informed by the community (Dickert & Sugarman, 2005). Such consultations help direct the project in a manner that ensures the ethical goals of the community are met. These ethical goals include enhancing protection of participants’ interests and welfare, enhancing benefit of the research to the community, gaining legitimacy within the community, and eliciting shared responsibility (Dickert & Sugarman, 2005).

Community consultation involved communication with multiple stakeholders in the Chinese-Canadian community prior to and during the recruitment process. These consultations highlighted the collaborative dimension of the project. Stakeholders, whom I met throughout the project, included M. Kam (Director of Family and Community Services at S.U.C.C.E.S.S.), the counselling team at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the Chinese-Canadian Historical Society, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and two other professors with interest in Asia-Canadian history and intergenerational relations. As the project was in partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the agency served as the main resource for cultural consultation. For instance, the counselling team at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. reviewed the recruitment material and provided feedback on cultural considerations when exploring the research topic.

**Selection criteria and recruitment.** Originally, the intention was to recruit three family dyads (offspring and parent), with the selection criteria seeking Chinese-Canadian families wherein at least one member of the parental generation had exposure to pre- or post-migratory psychological trauma and had immigrated from China to Canada after 1967. The sample size of three to six participants was consistent with narrative research (see Creswell, 2007), and the reason for 1967 was its demarcation of the year Canada changed its immigration policy to allow equal status for Chinese immigrants (Li, 2008). However, after two months of active recruitment
efforts, I was unable to recruit suitable candidates. It was determined appropriate by my supervisor (Dr. Marla Buchanan) to broaden the selection criteria.

During the initial recruitment, I was able to recruit offspring participants who identified that their parent(s) had experienced psychological trauma, but was only able to involve two family dyads. I speculated that part of the difficulty with recruitment may have resulted from the idea that acknowledgement of psychological trauma could be stigmatizing within the Chinese-Canadian community; involvement would entail discussing one’s experience to their children, experience that might intentionally be silenced. The difficulty with recruitment reminded me of Danieli’s (1998) concept of the *Conspiracy of Silence*, whereby cultural, societal, and familial systems can perpetuate self-silencing of traumatic experiences.

The selection criteria then broadened to include either parental and/or offspring generation participants with IGT as part of their family dynamic. Specifics regarding selection criteria included: (a) adult offspring generation with parent(s) who experienced psychological trauma related to migration to Canada after 1967, or (b) parental generation who experienced psychological trauma related to migration and had an adult descendant. It was no longer mandatory to take part in the study as a family dyad, though it was encouraged. I continued to use a broad conceptualization of parental-generation Chinese—born in China and experiencing pre- or post-migration trauma—but these participants could have immigrated to Canada from a different country. This definition acknowledged the turmoil during twentieth century China; individuals may have originally been from China, but had migrated elsewhere to avoid conflict (An, 1991; Holland, 2007). The affirmation of parental exposure to psychological trauma was based on the self-reported and/or offspring-reported DSM-5 criteria for posttraumatic stress as defined by the PTSD construct: the exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or
sexual violence through direct exposure, witnessing, learning of the traumatic event(s) occurring to a close family member or friend, and/or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (APA, 2013, p. 271). It was not necessary for participants to meet the diagnosis for PTSD, although it was possible that they could have exhibited PTSD or PTS symptoms. For the offspring generation, representatives who were under the age of 18 were excluded, as the study focused on adult offspring of trauma survivors.

A research assistant (S. Troung) was hired to help with the recruitment. Recruitment involved convenience and purposeful snowball sampling, which refers to identifying potential participants through social networks that can inform the topic of interest, it being IGT within Chinese-Canadian families (Creswell, 2007). These sampling strategies were appropriate for this study given its collaboration with community agencies and the difficulty of finding prospective participants willing to share their story related to traumatic and/or oppressive experiences.

Further, with the dimensions of shame and silencing in Chinese culture as related to difficult experiences (see Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Yang & Kleinman, 2008), it was vital to have recruitment strategies that lessened the barriers for taking part in this study.

Recruitment brochures and posters (see Appendix C) were developed in English and simplified Chinese. To facilitate recruitment, I built connections with the community through the community consultations and met with various stakeholders who connected me with potential candidates. My research assistant and I contacted several agencies to inquire about potential participants and to distribute recruitment materials. These included: S.U.C.C.E.S.S., The Chinese Historical Society of BC, Canadian Mental Health Association, DiverseCity, Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver Chinese churches, Touchstone Family Services, Minoru Senior Centre, Youth for Chinese Seniors, Chinese Seniors Outreach, and Facebook groups such as the
Asian Diaspora on Unceded Coast Salish Territory. We also drew upon the personal networks of individuals who were either candidates themselves or knew of a potential candidate. In addition, a referral process was established with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. staff and counsellors for potentially interested participants. Staff were provided with a general script to follow when introducing the study, which involved a general overview of the project and potential benefits and risks, as well as my contact information should the prospective participant be interested. With all the recruitment strategies (referrals and recruitment material), potential participants were invited to contact the researcher to inquire further, if they were interested in taking part of the study.

Interested participants took part in a semi-structured, pre-interview conversation and were asked to sign a consent form beforehand (see Appendix D). The pre-interview offered an opportunity to assess the appropriateness (according to the selection criteria) of the participants for this study. Any questions regarding involvement and what the project entailed were discussed during this pre-interview. During these conversations, potential participants were informed of the nature of the study. My co-researcher, C. Huang, conducted pre-interviews with those candidates only speaking Cantonese or Mandarin; she later debriefed me regarding candidates’ appropriateness. Candidates were informed that, if they were suitable for the study, they would be contacted within two weeks. Participants who fit the criteria for participation in the study were provide a package that included an informed consent form and information to help them prepare for the narrative interview (see Appendix E and F).

**Stage 2: Co-constructing narratives.** The narrative interview is understood as a reflexive and collaborative conversation. Semi-structured interviews were guided by Mishler’s (1991) principles of narrative interviews (see Appendix H for interview protocols) and were utilized to construct narrative data (see Reissman, 2008). With narrative interviews, the narrative
account takes centre stage and is understood to be a co-construction that is dialogical in nature (Murray, 2003). With this study, the interviews involved life-story interviews that focused on the topic of traumatic experiences (Murray, 2003). The purpose of these interviews was to collaboratively construct parental and offspring narratives in written form (see Stage 6).

Narrative interviews were tailored to offspring and parental participants respectively. Offspring participants were asked about significant moments in their lives, traumatic experiences they were aware of experienced by their parents, and how their parents influenced them while growing up in Canada. Parental participants were asked about significant moments in their lives, traumatic experiences, and how their experiences may have influenced their children. Interviews were audio-recorded for transcription and analyses, and light snacks were provided.

**Data collection.** Data collection consisted of the narrative data elicited during interviews and my own reflections in the form of journaling and field notes. As eliciting incidents related to trauma can be disorientating and a “multifaceted experience” involving both verbal and tacit dimensions, devices were utilized to support the participant’s telling of their story (Durham, 2002; Keats, 2009; Liamputtong, 2006; van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). During life-story interviews, cultural artifacts and *Guided Autobiography* (priming autobiographic memories, using common themes to express life events, and telling one’s story) were adapted and employed (Atkinson, 2007; Birren & Birren, 1996). Guided Autobiography or Life Review can be understood as a strategy to support and elicit life stories (Atkinson, 2007). As an approach, it has been used in narrative gerontology to help participants gain both deeper understanding and new perspective on life themes and transitions (Birren & Birren, 1996; Thornton, 2008). Although Guided Autobiography is typically done in a group setting, in this study it was employed as an individualized interview device.
Following the Guided Autobiography’s approach, participants were provided with an interview package and invited to write a two or three-page sketch based on the theme of IGT to bring to the interview (Thornton, 2008). They were also asked to bring a cultural artifact relevant to their story to share during the interview. The parental participants were invited to reflect on traumatic and difficult moments related to immigration and adjustment to Canada, as well as these moments’ influence on their children; offspring participants were invited to reflect on key moments regarding their parent’s trauma and how such moments influenced their growing up in Canada (see Appendix E).

To assess exposure to psychological trauma in both generations, the Life Events Checklist (LEC-5) for DSM-5 Standardized Version (see Weathers, Blake, Schnurr, Kaloupek, Marx, & Keane, 2013) was employed to screen the types of traumatic events participants had experienced. The LEC-5 is a brief screening instrument consisting of seventeen items, originally developed in conjunction with the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (Gray, Litz, Hsu, & Lombardo, 2004; Weathers et al., 2013). The instrument is meant to screen whether an individual has been exposed to traumatic events and is in itself insufficient for diagnosing PTSD (Gray et al., 2004). The LEC-5 is an appropriate assessment instrument given its brevity and the fairly non-invasive questions within. It is also structured in a manner helpful for participants’ thinking about their traumatic experiences in a way that orientates them to the narrative interview. The LEC-5 was administered as part of a demographic information package that participants completed at the beginning of the interview after consent forms were signed. The results of the LEC-5 are found at the beginning of each narrative (see Chapters 4 & 5).

Throughout the research project, and after each interview, I engaged in a process of reflection and journaling, which informed my own perceptions of, and contributions to, the co-
constructed narratives. The reflective process is a strategy to engage in self-reflexivity and also to track the researcher’s own story of engaging in a research project. Aspects of my own story are included throughout the study through reflections on my positionality and my experience while witnessing the family dialogue (see Stage 7). This process is an important component of the CNM as it contributes to the polyvocality of the narratives. It provides readers with insight into the researcher’s interpretation and co-construction of the stories of the participants. Reflexivity is vital to this study, as I am in a position of privilege whereby, I am essentially authoring another person’s lived experience. Thus, it is important to acknowledge my own position, given that my voice will be intertwined with other subjects’ voices in the co-construction of their narratives.

**Interview context.** The narrative interviews were two to three hours long for each participant. During the interviews, participants were invited to share either their initial reflections or written sketches and cultural artifacts that were solicited by the interview package they received prior to the interview. The LEC-5 was referred to throughout to interview to help garner an appreciated understanding of the traumas they (parental participants) or their parent’s (offspring participants) had endured. During interviews, conversations were conducted in an empathetic manner sensitive to the difficult, traumatic experiences that might be shared. Thus, strategies such as self-disclosure were utilized to help facilitate an authentic dialogue (Arvay, 2003; Liamputtong, 2006). These interviews were conducted at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. or at the UBC’s Centre for Group Counselling and Trauma office, both confidential spaces, and were recorded using a digital audio recorder. Interviews were conducted in the language that the participant was most comfortable speaking. In these cases, interviews conducted in Cantonese or Mandarin involved my co-researcher, C. Huang, who helped with interpretations. She was involved in four
of eight interviews which included all family dyad interviews. All interviews were conducted by myself as the main research interviewer.

**Data management.** Interview data (audio recordings, video recordings of family dialogue [Stage 7] and transcripts) were stored in my password-protected laptop. The recordings were kept separate from any information identifying the participants to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Only I had access to the data, so that confidentiality and privacy was kept. After the project has been completed, the interview data will be deleted from my laptop. A digital copy of the interview data will be encrypted and kept in a memory stick to be held within the Counselling Psychology department at the University of British Columbia (in my supervisor’s lab), kept in a locked filing cabinet for the next 5 years. Afterwards, the data will be destroyed.

With regard to reporting, participants were identified by pseudonyms/aliases they had determined themselves (some deferred to myself to determine their aliases).

**Stage 3: Transcription and translation.** This stage involves the transcription and translation of the narrative interviews. In this study, transcription and translation are understood as interpretive processes contributing to the co-constructed narrative (Reissman, 2008). Transcription involves transposing spoken word into text, while translation refers to transposing written word into another language (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). It is important to note that translating and transcribing involves respective authors’ interpretive judgements, meaning their products are a form of processed data rather than raw data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 209). Both are theory-laden and have ethical, epistemological, and methodological implications in qualitative research (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Temple & Young, 2004). For instance, in narrative research, translation is not merely a technical exercise of changing words, rather the translator’s linguistic dimensions and language structures shape the content of an account,
offering insight into the contextual complexities whereby individuals understand their experience and narratives (Temple, 2008).

Temple (2008) proposes it is valuable to engage in reflexivity in the ethics of translation, as the experiences and contexts from which translations are generated contribute to the production of different research data. It is therefore valuable to acknowledge the limitations of translation and interpretation (Temple, 2008). As this study involved a multilingual research design, the Linguistic Ecology Protocol was employed to aide with translation, transcription and interpretation processes (McDonald & Chau, 2008; see Appendix B). This protocol explicitly acknowledges the limitations and benefits of translation and interpretation within a multilingual-research approach. Interviews conducted in English were transcribed directly into English transcripts, while interviews conducted in Chinese were transcribed directly into English by my co-researcher (C. Huang), who is fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin and who also took part in these interviews. In alignment with a social constructionist epistemology, each member of the research team (interpreter, transcriptionist, and translator) were understood to have shaped the narrative, leading to the polyphonic nature of the story that was constructed for this study (Temple & Young, 2004).

The transcripts included nuances of speech such as the non-verbal and para-verbal presentations captured in the speech, as well as possibly incorrect grammar that occurs through speech (see Marshall & Rossman, 2016). If the interview was conducted in Chinese, however, it is important to recognize that some of these nuances may be lost in translation. Ostensibly incorrect grammar usage is difficult to appropriately translate from one language to another. Though grammatical nuances may not be possible to capture during translation, halts and hesitations (para-verbal) were indeed incorporated into the translated transcripts. During the
transcription stage, I transcribed one English interview to familiarize myself with the transcription process. I hired a research assistant and a transcriptionist to transcribe the remainder of the English audio recordings. All the transcripts were then reviewed by myself against the audio recordings to ensure accuracy in the verbal statements and para-verbal nuances. Reviewing the transcripts also contributed to my initial interpretation of the narratives and helped with my immersion into the narrative data.

**Stage 4: Researcher’s interpretation.** English transcripts were read based on four different interpretive readings— for content, for self of the narrator, for the research question, and for relations of power and culture. These interpretations were based on my readings of the participants’ transcripts as a text and were shaped by conversations with co-researchers. In Arvay’s (2003) original approach, this process involved interpretive readings from all the participants, however given the translation difficulties and practical and financial limitations of the study, I opted to engage in these readings on my own. The first reading, *reading for content*, involves reviewing the transcript for coherence regarding the content of the interview. The second step, *reading for the self of the narrator*, consists of reading the transcript from the perspective of the narrator and from my perspective as the researcher. In the third, *reading for the research question*, transcripts were read to examine IGT within the storied texts. The last step, *reading for relations of power and culture*, entails my reading of the power and cultural dimensions that shape interpretation and content within the transcripts.

The interpretation of the transcript texts takes into consideration the *hermeneutics of faith and suspicion* as elaborated in Josselson’s (2004) narrative research based on Paul Ricœur’s work. *Hermeneutics of faith* is about restoring meaning to a text, trusting that there is truth in the face value of what is presented by participants—the intentionality, subjectivity, and meaning-
making aspects of narrative. *Hermeneutics of suspicion* is about decoding possible messages and inherent meanings whether said or unsaid by reading into and behind the text; it entails de-mystifying text and recognizing those layers of depth possibly concealed during superficial interpretation. In this study, I aimed to balance both in a dialectical sense—the narrative truth that participants presented during interviews along with the meaning they made of their story (*hermeneutic of faith*) and the layers of cultural and sociopolitical discourses that might influence their understanding of IGT (*hermeneutic of suspicion*). Both dimensions are read in the process of Arvay’s (2003) four interpretive readings and are incorporated in the researcher-written narratives through the cultural interpretations of the texts.

**Researcher role.** I describe my role and positionality at this stage, though I acknowledge that reflexivity regarding my role as a researcher occurred throughout the study. My role as a researcher is that of a collaborator and a polyphonic author aiming to highlight the stories of participants. This approach does not mean that I do not share my views, rather my focus is to pursue a dialogical sense of truth—that which is understood as truth and meaning among the collective participants (Bakhtin, 1981; Kim, 2015). This role involves an engagement in critical reflexivity to understand my own subjectivity and power, discerning whether I am serving the collaborative intentions of the study (Arvay, 2003).

Relationships are paramount to narrative research (Adams, 2008). Therefore, alongside procedural and situational ethics, *relational ethics*—ethics that recognizes mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched—served as a guide for this study (Adams, 2008; Ellis, 2007). Privileging the relationship was made explicit through informed consent. Furthermore, it was expressed implicitly through the subtle interpersonal cues that my co-researcher and I provided by fostering a supportive environment with empathic, non-
judgemental interactions (Josselson, 2007). Relational ethics was also applied to my relationship with the community. In this case, my relationship with the community was built profitably through intentional interactions, consultation, provision of updates to the project, and continued relational development.

I acknowledge that the lens through which I interpret these stories is crafted/influenced by my positionality and lived experiences. I identify as being of Chinese ethnic heritage, and I was born and raised in Canada. My parents were from Guangzhou, China and immigrated in the early 1980s. I lived in an intergenerational household with my siblings, parents, and paternal grandfather, and I spoke Cantonese during my early childhood. Most of my life, I lived in spaces as an ethnic minority in a lower-class socioeconomic setting where my parents worked immigrant jobs to make ends meet. I grew up in Edmonton, Alberta, with a predominantly Caucasian population.

My awareness of Chinese history was limited. What I knew of my heritage and what I understood to be Chinese came from my parents and grandparents and peers. These understandings were explicitly limited and situated within some of my own self-stereotypes. To be Chinese meant to be “frugal,” “good at math,” “hard-working,” and “family-oriented.” It meant one had certain career paths set in place—usually medically-related, lucrative, and stable. Growing up, I encountered my fair share of racism, having been called a “chink” and submitted to the typical mockery of the Chinese language. Tacitly, I come to understand experience of being Chinese, of the values distilled in me through lessons and interactions from my family. Yet, despite these experiences, I had a limited understanding of my place and heritage.

As previously mentioned, it was not until my grandfather’s death that I started to explore my place and heritage from a historical vantage. I was not so much unaware of my Chinese
identity, as I was unaware of my historical roots and family history that were often kept at the backdrop of conversations. In other words, I was aware of being Chinese, but not being rooted in my Chinese heritage. My journey in exploring these dimensions of my heritage led to my research topic: exploring how place, history, and silenced traumas of the past shape the present Chinese-Canadian diaspora. Temporality, sociality, and place are the facets that participate in my narrative (see Clandinin, 2013), that extend beyond this study—before and after. These same facets contribute, in both explicit and implicit ways, to the fashion in which participants’ narratives and meaning are co-constructed in this study.

**Stage 5: Writing narratives and collaborative verification.** After the readings, I summarized the interpretive readings into a blended text and incorporated events that were told by the participants (based on the transcripts) into chronological order. Narratives were drafted for each participant and written from a first-person perspective to “bring their stories ‘back to life’” (Arvay, 2003, p. 172). The aim of the story writing was to fill the stories with as much breadth as possible to both provide coherence and reveal the storyteller’s intention, while understanding that aspects of each story might be reduced in the process (Arvay, 2003).

As there was an understanding that certain Chinese phrases and words could not be directly translated into English, these vocabularies were kept as Simplified Chinese characters along with their respective romanization (pinyin for Mandarin; jyutping for Cantonese) in the narrative text. Glosses (series of brief explanations) in the form of footnotes were included to provide interpretations of these vocabularies. These glosses also provided for culturally and historically relevant vocabularies. The intention of these steps was to offer the reader an appreciation of the multilingual and cultural dimensions of the presented stories. The accounts
attempted to capture the intimately personal experience and nuance of listening and learning about participants’ stories in textual form.

After completion of a draft of their stories, participants were then invited to take part in a second interview where their stories were read to them, and they were provided with a copy to review. These interviews were two-hours long and conducted at either UBC’s Centre for Group Counselling or S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and were audio recorded. My co-researcher, C. Huang, was involved in interpretation for interviews conducted in Chinese. Unlike the first interview, these interviews were not transcribed. During these interviews, clarification of written details was invited, where participants were invited to add, remove, or modify any details from the written story. Changes from the second interview were then incorporated into respective narratives yielding a revised draft. The revised drafts were resent to the participants for review, to ensure that changes were incorporated in a manner that was consistent with their requests. For participants with Chinese as their source-language, requested changes were incorporated into English and Chinese drafts, and both were provided for their review. Participants were given two to three weeks to review the draft and provide any additional feedback. At this point, I engaged in this iterative process with the participants to achieve a consensus on the narrative draft before I engaged in additional analysis. Participant input was privileged regarding what was included or excluded from his/her story, as the purpose of the narrative summary was to reflect the participant's narrative truth (see Reissman, 2008). There was a mutual understanding that their stories could only represent a particular instantiation in time and there could, in a sense, be no final version of their story. As Arvay describes, “these forms of narrative representation often contain contradictions and ambiguity – like ‘real’ life, [they are] a life in progress, a chapter not yet finished” (p. 172).
Stage 6: Narrative analysis. After a consensus on the narratives was reached with the participants, I engaged in a narrative analysis of drafted stories. My analysis utilized Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis for the across-narrative analysis. The analysis was supported with the use of a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software, Atlas ti. The specific steps I took for the analytical process is described in the following:

1. All the narratives (in English) were entered into Atlas ti and coded line by line to identify multiple descriptive meaning units. The comprehensive analysis and production of codes was based on Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis of narrative content. This analysis was conducted across all the participant narratives, to identify the themes across the body of writing. Specifically, the analytical steps followed those outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) approach: (a) familiarization with data (e.g. transcription and interpretive readings); (b) generating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; and (e) defining and naming themes. The identified themes included five parental themes (related to trauma) and five transmission themes (related to communication to offspring experiences), for a total of ten themes.

2. After analysis was completed, a summary of the key themes was drafted, and a copy was provided to each participant for member checking. Participants were then invited to provide any feedback, and a final meeting was arranged to discuss their input. Prior to the final meeting, participants were asked to offer an alias by which they would prefer to be identified and a title for their story. They were also given one more opportunity to provide any additional modifications or feedback for their written story. During this final meeting, I discussed their input on the themes and provided the participants with both a printed copy of their story and a USB drive containing a digital copy of their story.
**Stage 7: Family dialogue.** For participants who took part as a family dyad, their narratives were translated into English and Chinese versions of the offspring and parental narratives and they were invited to take part in a family dialogue. These family dialogues were conducted separately within each respective family dyad and were guided by interview protocol (see Appendix I). Participants shared their stories with respective family members (who took part in the study) in the language they were comfortable with. Listeners were able to follow English or Chinese versions of their family member’s story to address any potential linguistic barriers. These interviews were conducted at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. or at UBC and were facilitated by myself and my co-researcher.

The steps taken for family dialogue involved a process of sharing and reflecting based on Guided Autobiography (see Thornton, 2008). First, the listener was invited to listen and reflect on the narrative, the impact on the speaker, and the impact on themselves. Any questions or comments were held in abeyance until after the sharing, and the listener was then provided an opportunity to share their reflections regarding their resonances with the story. Afterwards, the speaker shared his/her final reflections or shared his/her response to the listener. After one individual completed his/her sharing, the other participant was invited to share their narrative and engage in the same telling/listening/reflecting process. Upon completion of the second sharing, participants were then invited to share any last reflections prior to the session’s ending. My own reflections, along with the co-researcher’s reflections, were shared at this point. These interviews were video-recorded to capture the non-verbal and embodied aspects of storytelling, and a copy of the recording was given to participants.

After the family dialogues, I engaged in a reflective dialogue with the co-researcher, C. Huang. This reflexive process was based on a component of the “reflecting team dialogue” (see
Andersen, 1987), which involved commenting on verbal and nonverbal material that emerged during the dialogue, as well as the ways in which the process resonated with ourselves. Based on my experience of the family dialogue, reflections, and field notes, I drafted my own story of witnessing the dialogue. As a final member check, this narrative was then reviewed and verified by the offspring participants in the family dyads for accuracy and proper representation of the family dialogue. This additional step was done out of courtesy to respect the collaborative dimensions of the project. Only offspring participants were involved in this step as this representation was only available in English.

**Trustworthiness and Rigour**

Validation, from a social constructionist standpoint, is about trustworthiness (Mishler, 1990). It concerns convincing the reader of the level of plausibility, credibility, or trustworthiness of a knowledge claim as such aligns with the assumptions of the study (Polkinghorne, 2007). Thus, the process regards degrees of validity, rather than a binary of being valid or invalid (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 474). In this study, validity was examined in two different forms: (a) assembled narrative text, which represents the stories presented by individuals and families, and (b) interpretations of narrative texts, my own theoretical interpretation of the presented stories as indications of social and cultural contexts (see Polkinghorne, 2007). With assembled narrative texts, validity is about the “narrative truth,” the degree to which experiential meaning is accurately reflected in the presented story (Polkinghorne, 2007; Spence, 1982). This differs from “historical truth” which involves whether or not the described story fits with actual events (Polkinghorne, 2007; Spence, 1982). This study advocates for a position whereby narratives are based on life events that are neither complete works of fiction nor necessarily accurate representations of reality. Regarding my own
interpretations of the narrative texts, validity is similar to literary criticism, whose discourse requires evidence from the presented text to ensure that the knowledge claim is credible (Polkinghorne, 2007). Thus, for narrative research, trustworthiness can be ascribed to the following dimensions—triangulation, coherence and persuasion, correspondence, and the researcher’s reflexivity and theoretical interpretations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Reissman, 2008). An overview of the specific steps taken to ensure credibility and trustworthiness in the study is illustrated in Table 5 below. These steps are described further in the section below.

Table 5. Trustworthiness and Credibility Checks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credibility Check</th>
<th>Dimension of trustworthiness</th>
<th>Steps Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Narrative construction            | Triangulation               | • Participants were provided with an interview package prior to narrative interviews and invited to reflect on the research question. They were asked to bring a cultural artifact for the narrative interview. The LEC-5 also served to help determine traumatic experiences. These three dimensions provided triangulation during the narrative interview.  
  • Upon completion of the narratives, participants were invited to provide a title for their story. |
| Researcher’s reflections          | Triangulation and reflexivity| • I engaged in continuous journaling and field note writing throughout the project. These reflections were guided by Milner’s (2007) “cultural reflexivity.”  
  • Reflections after each interview were drawn upon during the narrative construction process (Stage 5).  
  • Reflective conversations with co-researchers after narrative interviews and during transcription and translation processes took place. I and one co-researcher debriefed with Dr. Marvin Westwood regarding our experiences of the narrative interviews. |
| Narrative interview fidelity      | Coherence and persuasion    | • One audio-recorded interview was reviewed with Dr. Marla Buchanan, an expert in narrative research, to ensure fidelity to narrative interview process.  
  • Each of the narrative interviews my co-researcher was involved in was debriefed. |
| Member checking of narrative constructions | Correspondence              | • The initial and revised drafts of co-constructed narratives was reviewed with each research participant based on narratives’ resonance, comprehensiveness, and accuracy. |
Participants involved in the family dialogue stage (Stage 7) reviewed my narrative account of the family dialogue to ensure accuracy.

- Dr. Buchanan reviewed four of the transcripts-to-narrative constructions (Stage 5 of Collaborative Narrative Method), along with corresponding on the thematic analysis coding. Dr. Buchanan also provided input regarding category and theme formation.

- M. Kam (Director of Family and Community Services at S.U.C.C.E.S.S.) reviewed a summary of narrative analysis and was asked to provide feedback on the pragmatic value (usefulness) and resonance with the work in the field. M. Kam reported that the analysis was valuable and resonated with her experience in the field.

- Co-researchers reviewed the summary of the narrative analysis and provided their feedback on the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives coherence from transcript and thematic analysis review</th>
<th>Coherence and persuasion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert checking of narrative analysis</td>
<td>Coherence and persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member checking of narrative analysis</td>
<td>Triangulation and correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and translation coherence</td>
<td>Correspondence, Coherence and persuasion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Each participant was invited to provide their feedback on the narrative analysis summary regarding pragmatic value and resonance with their experience. Each participant supported the analysis as being reflective of their experience.

- Dr. McDonald (developer of Linguistic Ecology Protocol) reviewed the steps taken for my adaptation of the protocol and reviewed five transcript-to-narrative procedures for translation coherence.

- Linguistic Ecology Protocol was followed (see Appendix B).

**Triangulation.** “Triangulation” refers to “the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 262). In this study, triangulation provides a strategy to help make sense of social phenomena and their complexities (Mathison, 1998). This involved the collection of written material and artifacts, discussions with the participants regarding the narrative drafts and interpretations (member checking), and my own field notes and journaling as a way to engage in critical reflexivity.

In terms of written material and artifacts, participants were invited to prepare for narrative interviews by bringing memorabilia and brief write-ups of their narratives. These
materials were referenced throughout the narrative interview and incorporated into narratives when appropriate. With member checking, participants were invited to provide feedback on a summary of my narrative analysis. Any input provided was incorporated into the larger analysis. Lastly, the use of field notes and journaling throughout the project was used to track my own observations and reflections. These sources of data from my reflections were incorporated into interpretation, analysis, co-construction of narrative, and my own narrative account of the family dialogue.

**Correspondence.** From a social constructionist perspective, “correspondence” refers to the narrative truth of the story and the degree to which it reflects the interpretation of the participant (Reissman, 2008). In this study, correspondence is integrated through the member checking of constructed narratives and analyses, and in the Linguistic Ecology Protocol. As described in Stage 5 of the adapted CNM, participants were invited to provide feedback on the initial drafted narrative during a follow-up interview. During this interview, they were invited to comment on their story’s personal resonance, comprehensiveness, and accuracy. Participants were then offered another opportunity to provide feedback, after revisions were made following the aforementioned interview. The participants were provided a final opportunity to offer feedback on their constructed narratives upon an invitation to engage in member checking of the narrative analysis. With the member checking of the narrative analysis, a ten-page summary of the across-narrative analysis was provided to the participants to review and annotate regarding pragmatic value and resonance with their own experience.

The Linguistic Ecology Protocol incorporates steps to ensure cultural and translative coherence. These steps include the involvement of a cultural consultant, cultural reviews,
glosses for relevant cultural/historical knowledge and difficult-to-translate grammar, and translation verification. A detailed breakdown of these steps is described in Appendix B.

**Coherence and persuasion.** Coherence refers to the consistency of narrative accounts, interpretations, and their relation to each other (Morrow, 2005; Reissman, 2008). While persuasion is the convincing and influencing of readers based on the narrative account (Polkinghorne, 2007). To address these dimensions, thick descriptions were provided throughout the written narratives, along with details (in the form of glosses) of relevant cultural and sociohistorical factors. Coherence was also addressed by ensuring fidelity to the methodology, which includes narrative-interview fidelity and the construction of narratives based on transcriptions. Dr. Marla Buchanan, an expert in narrative research, reviewed one initial audio-recorded narrative interviews to ensure these interviews were being conducted according to principles of narrative research. She provided input on four of the transcripts and the corresponding narratives to confirm that the narrative construction process was consistent with the CNM approach. Lastly, she reviewed the coding of several narratives, along with categorical and thematic formation. Meanwhile, Dr. Marvin McDonald reviewed five of the transcripts and the corresponding narratives and provided input regarding category and theme formation.

Persuasion can refer to how useful is the research and was addressed through the expert review of the narrative analysis. Specifically, I provided a ten-page summary of the narrative analysis for M. Kam, Director of Family and Community Services at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., for her comment on its pragmatic value and resonance with the field. M. Kam responded that the analysis was useful and resonated with her experience as a practitioner. Lastly, coherence and persuasion can be understood as alignment with the transformative validity of the research study, which emphasizes transparency and generativity from a social justice perspective (Cho & Trent, 2000).
2006). As IGT is understood to be a form of oppression and silencing (Danieli, 1998, 2007), offering ways to tell the trauma-laden story and embody it in written forms can help with the uncensoring of these historically oppressed and silenced narratives.

**Reflexivity and theoretical and methodological consistency.** Carter and Little (2007) emphasize the importance of having theoretical and internal consistency in the procedure and implementation of qualitative research. In the case of this study, such consistency regards the extent to which I, a researcher and collaborative author, reflect the epistemological framework and the intentions of this collaborative narrative study through my research actions. Thus, the theoretical and internal consistency of this project started at the beginning of the research, which closely involved the community, a research supervisor, and a committee, all proficient in narrative inquiry. Dr. Marla Buchanan, who developed the CNM, also ensured that adaptations and implementations were consistent with her model. As my Master’s thesis utilized Participatory Action Research, I had become well acquainted with collaborative research and these sensibilities were incorporated into the study. Furthermore, as a practicing clinician who embraces narrative-based therapeutic orientations, I have developed proficiencies in active listening, rapport building, comprehending narratives, and recognition of para-verbal and non-verbal presentations, which helped with the narrative interviews.

I kept a reflexive journal to highlight my own process of engaging in this research study. This journal has documented my own reflections, thoughts, and feelings, as well as my positionality throughout the study, experiences after meetings and interviews, and observations. Milner’s (2007) “cultural reflexivity” was utilized as a model to help guide reflections, which include the following areas of reflection (described earlier): (a) researching the self, (b) researching the self in relation to others, (c) engaged reflection and representation, and (d)
shifting from self to system. A positionality statement was also provided (see Stage 4) to highlight my own voice and standpoint, as well as the experiences that shape my own interpretive lens.
CHAPTER 4: FAMILY STORIES

The narratives and subsequent narrative analysis are presented in Chapters Four and Five and in Appendix A. A demographic breakdown is provided in this chapter to offer a contextualized lens of the co-authors of these stories. This chapter includes the narratives of the family dyads Henry/Lina and Ms. Leung/Ryan, while individual narratives of participants not connected to any family members in the study (Hua, Joan, Ken, and Stacy) are presented in Appendix A. The purpose of having the family narratives within the body of the dissertation is to help the readers draw their own connections regarding IGT within families. These family dyads also include a narrative of the family dialogue that was a core component of the project. It is highly recommended to review the individual narratives in Appendix A as each story adds to the polyphonic nature of this study. All the narratives were analyzed and incorporated into the categorical content analysis found in Chapter Five. Please note that all the stories include a title that was either determined by the participant or endorsed by them. The title offers a glimpse into the overall theme of their narrative. Each narrative also involves an introduction that outlines the story and an overview of the items the participant endorsed on the LEC-5.

When reading the narratives, it is important to recognize that the stories are situated in unique historical, cultural, and political contexts. As these stories are read, please “listen” to these stories as they are being “told”—envision the stories told by the person, along with their nuances and linguistic characterizations. These stories are multilingual, therefore key phrases and words are kept in Chinese to affirm the language of the participant and the notion that not all words can be fully translated into English. Bridging efforts are provided throughout the narratives. For instance, pinyin (Mandarin romanization), jyutping (Cantonese romanization), and glosses are embedded into the narratives to help bridge translation gaps in the stories. The
purpose of these bridging efforts is to also bring the readers closer to my experience of listening to the stories as told first-hand and to recognize the ways these participants uniquely constructed their stories.

All stories are presented with pseudonyms and identifying information has been removed to protect the anonymity of participants with discretion from the participants. The pseudonyms were either provided by myself and confirmed by the participants or determined by the participant. Presented below is the demographic information of the parental participants (Table 6) and of the offspring participants (Table 7).
Table 6. Parental Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Henry</th>
<th>Ms. Leung</th>
<th>Hua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified ethnicity</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of immigration</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in what other countries?</td>
<td>Hong Kong, Japan, United States</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of completed education</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation (before immigration)</td>
<td>Engineer / Businessman</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation (after immigration)</td>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current occupation</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Home nurse for new mothers</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current living arrangement</td>
<td>Living with wife and daughter</td>
<td>Living with sons</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>Five siblings (ages 82, 80, 77, 71, 67)</td>
<td>Three siblings (ages 52, 47, 40)</td>
<td>One sibling (57 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children / Age</td>
<td>Daughter, 31 years old&lt;br&gt;Daughter, 22 years old</td>
<td>Son, 26 years old&lt;br&gt;Son, 13 years old</td>
<td>Son, 39 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member in the study</td>
<td>Lina</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Pseudonym</td>
<td>Date of interviews</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina</td>
<td>Nov. 29, 2016</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Dec. 5, 2016</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>Dec. 6, 2016</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Dec. 20, 2016</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>Jan. 4, 2017</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Genderfluid / Mostly female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of Family Stories

In this chapter each family dyad is presented separately. First, Henry and Lina’s story are presented followed by Ms. Leung and Ryan’s narratives. Within each family dyad, the narratives are presented in the following manner: (a) parent narrative with a brief introduction and endorsed LEC-5 items, (b) offspring narrative with a brief introduction and endorsed LEC-5 items, (c) my interpretive narrative of the family dialogue, and (d) my personal reflections and a follow-up discussion with the participants a week after the dialogue. The reason for this structure is to help bring readers an account of my experience witnessing this process unfold—from listening to these narratives individually to witnessing of these stories being brought together in dialogue.

Henry and Lina’s Stories

Presented are the stories of both Lina and Henry along with the recounting of their sharing their narratives with each other. This section starts with the father’s narrative, then the daughter’s, and then a narrative of the dialogue between the two along with reflections on the process. The last part of this chapter includes a description of the debriefing session with the participants about a week after the family dialogue and my final reflections.

Henry’s Story: A Father’s Yearnings

Introduction. Henry is 64-year-old man who was born in China and later immigrated to Canada in 1990 after the events in Tiananmen Square. He has endorsed that he experienced and witnessed numerous psychological traumas as indicated in the LEC-5 (see Table 8). His story has been shared before; it is one with which his daughters are familiar. For Henry, he shares his story so that others can learn about the events that transpired in China. It centres around his father during the events and aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Though he did not really
know his father, his father is ubiquitous in his narrative. In a way, the parallels between himself and his father are clear in their respective desires for improvement of their children’s futures and the sacrifices that resulted. During our interviews, Henry was expressive and his stories were thought through and detailed in the recounting. He shared with eagerness, but also clarity of mind that his was a story mired with sadness of the losses that transpired within his family. This is his story.

Table 8. LEC-5 Items Endorsed by Henry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
<th>Learned about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural disaster</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with weapon</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat or exposure to war zone</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captivity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-threatening illness or injury</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe human suffering</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preface.** Every immigrant has a story. It’s inevitable as one moves from a familiar place to a foreign place. Except for being in the military, I have experienced many things; many of these experiences people would not feel comfortable talking about. With my story, I had to immigrate because I felt that the environment in China was oppressive (壓迫 / yāpò). It is not to

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1 壓迫 (yāpò) - Oppressing / Oppressive
say that China itself is not a good country, but I think many Chinese people feel trapped (压抑 / yāyì). Many people from China are afraid to speak about the events that happened in China. Maybe they are afraid of sharing or maybe, because of the Cultural Revolution, they themselves changed as people. However, things are beginning to change, and people are trying to uncover the truth and are sharing their experiences.

It is important for me to speak the truth. I don’t want the traumas I experienced to turn into anger. I want to share my story with the future generation, with my children, so that they can have a choice and decide what they want for their lives and for their future. There were events that have negatively impacted my family and I was concerned about my family’s future in China. There were also more opportunities in Canada, so I felt it was necessary to leave, for my family and for my children.

**My Father and the Cultural Revolution.** I didn’t know much about my father back then because he was always working. My family was a traditional household. My father and mother worked all the time: my father, a doctor, and my mother, the principal of an elementary school. We had two nannies—one in charge of cooking and one in charge of taking care of me and my siblings—so most of my time was spent with the nannies instead of my parents. Sometimes I would not even see my parents because they would come home very late after work. I learned more about my father through my mother and, later in my life, through stories I read online that others have written about him.

My father was born in 1901 and was a famous doctor in China. In 1931, he was in the first class of graduates from a prominent Chinese University and one of two that received a

---

2 压抑 (yāyì) - Constrained or repressed emotions – can also refer to being socially subjugated or oppressed.
Doctorate in Medicine. This was a very significant achievement back then as my father did not come from a well-off family. He used to tell me that when he was a child, he would be treated with a quarter of a salty duck egg for his birthday, while girls would only get one eighth. To get an education he left home at the age of 12, walked a few hundred miles and attended a church-run school because it did not cost any money. My father had witnessed wars and escaped bombs when the Japanese invaded China. There were many hardships back then.

My father did very well as a doctor and eventually became the provincial health minister for his province. China needed to obtain new foreign medical information, so he was sent to a prominent American university to study for a year and a half in 1946. From 1947 until 1958, my father served as a professor, dean of academics, the department head, and the president for a large university hospital in China, and, in 1952, he worked as an inspector for an international agency for his province and worked on issues such as epidemics and malaria. That same year he also became the head of the university hospital he was working in. When I reflect about the things I have learned about my father, I feel very proud of him and his accomplishments.

I was born in 1952, and until 1958, when I was in kindergarten, I thought life was pretty good. However, everything changed in 1958. Suddenly, I became the son of a “bad person” (坏人 / huàirén). In 1958, the Chinese government launched a large scale anti-rightist movement (反右运动 / Fǎn Yòu Yùndòng) and targeted my father and his colleagues. When Mao grabbed

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3 In 1951-1952 it was the Three-anti Campaign and the Five-anti Campaign. The three evils was against corruption, waste, and bureaucracy within the party; the five evils referred to the campaign against bribery, tax evasion, theft of state property, doing shoddy work and using inferior materials, and stealing economic information which was focused on the industrial and commercial sectors. These campaigns were associated with each other and therefore linked together as the 三反五反 (sān fǎn wǔ fǎn; Li, 1995, p. 361). This period of time would likely not have affected the participant’s family, therefore the relative peace for the participant at the time.

4 坏人 (huàirén) - bad person or villain
power in 1948, he included a lot of intellectuals like doctors and engineers to be part of his government; however, he also appointed a party secretary (书记 / shūjì)\(^5\) in every council to take charge. These individuals were from the military and were mostly illiterate. The intellectuals challenged the idea of having these individuals run places like hospitals and Mao became very angry with the intellectuals and started the “anti-rightist movement”\(^6\). The highest punishment for being a rightist was capital punishment. Those who were considered rightists were sent to farms to receive capital punishment. In 1958, my father was sent to the countryside to act as a doctor for the farmers and was paid 80 Yuan per month for all his living expenses.

The change in my father’s status impacted my mother. My mother was the principal of an elementary school that she founded during World War II. She took everything from her household to setup that elementary school and only took a small amount as salary. When my father was labelled as a rightist, my mother was no longer allowed to be the principal of her school, instead she was demoted to be a teacher.

When I was labeled as the son of a “bad person” (坏人 / huàirén), this was the first time I felt extremely wronged (委屈 / wěiqu).\(^7\) I was quite popular as a child, but after I was labelled as a bad person’s kid, and all the parents told their kids not to play with me. Suddenly, I had no friends and nobody was willing to play with me. It impacted me a lot as a child. I felt so lonely. Everyone was telling me that my father was a bad person (坏人 / huàirén). There was a moment where I hated my father because I felt like my father put me in this position and I questioned

\(^5\) 书记 (shūjì) - secretary (chief official of a branch of a communist party)

\(^6\) The Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1959) occurred right after the Hundred Flowers Campaign in reaction to the criticism received during the former campaign. During this period 400 000 to 700 000 “rightists” were sent to labour camps for re-education (Dillon, 2017).

\(^7\) 委屈 (wěiqu) - to feel wronged or grievance
whether or not my father was a good person. I remember one time asking my aunt (my mother’s good friend who was our neighbour) whether my father was a bad person. She said that my father is a good person, but also warned me not to talk about it publicly. It made me feel better because I felt assured that my father was good.

When I was 7 or 8, my older siblings had to write letters to government officials stating that they denounced my father and were cutting ties with him. I had to do this as well, but because I was so young, I did not understand the implications of what I was writing. My older brother was 26 at the time and was old enough to understand what he was doing. He had a high position as a party member. Maybe he felt it was necessary to denounce our father in order to maintain his position. One day he had a conversation with a friend and said something that offended Mao. He was reprimanded. His son, who was in elementary, then had to write and post up a poster stating that his father, my older brother, was a bad person (坏人 / huàirén) and he was going to cut ties with him. After that situation, my brother experienced what our father had endured and eventually re-connected with him.

In those days, China was very hierarchical, even with the school kids. The top students would always wear a red scarf that signifies they are not only obedient, but also pro-communist. I was never allowed to wear a red scarf, because I was a bad person’s (坏人 / huàirén) kid and was segregated from the rest of the pupils. After six years of grade school, I was ready to enter middle school but was not allowed to be accepted into a public school. Each student had their

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8 In the Chinese culture “aunts” can refer to both family members or friends who are close to the family.
9 Having party membership in the Communist Party meant that members had social, economic, and political capital, along with opportunities that were not available to non-party members (Dickson & Rublee, 2000).
10 The red scarf was worn by the Young Pioneers, under the umbrella of the Chinese Communist Youth League, was designed to recruit and train future communist party members (Dillon, 2017). The red scarf signified loyalty to the socialist value and was given to the top students of the young pioneers (according to the participant).
own file and my file stated that I could not be accepted as a student. Even though my marks were top-notch, maybe second highest in the school, I was not allowed to go. Everyone could get into public school except me. Eventually, my family found me a private middle school. However, private schools were the worst. Unlike Canada where private school is top notch, private schools in China were full of students that were not accepted by the regular public schools. They were just like a (收容所 / shōuróng suǒ) juvenile detention center. I was disappointed. I was still young, and I didn’t understand why it was so unfair, so I expressed that I didn’t want to go to that kind of school. At that moment, I saw father cry for the first time. I was twelve years old. My father said that he had done wrong and that I must go study. So, I went, even if it was a private school. My father must have felt at fault. He must have felt that, because of him, because he was targeted by the state, our futures were taken away.

My younger brother died in 1965 prior to the Cultural Revolution. He was 3 years younger than me and had a chronic disease from the age of 5 to 10. During that time, we were given ration stamps for food and supplies because it was in limited supply and had to be rationed. We were only given about 100 grams of meat (which included skin and bones), 100 grams of oil, and about 14 kilograms of rice per person each month. There was not much nutrition and there was not much medication available. His heart was failing; there was no solution for my brother. I saw my younger brother die. We could not save him. It was too costly to take him to the hospital. My family didn’t have money. We could not save him even though my father was a doctor.

11 The Great Chinese Famine happened in between 1959-1961. His brother likely developed his disease during that time and there were vastly limited supplies available for everyone during that period.
The Cultural Revolution. In 1966, after 6 months of going to the private school, the Cultural Revolution started and every school ceased operations. The Red Guards targeted my father and many of his friends. They were beat up and were forced to shave half their heads (剃半邊頭/tì bànbiān tóu). There was a lot of violence, especially among the senior students in middle school. Students would break off the leg of tables and attack their teachers. This happened less so among university students, but the violence was universal. You were targeted if you were a doctor, teacher, professor, actor, or if you worked in the old government—you were considered “rightists” or a “capitalist roader” (走資派/zǒu zī pài).

The government would send the Red Guards to raid and confiscate people’s property and belongings (抄家/chāojiā). Anything valuable was taken. At this time, my father was merely a scholar and he didn’t have much money at this point. He didn’t have any income or anything valuable. All he had were just books. I remember seeing them raid our house. I felt so scared. They took everything that belonged to us, from our bed to our books and scoured our place for any valuables and dug the grounds for any hidden goods.

My father was accused of being an American spy because of the work he had done with an international agency. He was no longer allowed to be a doctor and was made to sweep the school, the streets and the roads. Around 1965 he was forced to wear a tall hat made from newspaper and a sign around his neck that labelled him as a “big right” (大右派/dà yòupài) and...
“an American spy”. Everyday for 8 months he wore this to and from work and could not take it off until he got home. A few households in the same hospital were also treated this way, especially the old professors.

I felt embarrassed for my father and I felt very shameful (无地自容 / wúdìziróng). I didn’t have the face (面子 / miànzi) to see anyone. Everyone knew my father and my mother because of the former positions they held. I felt like everyone was watching me. It was like an atonement for my father. As he wore the hat and sign, he was being attacked and had no way of retaliating, instead, he just took it all in. When he walked to and from work, he would have to pass by my school door. I felt very sad. When I saw my father like this, I wanted to cry, but could not (欲哭无泪 / yù kū wú lèi). I wanted to talk about it, but there was no one I could talk to, so I kept it inside. The sadness turned into anger. I wanted to hit someone, but there was no one to hit.

The government stopped this practice after 8 months because people were killing themselves (自杀 / zìshā). Many of my father’s friends ended up killing themselves by either jumping into the river, jumping to their deaths, or hanging themselves. So, the government decided to just keep my father and his colleagues imprisoned in the school. For 2 to 3 years, they still had to wear the paper hat and sign whenever they were taken out in public. My father was kept in a cowshed (牛棚 / niú péng) and my mother was forced back to her hometown. This ended up leaving my older brother and I to watch over the house.

15 大右派 (dà yòupài) – big right or big rightist
16 无地自容 (wúdìziróng) - So ashamed that one could not show one’s face. A culturally familiar statement that is both metaphorical, from the Chinese notion of face, and literal, not being able to literally show one’s face.
17 欲哭无泪 (yù kū wú lèi) - wanted to cry but without tears; it is an expression of extreme sorrow and helplessness
18 牛棚 (niú péng) – this was a practice of isolating intellectuals from their families. By locking people up in cowsheds it was a way dehumanize them. There is a metaphorical component where people who were locked up
As my father was imprisoned and had no more authority in the medical school, they didn’t bother us anymore. Instead, they focused their attention on finding people who still followed capitalism, so by 1967-1968, my siblings and I were classified as free men (消遙派 / xiāo yáo pài). In the 60s, we didn’t go to school. It was called work-study; half the time we worked and half the time we studied. Though there was a lot of violence going on, I was not physically abused. I was pushed around and bullied by other workers when I worked, but it was nothing too serious.

The Red Guards ran amok in the city. They could just accuse and capture anyone; there was no court or police. They could just take you away because they thought you were a “bad person”, as was the case of my father. The Red Guards also formed factions. They all claimed to be Red Guards working for Mao, but they had different ideologies and fought amongst themselves. All they wanted was to gain power in the city. That was what the fighting was about. They would steal weapons and artillery from nearby factories and from the military or they made their own weapons and bombs. The soldiers did not care and did not even prevent them from stealing the weapons.

There was a lot of gunfire between the Red Guards. We could hear rumbling in our houses from the gunfire and bombs that were being dropped. Civilians were caught in the crossfire. They bombed the office that my sister worked in, and that really scared her. Another time, a rival Red Guard faction even broke into our home and brought a machine gun and started

were referred to as 牛鬼蛇神 (niúguǐshéshén) which literally means “cow ghosts and snake spirits” which was the reference for “monsters and demons”, therefore referring to these individuals as forces of evil (Wen, 1995).
19 During that time there were Red Guard factions that fought against each other for power (according to the participant).
a gunfight with another faction whose head office was 2 meters away from our home. I was so scared! I hid in my room until the fight was over.

My family was deeply impacted by the chaos during this period. My older brother, who worked at a university as an airplane engine designer, was attacked by people there and was captured and imprisoned for 3 years; my second oldest brother was beat-up and had his mouth split open; and my third oldest brother was sent to the countryside to work as a farmer. When my third oldest brother was there, the farmers said that people from my province were “bad people” because of their backgrounds. At the time, people were categorized into “good” or “bad” families depending on their background. For instance, if your father was from the army you were a “good person”, but if your family had money, they belonged to a “bad family”. It just so happened that many people from my province who were sent to the countryside were from “bad families”. Without question, they assumed everyone from my province was from a “bad family”, so they captured and murdered them and threw them into the river—even their children regardless of how young they were. When my brother found out that this was happening, he ran off in the night and climbed a mountain to escape. Though my brother escaped, many of his classmates were murdered.

In 1968, the Red Guards campaign ended, though the Cultural Revolution itself did not end until 1976. About 90% of the students were sent to the countryside, including myself. My father and his colleagues did not have any rights or power and my father was still locked in the school. They didn’t let him go home and so they made him do manual labour, digging air-raid

\[^{20}\text{Being part of a “bad” family is a reference being part of the “five black categories”—families considered enemies of the Revolution. While being part of a “good” family meant being part of the “five red categories”—social classes favoured by the Communist Party (Sullivan, 2007).}\]
shelters because, at that time, China and the Soviet Union were at odds. My father was in his 60s and was required to dig and carry dirt and write reports. Though my father was made to do hard labour, he was treated with some respect because of the work he did in the past and because he was older. Nonetheless, some of the younger individuals were beat up, especially if they rebelled.

Many people suffered a lot during these times. Everything was tumultuous, and people could not predict what would happen to them. It didn’t matter if you had power or if you didn’t, no one knew what would happen the next day. Suffering (苦 / kǔ) abounded. It broke my father’s heart when I was sent to the countryside. It was the second time in my life I saw him cry. He said to me, “How can you live there… you’re only 16.” My heart wrenched when I saw my father cry.

**The Countryside (1968-1974).** In 1968, when I was 16, I was sent to the countryside for 7 or 8 years. When we first arrived, we were treated very well because they thought we were all part of the Red Guard. They didn’t know that we weren’t because they didn’t see our file, as the files were controlled by the county. The farmers only knew that we were from the city. Even though the official Red Guard campaign was no more, when we were in the countryside, every student had to participate in being a Red Guard.

We were sent to the countryside to the production team. It was very primitive. At first, a couple of us lived together, but afterwards we were separated to live with different families. We had to call them godfather (乾爸 / gān bà) and godmother (乾妈 / gān mā). In a sense, we became their new sons and daughters. About a year later, a factory needed to look for student workers

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21 苦 (kǔ) - bitter; hardship, suffering
and because we were recommended by the farmers to work there, they were able to review our files. We were out of luck. The farmers found out about my father’s status and what kind of people my classmate’s fathers were. After that, the farmers started to bully and treat us poorly. It was quite a disparity. Suddenly, we were given more laborious jobs, they wouldn’t let us return home during the holidays, and they prevented us from applying for better work and educational opportunities.

There were so many stories in the countryside some of which seem almost unbelievable. I remember experiencing a flood in 1970. The countryside was next to a mountain and a lake; there was also a reservoir to help with the farming. One day the reservoir collapsed, and I remember feeling the ground shake and water coming at about 2 to 3 metres high. We were supposed to protect the rice that we were farming, but when we saw the water coming towards us, everyone started running. I remember the local militia screaming at us not to run and firing their guns in the air, but we didn’t care, there was a large wave from the river coming. Everyone dropped their work and ran for the mountain. Everything was destroyed, the houses, the farmland, the pigs—everything.

Another time, I remember laying down on the grass because I was so tired after working in the fields. The grass was tall and, as it was summer, it was also really dry. That day, I threw away a cigarette butt and fell asleep on the grass and the next moment I remember hearing a crackling sound. The cigarette butt caught fire and started a huge fire! As it was so dry and windy, the fire began to spread quickly. I remember having to run away as fast as I could. The fire ended up spreading out for a few kilometers. These moments made me realize that no matter how people strive, we can never compete with the heavens.
I contracted malaria in the countryside. It was spread by the mosquitos and was very prevalent in hot, humid places. I remember feeling very cold at one moment and very hot the next. I was working in a warehouse and as I was in the back digging up rice husks when I collapsed and fainted. The people outside didn’t know that I was still there and had locked the door and left me there sleeping for two days. Eventually they found me, but because of the floods I had to be sent to another town to a small hospital. I ended up staying two months and barely skirted death. My family didn’t even know this had happened and, because my father was imprisoned, I didn’t even dare to write them letters. I got better after 2 months and had to travel alone for about 3 to 4 hours back to my village while still feeling very weak.

In 1974, I was able to leave the countryside because of a favour I helped facilitate with the county head. I was working at a famous lake in China and a team of hospital staff were sent to the countryside to deal with an outbreak of blood flukes. These parasites were deadly and were very difficult to eradicate; an infection could spread through a village and end up killing hundreds of people. One of the members of the team who was sent to our village was actually one of my father’s students at his university hospital. He introduced me to his friend who happened to be the former county head, but at the time he was relegated because he was accused of being a rightist. My dad’s former student asked me to find a doctor for his friend because he was sick and unable to find a competent doctor because of his demotion. Back in the day, when you went to see a doctor you had to get a ticket, but you could not select which doctor was going to see you. This was problematic as some doctors might not be helpful.

Even though my father was also relegated, he retained a lot of friends who were good doctors, so I connected the individual with a doctor from my father’s university hospital. I went together with him to my father’s hospital and my father, and then connected him with a trusted doctor.
doctor. This ended up being quite fortunate for me because this man was eventually reinstated as the county head. He offered me any position in the county, but I told him that I didn’t want anything, I just wanted to go back home. It was very difficult to get a release notice. People would attempt extreme actions in order to get a release notice, such as pretending to be insane, and still they would not be issued a notice. I felt extremely lucky to receive one.

I know my father was pained about what happened to me. The moment I discovered this about my father was during this following event. My father is a very proper and traditional man and separated business from personal life, but at this particular moment, he did something that was against his principles, using his former status for a private matter. My father said all his life he had never begged anyone for anything. It was a degrading moment for my father to put himself in this position and to set aside his reputation. He lost a lot of face (面子 / miànzi) that day he begged for a favour on my behalf.

**Coming home.** When I returned home, I was able to get a job at a residential factory. Residential factories were considered the lowest ranking factory, below country factories, city factories, and private factories. At this point in my life, I had only studied in middle school. My father told me to study, so I looked for books and studied on my own and eventually finished all of the high school curriculum. Afterwards, I ended up going to an after-hours school where I would take courses in the evenings. Saturday and Sunday, I went to a college.

I worked hard to understand the material. I remember doing thousands of physics problems. I was interested in radios and I chose to major in electronics. I got so involved in it I ended up developing a device that addressed a major problem with the underground wires. My device gained notice in my county and was sold and produced through a manufacturing company in Southern China. Though I invented the device, I did not own it; rather, it was owned by the
government. I still got a regular salary of about 6 dollars Canadian/month. Eventually, I became a teacher and taught physics and electronics. When I look back on this, I am very proud of these achievements. Despite losing the opportunity for formal and structured education, I overcame this through hard work and innovation. In a way, I made up for the educational opportunities that were initially taken away from me.

As for my father, I was able to see him in 1972 whenever I could leave the countryside during holidays. My father was released from the school he was imprisoned at in 1972, but even then, he was only allowed to do menial tasks like washing dishes and beakers. He did get the opportunity to translate books because he had taken courses in America. However, he continued being wrongfully accused as being a rightist. It was not until 1979 that my father was finally redressed and offered political rehabilitation (平反 / píngfān). This meant that the government acknowledged that he may not have done anything wrong. This rehabilitation did not happen until Mao Zedong died in 1976 and Deng Xiao Ping came into power. Over six-hundred thousand people who were considered rightists, people who were wrongfully treated, were redressed.

My father died in 1980. He had suffered for over 20 years. He carried the label of being a traitor for over 20 years. It effected my family for over 20 years. Being labeled as a traitor meant that he and his family were no longer entitled to certain jobs and rights. Even when he received his initial redress, which stated that he “may not be” a traitor or a rightist, it still meant that our family had limited rights and privileges. My older brother could not reveal that he was related to my father; my older sister who studied to be a teacher could no longer teach; and I was

22 平反 (píngfān) - political rehabilitation
not allowed to go to school—all because my father was labelled as a traitor and a rightist. The sad thing is my father died knowing that the government still considered him as a possible rightist traitor and that his family continued to be affected by this legacy.

The state held a funeral for my father when he died. As he held a significant position in the past, there was an announcement for his death and an invitation for people to come to his funeral, but it was all arranged by the government and by government officials. My family protested by informing them that they were not going to attend the funeral because the government did not fully acknowledge that he was definitively not a traitor. When the state officials found out that the family was not going to attend, they sent out another redress stating definitively he was not a traitor. We were very sad about this whole ordeal. It took his own death in order to receive this official redress. It felt like there was no point. He was not alive to witness the redress himself.

After my father was reinstated, it did open opportunities for me, and I was able to work in the hospital as a technician. There was also an influx of new resources for medical technologies funded by the World Health Organization. So, I was able to work on X-rays, electronic microscopes, and CT scanners. This led to my dealing with medical equipment and purchasing these goods for the hospital. I eventually switched over to doing importing and exporting work with hospital equipment and electronics. In 1984 I along with other colleagues started our own trading company and I became a businessman.  

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23 After the Cultural Revolution there was economic reform and a realization that those who were considered “rightist” and academics were needed in order to help move the country forward which led economic opportunities (Misra, 1997; Sullivan, 2007).

24 During this time China was heavily investing into economic industries to help boost the economy, however it was still centralized. This was common for industry to work with government, but the industry was still under government ownership (according to the participant).
Deciding to leave for Canada. When I came to Canada, I was still afraid of China. People can say whatever they want in Canada, but in China you must be careful. Before I left for Canada, I had a very good job: my income was good, my position was high, but in my heart I was still afraid. Along with the events inflicted upon my family, there were other incidents contributing to this fear. For instance, I had a cousin who was wrongfully imprisoned for about 20 years. When she was 18, she was working at my father’s medical school hospital as a nurse and found water pitchers that were contaminated with rat poison. When she reported it, they accused her of being disgruntled because my father was considered a rightist. Even though they lacked any evidence, they blamed and imprisoned her until she was 40. What happened to her made me realize that the political system was unfair, and your own situation could change at any moment. There is nothing you can do to have a sense of control in China.

The June Fourth (六四事件 / liùsì shìqíng / Tiananmen Square) incident, June 4, 1989) incident had a significant impact on me. I was in Hong Kong when I saw the events transpire on the television. I couldn’t believe it. The country had sent its army and its tanks against its own people. I remember thinking to myself that they were just students, they didn’t know anything, there was no need to be so forceful in opposing them. The country was in chaos for 4 or 5 days before and after the June Fourth event. After that incident, the whole country, every school, every company, every unit, every person, needed to write down what they did before and after June 4th. We were required to write these reports. It was all to be reported to the government. The students were out of chances. Those who participated in the march, who went to Tiananmen Square, they were punished and sent to the countryside and to work in factories, often in the lowest of factories.
Afterwards, I remember watching a BBC news interview with Jiang Zemin, who was the president of China at the time. There was an incident regarding a female student who had participated in the June Fourth (六四 / liùsì) Tiananmen Square event. Back then, when you graduated, the government assigned you a job. When she graduated from Beijing University, she was assigned to a small factory in the countryside of Beijing and was raped by the locals. When the reporter asked Jiang Zemin about this incident, he had two responses. First, he said he didn’t know about the event, which I found hard to believe because this is a man who was supposed to be aware of these situations, and second, he said that even if it did happen, the person was probably wicked and she deserved it. I couldn’t believe what I heard— that an incident like that could be so easily disregarded by the president and that he could support a situation like that! Why did this student have to suffer like this? It was not deserved and her getting raped had nothing to do with taking part in the protests. It did not make her a wicked person deserving of this suffering.

These events made me realize China was unsafe. I had hoped there would have been changes after the Cultural Revolution, but events like Tiananmen Square and what happened to my cousin shows me otherwise. Regardless of how successful I may be, there is no control over what the government decides to do. There is no predictability. Things can change quickly and there is no way for control, and because of that, I felt afraid. I know a lot about corruption in the Chinese government, things hidden in the dark because I got to know people in positions of power through my work in the trading company and also because some of them also knew my

\[liùsì\] — as an indication of the significance of this event it is referred to as by its date “six four” or “June 4”, which is similar to how 9/11 has significance as an important date for North Americans.
father. The people who knew my father were once considered rightists in the past, but after they were redressed in the 1980s, some of them held high positions in the government. Many Chinese do not speak of such things, especially in China. I don’t even talk to my siblings about these concerns because they are still in China and they still need to work to live there. There was so much injustice to the people, like my father, who contributed to shaping the country. It is unfair, and I knew I had to leave for the sake of my children. I did not want them to experience not having opportunities or an education.

My daughter. My children love to hear the stories I tell, because I am able to provide a broader perspective of China. A lot of what they know comes from the media, and that’s problematic because a lot of Chinese culture is about face. For example, when you go to China, you are provided with the best food and everything looks really good, but that’s not their everyday life. I feel I am able to tell them truths about China that they may not otherwise have a chance to know or experience.

When I think about how my experiences impact my relationship with my daughter, I see she has opportunities and, because I had lost so many opportunities, I realize I give her too much pressure. I want her to seize those opportunities that I had wished for early in my childhood and teenage years. I don’t think everyone has these opportunities. Education was very important to me and my father, and yet it was taken away from me when I was younger. I don’t know if it’s a Chinese thing or if it’s universal, but I think there is a general belief that if you don’t study well you won’t find a good job, and if you don’t find a good job you won’t have money, and if you don’t have money, then your family life will be tough. These worries are very prominent, and these are concerns that I have for my daughter.
I compare my experience to hers and I often tell her that she does not need to worry about having rice to eat and that her life is so good. That she is in a good environment here. I tell her that she needs to find a stable job and work hard and study hard. I think in a way it is too relaxed here compared to how it was in China. However, I do think that even though it may be more relaxed here, to study successfully can be very difficult because it’s so competitive to get into programs like medicine.

I see that hard work is one thing and opportunities are another. Some people work hard but don’t have opportunities, while others have opportunities but don’t work hard. I believe you need both. I think I have given her an opportunity and maybe that’s why I keep on pressuring her to work harder. I know that’s my problem though. I put too much pressure on her. I understand that my experience is not the same as hers. I think what makes my concerns more prominent is that I’m reminded of my father and his wishes for me. One of the most tragic things for him was that the future was taken away from his children, and maybe I fear that as well. My family experienced a lot of injustice and I lost a lot of opportunities when I was younger. Because of that, I want her to take up the opportunities that were taken away from me. To live a life that I never got when I was younger.

I see part of myself in my daughter. We are both stubborn, love to learn and read, and think very deeply about life. But she is different than me. For me, I tend to see things in black and white and the truth is very important, while for her, she is thoughtful and can see that there are a lot of grey-areas in life. I think she is much smarter than me. I am very proud of my daughter. I have seen a lot of dark things in my life. Even though there is a lot of darkness in the world, my hope is that my daughter can see better things, see the good things in life.
Lina’s Story: Legacy of a Blacklisted Family

**Introduction.** Lina is a 23-year-old woman born and raised in Canada. She identifies both parents as having gone through psychological traumas during their time in China. This study involves her and her father (Henry above). Following the LEC-5, she identifies her father as experiencing numerous psychological traumas (see Table 9). This participant experiences her father as being very open to talking about his life history. Throughout her story, Lina shares how her father’s stories have impacted her identity and have directed her towards social justice initiatives and feminist theories. Her story highlights two intersecting challenges: meshing the cultural identities of being Chinese and Canadian, as well as defining self-identity amid her family’s legacy. As Lina aptly puts it, “I guess being part of a blacklisted family is very counter-cultural.” This is her story.

**Table 9. LEC-5 Items Endorsed by Lina (of Her Father’s Traumas)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
<th>Learned about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire or explosion</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation accident</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with a weapon</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat exposure to a war-zone</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-threatening illness or injury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe human suffering</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden violent death</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden accidental death</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface. My parents have given me a lot. They provided me with stability, and I grew up as a middle-class kid. This experience was very different than my parents’ experience. The stories that my father shared of when he was in China make me reflect about how different a world my parents lived in compared to my life in Canada. My parents have shaped many of my values. Their experience and stories have been a part of why I am drawn to feminism and social justice issues as a way for me to understand society and to help others.

Growing up as a Chinese-Canadian. I was born in 1994 and grew up in British Columbia. I do not recall much from my early childhood, though I was told I was a very difficult kid. Both my parents were the classic Asian parents, they would tell me things like, “Study hard, make sure your career is good, and don't go through the same things we had to go through.” Throughout elementary and middle school, my parents put a lot of stock into my studies; it was the whole, “Oh ninety-five percent, where did that five percent go?” I felt pressure, both internal and external, to do well in school. Maybe I felt my worth hinged on my performance in school—after all isn’t that the Chinese immigrant perspective? —That your worth is tied to your usefulness and accomplishments. As a child of immigrant Asian parents, it felt like I was often compared to other children. Who played piano the best? Who had the highest grades? Who obeyed their parents the most? We were trophies to be shown off, not people to be listened to.

Middle school was easy for me. I was the gifted kid, the smart kid in class. Things changed in 2008, when I went to Port Moody for high school and took part in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Everything became super stressful. It was like a culture shock. I was no longer the gifted kid because everyone was gifted which meant no one was gifted. I was
freaking out constantly to maintain my grades and to keep achieving. My parents saw how stressed I was and they told me, “Just do your best. If you did your best then its fine, we are not going to ask you to push yourself more than you have the ability to.” I was surprised to hear that from my parents. Typically, Asian parents, based on what I perceived from my friends and from the internet culture, expect their children to overachieve at the cost of their health, and instead they responded very compassionately.

I remember high school had so much work that I would only get about three hours of sleep each night. All my friends were constantly stressed. We would study together and then not talk to each other, because if we talked to each other we would snap. It’s like we needed to be together, but in silence. The choice of friends that I hung out with in high school had a lot to do with our shared academic attitudes, but we were still considered the “slackers” within the IB group. The other Asian kids were super studious and over-achieving, whereas my group of friends tried to have some sort of normalcy and mainly just wanted to survive the school year. Our group was looked down upon by the over-achieving kids. This elitist attitude exacerbated the differences between us and them. I think a lot of East Asian cultures breed elitism and class issues, which I can understand now, but back then I thought they were just haughty assholes. These challenges in high school brought my group together. Even now, though we grew into different people, we are still very close and have maintained our friendship.

After high school and before university, I developed a mild eating disorder. I ate less than 500 calories a day. I stress ate in grade 12, and after IB my life became very unstructured, so I did whatever I could to have a sense of control, and that came in the form of eating. This eating disorder resolved itself after I entered university, regaining a set schedule and being forced out of self-isolation at home.
Even though IB was super stressful, it opened me up to critical thinking and academic writing. The biggest shift in university was that it was no longer just about remembering facts, it involved reflecting and asking yourself why things are the way they are. Because of IB, university was not as big a jump for me as it seemed for other high school students.

**University years.** I changed a lot during university in terms of my worldview. I went from a teen wanting to be counter-cultural by trying to be edgy and sort of offensive to channelling those perspectives into more productive ways that actually help people. As a teenager, I would make off-color jokes and try not to be mainstream. I think, because I was super stressed in high school, I was just lashing out. As a teen, I knew that there was something wrong about the world, but did not know what it was exactly. I had a general sense that things needed to be fixed and I didn’t know what to do about it.

I started my university career at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and ended up transferring to the University of British Columbia (UBC) in my third year to take part in their speech science program. It wasn’t until my second year in university that I became interested in feminism. I was a student orientation leader, and I had an opportunity to meet the women’s centre coordinator at SFU. I had brought my orientation group to the women's centre, and the coordinator gave this cool speech about how the women’s centre is a safe space focused on equality. At the time, one of my best friends from high school also came out as being trans. I wanted to know how to best support him during his transition, so I went to speak to the women’s centre coordinator afterwards to ask for trans resources. After that I got into intersectional feminism and began volunteering there.

I think another reason why I got interested in feminism was because, when I was younger, I really liked helping friends. I was always the sounding board for friends if they had
issues. As I reflect about that now, I realize most of the friends I helped were male. I believe that I fit into a larger picture of ‘femme-people’ being used for emotional labour. Guys don’t talk to other guys about emotional issues and they end up dumping it onto women because a woman is a nice ‘soft thing’ that will listen to your woes and reassure you. Though I don’t regret helping my friends, this point of view provides me with a different perspective as to why I was placed in these situations. However, it does make me wary if I am being treated in this manner by new people I meet.

As mentioned earlier, I think now that I was also predisposed to seeing injustices earlier on because of my family history as told by my father. I knew of all of these horrendously unjust events that happened to members of my own family, and even though they were a world away, it planted the seed of resistance in me. I guess being part of a blacklisted family is very counter-cultural. I needed to be part of the solution or else I would be complicit. I could not know the problem and not be helping. To me, that’s as bad as contributing to the problem itself.

Feminism helps put these issues into words and see potential avenues for change.

Though it was intimidating at first to take part in feminist groups, I found that the people in the intersectional feminist bases to be really inviting. My feminism is now specifically intersectional – focusing on the unique oppressions that people with intersecting identities face (e.g. a black woman experiences a unique kind of racism and misogyny that a white woman does not) – because gender is not the only important thing in my fight for equality. Racism, ableism, classism, and other inequalities must be addressed as well. I feel like I have a place in this kind of feminism because a lot of Western feminism glosses over issues such as race, whereas intersectional feminism is more inclusive in that it draws together more diverse voices. I felt welcomed in these groups; I felt like I belonged and could talk about real issues that I could
relate to. This contrasted very starkly with another club that I joined early on in university that was focused on Chinese-Canadians but was super fake. I don't know if that's me being judgemental, but it seemed strange. It was just some exclusive gathering for Asians who were really obsessed with being the ‘cool fun party Asians’—“its like a Western party, but we have xiǎo long bāo (小笼包), 26 isn't that so cool?” It felt like that group was pretending to be white; like they hadn’t dealt with their own identity issues yet.

My fourth year was my most difficult year. I went through a bad breakup and had a lot of stress from school. I had a number of anxiety attacks and was dealing with severe depression and anxiety. I was not able to get out of bed to shower or eat. I became even more depressed and started skipping class. I was emotionally flat. I was numbing out. I could not do anything. I was at rock bottom.

I became more interested in mental health issues because of these challenges. The worst of it was when I was doing an honours study. I went to seek professional support at the UBC hospital. But they told me, since I was not at immediate risk of suicide, I would have to wait at least six months to see a psychologist, and by that time my honours thesis wasn’t going to be an issue anyways. I was prescribed Effexor by the doctor, which I took for a bit, but stopped because of its side effects. I eventually dropped the honours thesis and had to spread out the rest of my remaining coursework. My department was very reassuring and they supported me throughout this tough time. Eventually, I was able to manage my mental health challenges through support: from my current boyfriend, who was able to understand me because of his own mental health challenges; my high school friends, who as it turns out were diagnosed with mental

26 小笼包 (xiǎo long bāo) - A type of Chinese steamed bun
health issues as well; being part of feminist circles; and through engaging in spiritual practices. I don’t think I would have been able to make it if it were not for these supports.

When I talked to my parents about my mental health issues, I don’t think they really understood the extent of my mental health problems. Even though I am pretty sure my mom has anxiety and depression—and maybe even my dad to an extent, because he is always super over-prepared and that may be a response to going through times where he didn’t have anything—my parents don’t know how to talk about it. I think the problem is that there is not a lot of discussion about mental illness in Chinese circles. For instance, I remember my dad said, “you’re not visibly sick so it is hard to think of you as sick.” It’s hard for me to hear him say that, but I think he still tries to understand, which is all I can really ask for.

Dealing with race and culture growing up. When I was ten, my family moved to another city. It was very different, a lot more Caucasians and a lot less Asians. In my former place, there were a fair number of Asian kids, my best friends were Chinese, while in this new city my friend group became White. I had a lot of mixed messages growing up as a Chinese-Canadian. In elementary school, it was ok to be who I was because there were more Asians around me. However, in middle school, when I was around White people constantly, it felt like there was a shift. My food was suddenly considered weird. For example, I had a friend who got into vegetarianism and animal rights and was horrified by my nonchalant response to eating meat. I was just 13 and I ate whatever my mom made me and, being Chinese, that meant nearly every single dish having some sort of meat. Being Chinese was suddenly foreign and I equated being foreign with being bad, so it was better to eat things like hash browns instead of Chinese food.
There was pressure to like Western stuff because somehow it was inherently better. My older sister, whom I idolized when I was younger, was quite Westernized by the time I started thinking about my own identity. She introduced me to a lot of Western music and hobbies. My parents were kind of lame and Asian, while my sister was cool and Westernized. So, the message I received as I was growing up was that being a “banana” or being “white-washed” was a good thing.  

In high school, my friends were more multicultural. They informed a lot of the pop culture that I was into, but it was still this notion of, “don’t be one of those fobby Asians who just speak Chinese constantly or don’t line up because they don’t do that in China and are rude.” It was really confusing because I was born of Chinese immigrants, yet I am not really Chinese, but I wasn’t completely Western either. It was okay to be Chinese, in the sense that I didn’t face much overt racism, but not the most socially acceptable still. People were never going to treat me like a White person either because of my Asian features, of course, but I also had these Chinese family values that my parents tried to impart on me. It was weird growing up in a very Chinese household and being in very Chinese environments and then going to school where all my classmates were either White or from different cultures. I felt like I was part of two different worlds, that I had a dual identity, school was Canadian and home was Chinese. So, it was tough growing up as there were a lot of identity issues I had to deal with.

I never really had to deal with much blatant racism—definitely casual racism, but it’s easy to internalize that and brush it off as a kid because it is normalized by society. Nonetheless,

27 Banana – a term for a Chinese person who identifies with Western values, e.g. “yellow on the outside, white on the inside.”
28 Fobby – “Fresh Off the Boat”, a pejorative term that is prescribed to an newly immigrated Asian person.
it is still racism, casual or not. I think there may be a generational difference when it comes to racist experiences. An example is my best friend who is Filipino. She and her parents share a lot with each other and when she talks about social justice with them, they are very much of the mindset, “if it doesn't affect us and people are nice to us, we don't need worry about that.” I think, because our parents dealt with so much prior to coming to Canada and had to deal with more blatant racism in the 80s and 90s, they probably don’t worry as much about the micro-aggressions as we do now. That probably also explains why my parents are less into social justice causes as things are pretty okay now, especially compared to all the things they had to go through then. It’s like, “be happy you’re not getting executed for not being Communist.” Things could always be worse.

To me, there is a lack of diverse stories about Chinese people in North America. So, I think saving stories is incredibly important, especially stories of people of color. I don’t think Chinese culture places a lot of emphasis on sharing their own personal stories and I think it’s important for other Chinese people to know that they are not alone. It can seem like Chinese people are very monolithic, “oh we are a good family, we have such and such accomplishments, we don’t have flaws.” It’s that whole Chinese mentality, “oh so-and-so's kid did this, why can't you be more like them?” Any issues are to be swept under the rug because it would ruin the image of perfection we have to have. It can be problematic because it fits us into a particular mould, and it would’ve been nice to know that other people have flaws growing up—were allowed to have flaws even—and still turn out okay. When alternative stories are shared, it feels more human and it challenges the model minority story.

Even though I want to challenge the model minority myth, I think my life story still fits within it. It still feels like I must be a ‘good Asian’, I must go to university and that has never
been in question. I never even thought of any other possibility. I never thought about going into trades or arts. Other people do that, but not me. Even still, I harbour the belief that a good education and a professional career is the only path to a respectable lifestyle for me. Even if I wanted to do something else, I don’t think I would. I feel that pressure to keep up appearances and to save face. It’s a strange feeling, I’m very aware of this, yet it’s still deeply ingrained in me and I feel I cannot break out of it. At the same time, I don’t know if I would be doing the same things that I am doing now if my parents hadn’t imparted that on me. Would I have let my potential go to waste in favour of short-term fun? I’m not mad about it; I’m lucky enough to be happy with where I am and where I’m headed. I am part of the model minority myth. I don’t completely want to be; I reap the benefits of it, yet I am still restrained by it. I recognize that I may be alright with it, but that may not be the case for other Asian people, and I celebrate people who do not fit within this myth.

My family. I am proud of my parents. They are both very successful people. My mom came in 1989 for school, and then my dad followed the year after with my sister. When my dad got to Canada, he worked in a smaller importing/exporting place in Richmond, then opened his own convenience store and just retired this year.

Prior to immigrating, my dad was a businessman, unlike his brothers and sisters who went into professions. He started one of the first importing/exporting companies in his province. He is really smart and was a self-taught electrical engineer beforehand. He told me once that he gained some fame for inventing a device that helped fix a problem with underground communication wires.

My mom was also very successful. She’s in IT (information technology) and graduated as part of one of the first university computer science classes in China. She is independent,
strong willed, and was a good role model because she did not perpetuate stereotypical female gender roles. Of course, she was still a great mom and household caretaker, but she did all this while still working hard on her career. Though she initially struggled to find work in IT in Canada, she is now the manager of three departments in her company. To me, she’s a really motivational, career-oriented mom and she inspires me to work as hard as her.

My mom is also a very pragmatic person. To her, words are cheap; you can say whatever you want, but if it’s not translated into action, it’s meaningless. It’s important that there’s evidence that shows that you care. She tells me that my dad cares about us because you can see it in the way he nags us. Nagging means he cares. I think it fits with the whole idea that Chinese parents don’t say they love you with words, they say it by asking if you’ve eaten.

*Mother's stories.* When I was growing up, the stories my father shared were mostly about his family and injustices towards his family during the Cultural Revolution. His family was blacklisted and despite the injustices, he seems to have a pretty good sense of humour about it. When he talks about his stories it feels like two different worlds, his experience during Cultural Revolution compared to his life afterwards and my life in Canada.

My father would often tell me and my sister stories over dinner. It’s not like there was a sit-down, *you-must-pass-down-our-history* moment—his stories would often come up over something tangentially related. He would say something to the extent of, “Oh it’s so nice to have this in Canada because we didn’t have this when I was a kid.” Eventually, I would just ask him about his stories because that was a way that I could relate to my dad, knowing that he really enjoys telling stories and explaining things. Most of the stories he shared when I was a teenager would make me think to myself, “wow, my dad went through a lot of shit”.

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My dad would tell me stories about members of his family being jailed. My grandfather, my father’s dad, was the one who got the family blacklisted because he was a very prominent doctor at the time. He was the liaison for an international agency and was the director of a hospital and medical school. So, he was very much part of the establishment before Mao came into power. During Mao’s regime, he could not predict the degree of suffering that would occur, which is why they didn’t get out and go to Hong Kong like a lot of his other friends.

As my grandfather was blacklisted, my whole family was affected. For example, my dad told me that his cousin, who worked in the hospital in the lab, once found that liquids in the lab were contaminated by rat poison. When she reported it, the police accused her of poisoning the liquids. It was preposterous—why would she report it if she poisoned it? She was thrown into jail and, though authorities eventually admitted that they were wrong, because they didn't have any other suspects, they just kept her there. She ended up being in jail for twenty-five years! She didn’t get out until she was forty. She spent her whole life in prison for a crime that she never committed. After she was released, she was only allowed to live in that prison community, so she got married and still lives and works in that community because that’s all she was allowed to do.

Another example was my dad’s uncle, his father’s brother, my great uncle, who was a famous general in the Second World War and in the Sino-Japanese war. He was very well known for being the hero who fought against the Japanese. During the start of the revolution, there was a corrupt official who went to my grandpa's house and spoke to my grandma and said, “If you don't pay me 1000 yuan, we will arrest him (the general) and kill him.” My grandma didn’t know what to do; she thought to herself that there’s no way they would do that since he was a cultural hero. So, she didn't do anything because she didn’t know what to do. The official
ended up arresting my great uncle and executing him. Eventually, the corrupt official was also caught and executed, but not before he tried to extort money from a lot of other people.

The most difficult thing that my father witnessed was his younger brother passing away during the famine in the 60s. My father's family lived in one of those big traditional, fancy Chinese houses with the big courtyard in the middle with lots of rooms, but it was seized by the government. All their properties and possessions were seized as well. The government ended up giving them one room of their own house to live in, one that they had to pay rent for. During that time, it was a family of eight living in one room in their old house. When the famine hit, they didn't have a lot of money; they had food stamps and it had to be rationed. His younger brother, the youngest of the family, had an illness—some sort of congenital illness that would easily be cured now—and so needed to constantly be in bed rest. They gave him most of the food, but he still passed away because they couldn't afford medicine. My dad said that he was there when he stopped breathing. It's surreal to think that was my uncle whom I never met because he died when he was a teenager.

My dad would tell us a lot of little funny stories about the stuff he did in the country side when he was sent there. Back then, my father said that they would soak rice in wine and liquor and let it out into a trail to trap chickens. The chickens would get drunk and fall asleep on the ground and they would pick them up, cook them, and eat them, even though they belonged to local farmers. Another time, he stole stick grenades and kept them under his pillow. Obviously, that was not very smart. He thought keeping them under his pillow would be the best way to prevent their theft. One day, he woke up and noticed that all the grenades were gone. His friends ended up coming by, and asked if he wanted to have fish as they were having a big fish fry. Turns out they stole the grenades and blew up the local pond so that they could pick up all
the fish and eat them. This was the fish pond that was supposed feed the whole village, but this
group of sixteen-year-old city boys blew it up and ate all the fish. To me, it seemed like all the
kids that were sent to the countryside for character building were not suited for country living at
all!

Despite the funny stories, my family was heavily impacted by the events of the Cultural
Revolution. Both my parents were sent to the countryside for re-education; my mom for two or
three years and my dad for four or five because his family was blacklisted. My grandfather
wasn't allowed to practice medicine anymore—he was only allowed to wash beakers in the
basement and eventually, he wasn't even allowed to be in hospitals anymore, so he had to sweep
the streets. Afterwards, he was sent off to some mountain town. All of this because he was a
very famous doctor and people still treated him with respect, which I think may have upset the
officers because they feared his influence. Even when he was in the mountain town, people
would travel there to see him because he was a really good doctor. I think it was only after Mao
dfell that he was allowed to come back to his home.

My dad did tell me stories about grandfather after he wasn’t allowed to practice medicine
anymore. He said that they would hang big signs, big heavy boards, around his neck that said—
‘big right’, ‘traitor’, and various sorts of propaganda. They would also shave half his head for
humiliation and other things like that. My dad did tell me one funny story about my grandfather
though. He was friends with the dean of the university and, being that they were ‘the big right’,
a group of red guards cornered them on the street to shave their heads. At that time the price of a
haircut was about two yuan, so he said that his dad’s friend gave the red guards one yuan for half
the haircut. I remember feeling a sense of admiration hearing that story; they were still brave in
the face of adversity.
When Deng Xiao Ping came into power, they did issue apologies, but it was a simple “sorry this happened”. My dad said they took away two big trucks full of all his family’s possessions and during the apology they brought back a little sack, which just had a couple of grandpa's journals. In the end, they didn't get anything back. No monetary compensation either, as far as I know.

These events really impacted my dad. I feel like when he shares stories about his family, especially the one about his younger brother dying, he is pretty sombre about it. It definitely hurt him at the time. Talking to my mom about it, she would say he was really mad at the government when he was younger. He wasn’t allowed to get into university, but he kept trying because he wanted a university education so bad. He would study engineering at night until he was an electrical engineer, but at the same time he worked at a factory and felt that there was no point in trying. It seems like it’s kind of resolved for him now. He’s come to the point where he seems fulfilled in his life. He can talk about it and, when he shares with us, it’s like he is saying, “Here is the hardship I went through; it was bad and this is why I came to Canada to give you and your sister a better life.”

The impact of trauma on my mother. My mom doesn’t talk about her experiences nearly as much as my dad does and I don't want to dig at it if she doesn't want to talk about it. My dad will offer it freely, whereas I have to seek it out from my mom. Even then she doesn’t really like talking about it and would seem uncomfortable and offer a cagey vague answer. I know a lot about my dad’s family, but I don’t know much about hers. Despite the fact that she places a lot of emphasis on family, I never really got to meet people from her side of the family, which is hard to reconcile.
I think past events deeply affected her. She told me when she was very young, she lived with her grandfather and, at the time, her step-grandmother treated her like Cinderella. The other kids and grandchildren took precedence over her, and she was the one who had to wake up early in the morning, turn on the wood stove, and do all the laborious chores. I’m pretty sure she has Generalized Anxiety Disorder, because we related a lot on anxiety when I came out to her about my mental health issues. For example, as a kid I would freak out a lot about the future. When I was seven, I remember thinking, “Oh my god, what if I don't do X right and then I end up in some horrible place in the future.” I was worrying about my adult life at a very young age, and when I told my mom about it, she said, “Oh I did that too, you don't have to worry about that.” Which was a surprise to me, as I did not realize my mom was also thinking about the same things at such an early age.

My mom's Chinese zodiac sign is the chicken and our family thinks that’s very fitting because she can get very frantic. She’s really good at getting stuff done, but when she gets into this frantic mode, it’s like everything has to be done right away. Her franticness leads to frustration and she gets frustrated easily. She knows she has a temper. She’s always known that, even before she started dating my dad. I remember when I was seven in the car, she told me once, "If I ever get really, really mad, just tell me that I am getting mad right now and that I need to calm down before you start talking to me." So, I think she tried to set up safeguards around her temper. She is aware of it, but I don't think she has ever been to counselling.

I find that my mom has a tendency to take one thing, read into it, and interpret it a certain way. No matter what we say she won't let go of that thing. For example, for Christmas parties the rest of my family are not super enthused about throwing a big party, but we do it every year. My dad hates being around tons of people, he hates loud parties, and he’s a super solo guy,
whereas my mom is a lot more social. Neither my sister nor I help out as much because it feels like a chore every year, but she would get upset and say things like, "You don’t care about your family . . . who knows how long you are going to be seeing these people; you don't care about me; you don't care." It is frustrating. It’s not that we don't care, we just have other priorities. But when she becomes like that, we all must cater to her, otherwise she is unmoving. We acquiesce and wait for it to blow over.

**My relationship with my parents.** My mom was always stricter on me and my dad spoiled me. My mom was the parent that I would be afraid to show my report card to. You know, that stupid meme, “you’re an A'sian not a B'sian”. It was helpful to have my sister when it came to dealing with my mom. She was always my rock when interactions with my mom seemed crazy. When I was six or seven, I remember when I got one thing wrong on a spelling test, and my mom freaked out: "Oh, you are going to start thinking that is ok and let everything slip, and then you will be working as a gas station attendant for the rest of your life." My mom would have ridiculous leaps of logic like this all the time and then my sister would tell me, “Don't worry; it’s mom just being crazy.”

I do talk to my mom about my interests in social justice and feminism because the language barrier is not as bad with her. I can communicate with her in English as opposed to just Chinese. Her whole deal is if you can't personally change it, then why worry about it, which is tough for me because it conflicts with the way I see things. Personally, I espouse the idea that if you tell friends about issues, things will slowly change. Instead, in her point of view, thinking about sad and unfortunate injustices only brings yourself down. She does not want to hear me talk about large-scale issues, like police killing black people in the States, or issues like Standing Rock, because she feels that she can’t change those things and it just depresses her. She always
talks about trying to be happy and focusing on positive thoughts. I can see her doing that and struggling to be more positive because she does get weighed down by a lot of negative thoughts. I do want to give her the benefit of the doubt as it might be her personal philosophy, but I think that’s probably a coping mechanism. She had to go through so many horrible things in the past, and if she let all of them affect her, she would feel awful. If that’s how she gets herself out of the mud, then I can’t discount that.

I feel the idea of “you just have to be happy” is restrictive. Every time I try to tell her my thoughts on that matter, she would reject the idea. I would tell her, “Sometimes if you have a bad mood, you are just in a bad mood; you just roll with it and roll out of it, and try to minimize the impact by being alone or doing something that you think would help you work through it.” She would respond with something to the extent of, “Ok you can feel bad for like a minute and go back to being happy.” It is frustrating because she doesn't listen to me, and I don't think you can put a time restriction on things like that. She seems like she doesn't really want to talk about emotional things. I feel like that’s probably part of Chinese culture. Chinese culture is not very big on emotions. It seems like she has been through a lot of unfair circumstances, and she probably internalizes that as, "I can’t change it; this is the way the world is."

My dad still sees me as his baby. I was always the spoiled kid. My mom said that he was never a super openly loving person or an emotional person, but only after I was born—'cause they had me later—my dad cracked. I was this bright little cheery ball of baby in their lives. My dad always spoiled me. He’s always so happy to see me; even up until I was eleven or twelve, I would still jump out and surprise my dad when he came home from work. I was a total daddy’s girl. However, my parents are very controlling of my life. For instance, my parents are really resistant to things like boyfriends and sleepovers. I was never allowed to have a sleepover.
as a kid. They told me I could have a sleepover when I turned 18, and even then, they rejected the idea. Just last year, when I wanted to stay over at my cousin's house—my cousin whom we have known our whole lives—they asked me, “Why would I want to sleepover at someone else's place when I had a bed at home?” I don't understand why they have to be so controlling for something that is so reasonable. Even as an adult, I lived near UBC for two years in third and fourth year, and they would still want to see me every single weekend. They would call me daily and ask things like, “Did you eat?” I realize it’s because they worry about me, but it’s stifling when I see many of my peers being able to make plans independently and not worry. It’s embarrassing when I have to answer to my parents for the same things.

I don’t feel open with my parents when it comes to discussing certain things with them, because I feel like I know how they would react, that is to say, poorly. I tend to hide a lot of things from them because they would end up trying to manage what I do and say things like, “Don’t eat this particular snack at that time”, “don’t eat a lot at dinner”, or “you should sleep at this particular time because it is good for you.” My parents are really active on WeChat with their friends. My sister and I have downloaded it just to talk with them, but among their circles they share a whole bunch of misinformed Chinese health information. When they share advice like, “If you go to bed after a certain time then you don’t digest right”. I think to myself, “I know for a fact with my university education that you paid for that that is not true, but you won’t listen to me, so why did you spend money on my education?” There is no convincing them, so it’s easier to skip over these topics of conversation.

29 WeChat – A mobile communication app that is popular amongst Chinese people
I know I’m always going to be their baby, but at some point, they have to mesh that with my adult life. There have been some shifts in my relationship with my dad. Now I nag him, “If that’s how you’re going to show your love to me, that’s how I am going to show my love to you.” I think, over time, things have improved in the control department as well. My parents are trusting me more and they try not to micromanage my time. Though it can be frustrating to deal with their controlling behaviours, I feel that, because they have seen so many terrible and unfair things that can happen for seemingly no reason at all, they are that much more concerned when it comes to me going out. I don’t know how much of that is just Asian parents who like to have their children stay home and study, or how much of it is related to the idea that they have seen bad things and they don’t want bad things to happen to me. It’s probably a bit of both.

My parent’s impact on me. I would like to be more open with my parents without worrying that they’re going to close the door on me. For instance, because my mom is not that open, if I share vulnerably, will she respond vulnerably as well? It also seems like there aren’t any natural occasions to have these types of open conversations, especially in a Chinese family. I feel like I compartmentalize a lot of my life—my parents and my sister are in this one box and there are appropriate things I can talk them about, while my friends and my close relationships are in this other box, and it’s all very much separated. It’s weird to have to manage all my information and to discern what is appropriate to share or not. My parents and I have a good relationship and it is fine if the relationship continues to function the way it is now, but I want to be able to be more open with them, to know them more and for them to know me more.

My father's stories contribute to the way I see the world. If I grew up with a regular middle-class upbringing, I probably wouldn't have noticed the real issues that are happening in the world. My dad talks about how, in China, human rights aren’t taken very seriously. People
don’t care about anybody, aside from their own immediate family. Even when I went back in 2008, when I was 13, I could see that people were rude to each other on the street and that it was not a nice space. Going back this past fall reinforced this perception of what China is like. When I think of many issues in Canada that need to be fixed in terms of a feminist lens, they don’t even compare to the issues that are happening in China or the things that my parents have faced in the past.

As my dad told me a lot of his personal stories from the first-person perspective, it helped bridge the disconnection between the harsh upbringing he experienced and my own privileged upbringing. However, it sometimes feels overly factual, like he removes himself from the story. It’s still personal, in that it is about him, but it feels disconnected, as if he were reading from a storybook about someone else’s life. Nonetheless, the stories I received weren’t just negative, they were also positive and they gave me a bit of perspective; they didn’t overemphasize the suffering and weren’t used as a tool to guilt me. When I hear the stories that my father shares, I think to myself, “that would never happen in Canada”. It’s surreal. I don’t know any of these people in his stories and I can’t imagine these people existing. Even though I think I’m a very empathetic person, it’s hard to relate to all these things that have happened to my father because it is completely alien to anything that I would ever see here.

Though I come from a typical Asian upbringing, knowing my parents’ previous lives helps me see them more as complex human beings and not just my parents. This helped me gain insight into their logic when it comes to parenting. I am proud of my parents and their accomplishments. They went through so much and are still okay. I feel truly loved and supported by them. They’re great parents, even though they have flaws—they are human after
all. I appreciate the fact that they came to Canada, sacrificing so much for opportunities for their children. They did it—they won the immigrant struggle to settle here, and that’s amazing.

**Narrative of Lina and Henry’s Sharing**

Presented below is the researcher’s narrative of the dialogue and reflections between Lina and Henry as they shared their stories to each other. The dialogue was video and audio-recorded to capture the nuances of their sharing. It was facilitated by myself and my co-researcher (C. Huang), who helped with language interpretation. This narrative, however, comes from my own reflections and perspective of their sharing. It is a co-constructed experience, in the sense that a space has been created for the participants to dialogue with each other about their stories and the narrative itself is based on the participants’ contributions. Nonetheless, the voice represented here is my own, and my views may not necessarily reflect the participants’ experience of the dialogue. Quotes were selected to reflect the core dimensions of the narrative sharing and the process of “narrative smoothing” (Kim, 2016; Spence, 1986) was employed to provide coherence for the story. The narrative below does not capture all the nuances of the interaction, as the richness of the conversation could never be fully represented in paper form. Further, some parts of this dialogue have been omitted in recognition that the intended audience of the dialogue was that of a father and a daughter. Such omissions are intended to respect their privacy. The final story has been reviewed by the participants to ensure that the included content was consensual. The process of dialogue facilitation follows the format as indicated in the methods section. Lastly, Lina and Henry are referred to according to their relationship titles to highlight the relational dimensions interspersed within the dialogue itself.

**The dialogue between Lina and Henry.** I remember pacing around in the room. It was already set up, and my co-researcher (also interpreter) and I were waiting for the participants. I
was concerned if they would make it on time. The process was nerve-wracking. Maybe they backed out last minute? Would this dialogue be helpful for them? Will they be able to get what they need? How will this change their relationship? I received a text message from Lina—an apology for running behind—I felt a sense of relief.

When they arrived, I met them downstairs, and I remember chatting with the two of them as I brought them to the interview room. This was both familiar and unfamiliar. It was familiar—the same nervousness that reminded me of when I first met them. Yet, they have also become familiar as I have gotten to know them through their stories. It was also unfamiliar. This process of their sharing stories in a constructed setting was unfamiliar. Would they be able to share openly? Would they experience their stories similar to how I experienced them? I desired that the manner of telling would be theirs. It was an opportunity for them to witness each other—perhaps in a similar unfamiliar-familiar way. Though there was preparation to get to this point, there will always remain an unknowingness.

*Henry's sharing.* We arranged the participants to sit across from each other, while the interpreter and I sat parallel facing the side of their faces and directly at the video camera. They both smiled at each other awkwardly, but endearingly, almost as a re-assurance. As we adjusted ourselves in our seats, I explained the process, presented both with an English and a Chinese version of their respective stories, and invited either of them to start first. Henry indicated he wanted to start.

**Fred:** What was it like to prepare for this?
**Father (translated):** Nothing out of the ordinary [*with a smile]*
**Daughter:** My dad loves to tell me stories … it is a little bit different the other way around.
**Father (in English):** I think it is really important to let people know [*directed towards myself*].
As he settled in, I gestured for him to start his story, and he began to speak in Mandarin. I watched as his story unfolded. I became oblivious to the verbal statements, only aware of the non-verbal cues and the words I could pick out that sounded similar to Cantonese—a language I was somewhat familiar with. I trusted that the interpreter would inform me afterwards, and we both knew we did not want to interfere with the sharing process. Our roles were to guide, not to disturb. As he began, he started to aim his story towards me and the interpreter. I wondered about the audience, was this aimed towards us? Does he understand the intention was for him to share his story with his daughter? It was of course an unfamiliar process, a constructed process, however as he continued his story, he began to direct his speaking towards his daughter.

As Henry was sharing, I looked at the attentiveness of her expression. I wondered how much of these stories she had already heard. She was given the English version and was following it. She had mentioned that she understood Mandarin, but there were some words that she was unaware of. I was aware of how often he shared these stories. Was this a repeat of what was known? Was the constructed process taking away from their experience or was it itself an experience that was unique? I watched as she clung onto the words shared by her father and envisioned what it was like for her to listen as she shares so clearly in her own story. She responded on occasion by nodding and responding. Occasionally she would clarify in English.

As he was sharing, I remember having to balance allowing space to share within the time limits. This was part of the constructed process—the story which is so rich would be summarized. Even though an hour and a half were provided to share his story, it was clear there was much more to the story itself. As he was sharing, he began to expand more on each aspect of his story. Though this was appreciated and part of what we had desired, I was worried about whether or not he would be able to complete his story within the allotted time. I interjected at
one point to clarify the time constraint and invited him to share the details afterwards. I was scared that this would limit his sharing. I felt uncomfortable, yet also trusted this event was only one more construction, one moment in their storied lives. Finally, I appreciated that he had gotten into telling his story and I wanted it to continue, to not lose the essence of his telling. He was understanding and continued.

It appeared that he was able to reconnect viscerally with his story. I watched his gesturing as he described paper hats on his head. The animated gesturing helped me understand where he was in his story, but also clear up how the daughter had described his tendencies while telling his story. It seemed he was glossing over much of his story as he began to flip through the pages of his story (later confirmed by the interpreter). I wondered whether key aspects of his story were missing, as I was aware, from previous tellings, that there were some significant emotional moments. I realized there were key moments missing from the story, specifically around his father. I was not sure if he told that part of the story and was worried that, in requesting him to be brief, he may have skipped that significant part. I also knew by voicing my concern, I would be disrupting the process and maybe even shaping the told story. This paternal aspect was a key moment in his story that, through my interpretation, was fundamental to understanding his story. After a moment of hesitation, I asked if he could share about his father and expand. He took a deep breath and gathered his thoughts while looking down. I knew this was part of the co-construction—this prompting might not occur naturally—an intervention. His tone shifted and softened, and he began to speak in a candid and solemn manner about his father.

At the end of Henry’s sharing, I asked him to hear the reflections of his daughter, and then invited the daughter to share about how it impacted her to hear her father’s story in this
setting. I invited her to share in the language that she is comfortable with, and she proceeded to
share in Mandarin.

Daughter (translated): Back in the day it was unfair. . . is it because of the past experiences that
makes you have to be prepared all the time?
Father (translated): During those times my father didn’t have a chance to protect us. We
needed to fend for ourselves. . . we needed to do everything and it was tiring and
exhausting. So, I want to use all my power to help you so that you can make your own
decisions. I want to help you, but I know there are things you need to face on your own.

Fred [directed towards the daughter]: How does this influence how you see your father now
after learning more about his story?

Daughter (translated): Whenever he shares the stories before he would share the content, not
the feelings behind the story. With the feelings, it is more
of a whole story.

Father (translated): I didn’t talk much about my feeling back then. Because, in China, if you
talk about your feelings or emotions that means you have a problem.

As he shared this with his daughter, I was reminded how important it was to be cautious in
Henry’s story. To share emotions was a problem. To share emotions meant you are a problem.

It was unsafe given the circumstances and suspicions that permeated society at the time. This
emotionality was important for the daughter and I felt it was important to expand upon this
reflection.

Fred: When you saw your father being emotional what was it like?

Daughter (translated): Emotions are a good thing, so you are not like a book and just content. I
feel closer (to you) [wiping away a tear]. The most valuable information was knowing
how you felt about it. There is a lot here and most of it I have either heard before or at
least gotten the surrounding information in less detail. I think the most valuable part is
knowing how you felt about it. When you shared the stories before, you shared them
with a smile, but it seemed inconsistent with what was going on. Now it has changed,
knowing how you feel. When you’re worried, it makes more sense now.

Fred: What was it like to tell your story to your daughter?

Father (translated): Sometimes you say you don’t understand me and my friends. I didn’t
really believe you. I was afraid that you would go down the wrong path. I notice that
you read a lot of books and they are important. You are more mature now… [You] have
grown up now and it felt that I was speaking to you as an equal. Before, I was an
authority figure, and now, I am exchanging with you in a more equal level. We can better understand each other now.

**The interpreter:** Since you heard your daughter share about emotions as being important, what did you feel?

**Father (translated):** I feel very touched. There are times I don’t think she understands my intentions or efforts. I made a lot of sacrifices coming to Canada. I left during the “best time” in China, while others usually leave when things get difficult. Knowing each other better is a good thing. As we understand each other more, it is better for us.

As an outside observer, deaf to the language and not part of their relationship, I nevertheless could not help but be impacted by witnessing their dialogue. At that moment, I could only piece together parts of their dialogue, but I was able to understand the desires of both.

For her, the precipice of her desire was to truly know and feel close to her father; for him, it was to be understood, to know that his daughter understood his intentions. Ironically, both of them shared the same desire—a desire to connect, to know and to be known.

**Lina’s sharing.** After a short break. We resettled into the process. As we prepared, we talked about how she would like to share her story.

**Daughter:** In broken Mandarin and English, how I normally speak to my dad

**Fred:** Before we start, how are you feeling?

**Daughter:** I feel good; I don’t think I have ever talked about this stuff in much detail.

We joked about how the father would now have to be the one who listened, and Henry stated, “I understand that she has her own story.”

As she followed the written English story, she started speaking in English and began to shift towards Mandarin. Once again, this was her process, and once again, I was a deaf observer. Occasionally, there were words that made sense: “opportunity”, “thankful”, “stable”, “family unfair”. It was clear this was how she communicated. It was her way of description, in what is
colloquially referred to as “Chinglish”. This was her telling. This was for her dad. This was the way that she wanted to express thoughts to him.

They both had a similar type of humour and understanding, and as I watched her father, it was clear there was a sense of pride in listening to his daughter. I was curious what was going on with him. I was curious if he was thinking about her growing up as she was describing her experience growing up. There were parts of the story that were hard to hear. I was aware there were aspects where she had suffered and was curious how a father would react—would he feel blamed, or would it be an opportunity to communicate and hear. She was aware of this dynamic and, throughout her story, lent an indication of her “gratefulness”.

As she was sharing, she spoke in an animated manner. It was clear the mannerisms that she possessed paralleled her father’s in the indication and pointing. Both during moments that were more theoretical and more emotional, I wondered how he understood, or what were his reflections. I wondered whether he understood what she meant when she mentioned “social justice,” “feminism,” and “intersectional feminism.” These perspectives were important to her, and I could see her desire to have her father understand why she was engaged in these, as well as how important these concepts were to her. It was as if her speech was a passionate plea and a desire to really be known. Hers was also a desire to advocate for herself.

I realize this process itself was also uncomfortable. There is a social hierarchy in Confucian Chinese relationships with the father as the authorial head of the family, and to speak about the mistakes of one’s parents would subvert these social conventions. These difficulties truly highlighted the constructed aspect of this conversation, because the telling and even naming of mistakes could be difficult. I realize the risk of damaging the relationship and the consideration required in order to do so. Part of what made this sharing truly unique was the
opportunity to hear someone—of a different generation—earnestly. The story and even the process served this purpose for them. As she shared, she emphasized some of the current aspects of her narrative, how the narrative had unfolded since taking part in this project, and she emphasized how things had changed so much. Part of her emphasis may serve to protecting the relationship, yet it also names the changes that she has seen.

As Henry neared the end, she shared her desire for greater closeness. It was an important desire for her. She shared how grateful she was for her parents. “I am so proud of you guys; you guys are ok and you are such great parents.” She spoke with tears. Her father looked at her with an endearing smile.

Father (translated): She never told me this before… Chinese culture is very different, there are good things and bad things about the culture. I don’t love Chinese culture. In Chinese history, people are classified in different classes. There are Confucian relationships where there are hierarchies and even though I do not like this, I am still impacted by it. I can understand your pressures—I have my opinions, but you can have yours as well.

Fred (translated): What stood out for you the most?

Father (translated): I hope whatever [my daughters’] concern is that they can talk to [mom and I]. I was upset when you were not eating. I realize that when I was younger, with all my difficulties, it has hardened my heart to understand other people’s difficulties. So, I was not as sensitive to other people’s issues. I didn’t know that sickness [in reference to mental illness] affected you so much. Your mom tried to explain to me the sickness, so I read a lot of books and searched out more about the sickness. I realized that, because of this sickness, she (Lina) might not be able to attend classes or might have to miss school. But there are still a lot of things I still do not understand … I feel very happy to hear from my daughter.

Fred (translated): How do you see your daughter differently now that she has shared this?

Father (translated): She has grown [directed towards the interpreter]. I can only see one side of what I experienced, but today I was able to see you and your feelings on your end [spoken towards his daughter].

Daughter (translated): I understand back in the day you had a lot of stress and pressure, and that was a problem of the country you could not do anything about. Now the pressure on you has gone down, and you have softened.

Father (translated): Now, the pressure has decreased as my daughter has grown up.
Fred (translated): As your daughter has grown up, what are some of your thoughts and feelings?

Father (translated): Her understanding of the world is basically correct; there are a lot of places where there are inequalities [looking towards the interpreter]. You said some things that are really good [looking at his daughter]. There are some things that you might not be able to change, but you are right in having to speak about it. If you do not say your thoughts or feelings about a particular subject, everyone will think that you think the same as everyone else.

Fred: Do you have any last thoughts about what you heard from your dad?

Daughter (translated): I am very happy that we can put the stories together. In the moment, you might say things that are not nice, but the intentions are good. I understand more about that. In the future, if we get into a fight at least we know each other’s intentions.

Father (translated): Don’t “yell” at me (smiling). Before nobody “yells” at me, but now that I am at home everyone “yells” at me (laughing).

In that moment, I felt it was an appropriate acknowledgement of the different ways each had come to know the other’s respectively rooted identity. The threads of their reflections wove together in an unbroken fashion following the father’s first sharing. For Henry, a father’s knowledge of his own biases and historical knowing were being clarified. For Lina, a piecing together of her father’s intentions occurred. The differences in the reflections were clear: Henry responded contextually, providing a broader perspective in his account of self-history before indicating his desired point. For Lina, speech included a shifting perspective, but always directed towards how she sees her father. Perhaps, an explanation can be found in the difference in cultural background. There is some feature about the constructed sharing process more familiar to Lina, who relative to her father comes from an Anglo-perspective. The contextualized sharing that Henry provides may not be what I had expected, but it very much fit his communication—cultural influence notwithstanding. Regardless, what appeared in the interaction was a commitment to know each other. The in-betweenness of their relationship that
played out in this constructed process is a commentary on epistemological reality. It highlights the knowingness present in a desire to understand the other through the stories that are told.

The purposes that sharing stories serves may differ for each person. In a way, the purpose was for advocacy to raise awareness for what happened to Chinese-Canadians for the father. Yet for the daughter, the purpose was not only for self-advocacy, but also a desire for connection. Reflecting upon myself, my purpose was to further the project through their progressive participation. It is interesting to consider how the co-constructed process can wind toward different effects given different intentionalities, whether explicit or not. The interaction, regardless of its purposes, was a shared experience between them—a marker in their lives. I had the privilege to witness a conversation, an intimate conversation between the two of them.

There was a sense of relief at the end of the sharing. Each person had journeyed into a dialogue that was foreign to them, and as researchers we did not know what to expect. We merely set the conditions. Along with relief, both expressed their gratitude for taking part in the study, for having the opportunity to hear from each other. The laughter of the father at the end was normative for their relationship, but also, as I saw it, an acknowledgement of the changing father-daughter dynamic. As for me, I felt a deep sense of privilege. Although I was aware their intended audiences were each other, there were private moments that allowed myself to glimpse into their ever-changing relational narrative.

A reflective dialogue. Afterwards, my interpreter and I gathered to discuss our reflections on the process. We reflected about the balance of facilitation that prioritized the process’ natural unfolding. Specifically, we wondered whether it was helpful to interrupt Henry’s sharing and whether such resulted in too much abridgement: “Was this fully what was to be shared?” We appreciated the relational dynamism of being the father, the change in roles
relative to the daughter that must have made it difficult to share his emotions. We realized the final sharing constituted a shift and an incredible opportunity for his daughter to witness his emotions. His narration included counter-cultural aspects, as referred to by Henry in reference to disliking aspects of Chinese culture. These aspects ostensibly made it difficult to divulge deeply and to share “equally” with emotions, going against aspects of Confucian cultural heritage.

We reflected about how the stories were told. There seemed present to us two modalities of sharing for Henry—a recounting side and an emotional side. The storytelling provided context, a dearth of emotions, and perhaps a way of relating and hearing stories that was normative, while the emotional side was different. We reflected about the dialogue of Henry consisting of broadly informative sharing that would then narrow toward the point shared. We wondered whether this narrativizing was a cultural aspect of dialoguing or unique to Henry. We reflected about the differences in tonality as he was prompted to explore emotions during the sharing, emotions unfamiliar to Henry, yet appreciated by Lina. We appreciated that, despite these moments’ subtlety and brevity, they were profound in the context of their relationship and mutual knowingness.

We contemplated about the courage of Henry and the patience of Lina. It was greatly courageous of Lina to be able to share her story to her father. After all, such narrating was uncommon for her, and some aspects of what she shared were previously unknown to her father. As for Henry, we reflected about his attentiveness and clear desire to see and understand his daughter as he patiently listened to her.

There was one piece that stood out for us, as we reflected about the sharing in the midst of their relationship and their respective story: Henry shared about his attempt to understand his daughter’s “sickness” (in reference to mental health challenges with her eating restrictions).
Lina’s narrative, she was under the impression that her father did not understand. As we watched her expression during the father’s response, we saw surprise on her face, leading us to wondered how that impacted her. It was a piece of the relational narrative that was shifting—a realization that her father did indeed try, a fact not known to her beforehand. Likewise, we reflected about Lina’s acknowledgement of her father and mother during her reflections. The response touched upon a desire of Henry that his intentions would be understood at a tacit level. At an explicit level, there was understanding in that both untold aspects of their respective stories were intentionally grasped and known.

As I reflect on this process, it was truly about shifting the audience of the told story from ourselves as researchers, to each other. I think, to an extent, these goals were accomplished. I have no control over what they will do afterwards and whether or not this work was sufficient. However, I can only hope that they will continue in their dialogue with each other, that they have each other’s stories written down. I hope the written artefacts will be a reference point they can continue to build upon as their stories continue to unfold.

Epilogue. We followed up with the daughter and father about a week after the sharing. Part of this follow-up was for the purpose of ethical care for the participants and to offer an opportunity to debrief. The interpreter chatted with Henry, while I chatted with Lina. Provided is a summary of the dialogue between the two participants during the follow-up.

Henry. Henry expressed an appreciation for being able to take part in the research project. He did not indicate that there were any issues that came up. Instead, he informed us he felt that the whole research process was valuable. Henry felt that taking part has improved communication between him and his daughter; they developed a better understanding of each other. During our conversation, he conveyed that there were some grammatical errors with the
Chinese, but generally he felt the overall narrative represented him. He expressed gratitude for being able to share his story and to inform other people about the experiences he had gone through.

*Lina.* When I discussed with Lina, she relayed that she did not feel there were any difficulties that arose after sharing her story with her father, but instead found it beneficial. Lina felt taking part in the study was part of a change process for her. She was not sure if it was because she was thinking more about her life story or if it was taking part in the research process itself. She found it beneficial for her father. Both her mother and father have made comments about how she has grown as a person. Since participating, she found that both parents have been more permissive of her activities and have become more trusting.

With the research question, she felt that she was able to see how her father’s story has shaped her as a person and was able to see some of the parallels with her own life. Regarding their relational dynamic, she found her father to have slowly changed to be more egalitarian. She expressed an appreciation of how the research process itself was intentional and set enough parameters to be helpful for her. Lina expressed the unnaturalness of creating intentional space to share stories in this manner. Through the study, she was able to understand her father better, including his emotions, and able to express her life experiences to her father.

*Reflection from the lead researcher.* I believe the concluding dialogue between the participants was the cumulative fruit of their undergoing the study. I recall progress even in the second interview with Henry, who indicated that he felt there was a weight lifted. Lina, meanwhile, began to feel her parents were beginning to trust her more. The threads of these narratives interweave as represented in their sharing with each other. Now it is not possible to unravel whether the shifting relational dynamics are due to the dialogue itself or to their taking
part in the whole constructed process that is this research study. What is clear is that we were able to have a glimpse into their lives and a glimpse into their understanding of their relationship, their individual stories, and of their further story of their experience of each other. What a gift it is to be able to share in their work; I feel quite privileged to encounter this as a counsellor and researcher.

**Ms. Leung and Ryan’s Story**

Presented are the stories of both Ms. Leung and Ryan, along with the narrative of them sharing their stories with each other. This section starts with the mother’s and then the son’s story. Afterwards, I present a story of their dialogue from my own perspective and include reflections and a description of the debriefing with the participants a week later. As indicated in Henry and Lina’s (the other family dyad) overview, presenting these stories together illuminates the intergenerational narrative pathway of trauma between the parent and offspring.

**Ms. Leung’s Story: Lessons to my Son**

**Introduction.** Ms. Leung (梁女士 / loeng4 neoi5 si6) is a 51-year-old woman born in the Guangdong province of China and immigrated to Canada in 1999. On the Life Events Checklist-5 (LEC-5), she endorsed experiencing life-threatening illness or injury and enduring very stressful experiences and/or events (see Table 10). Her reasons for immigrating were for the sake of her son and in response to past hardships and uncertainty in China. For her, challenges included experiences before and after immigration. Despite these difficulties, there remains a continued desire to share her life lessons with her son. It is fitting that at the end of her story she shares a letter—a lesson—directed to her son.

During the interview, talking about her life story seemed familiar, despite the unfamiliarity of aspects of the interview, such as its formality and its co-constructive process.
Part of her narrative focuses on her sister-in-law who was kidnapped (see LEC-5 endorsement in Table 10), and a significant portion of time was dedicated to discussing this. Initially, my co-researcher (C. Huang) and I were unsure if her prolonged explanation was because the kidnapping was part of her endorsement on the LEC-5, because of the way in which she constructed her narrative, and/or a cultural difference in storytelling. Regardless of the reasoning, we recognized that the episode was significant for her, given that she wanted to include it in the final draft. This section was understood as part of her narrative identity—it framed her story and gave us a context into understanding her process of construction. Likewise, various relationships are referred to throughout her story, from her son’s father to her grandmother, which highlighted the relational nature of her narrative. This is her story.

**Table 10. LEC-5 Items Endorsed by Ms. Leung**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to</th>
<th>Learned about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captivity</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-threatening illness or injury</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Growing up in China.** There is a Chinese idiom that says 言傳身教 (jin4 cyun4 gyun1 gaau1 / teach by words and deeds).\(^\text{30}\) It means to teach others not only by words, but also by demonstrating it in action, that is, to set up good examples to influence people. My maternal grandmother was that person in my life. She was a kind and well-educated person and had

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\(^{30}\) 言傳身教 (jin4 cyun4 gyun1 gaau1 / teach by words and deeds) – A Chinese idiom similar to the idea of “leading by example” or “teach by example”. It is similar to another idiom 以身作则 (ji5 san1 zok3 zak1) which refers to “setting an example for others and practicing what one preaches” (Jiao, Kubler, & Zhang, 2011).
worked as a teacher, retiring shortly after I was born. My sister and I were raised by grandmother’s words and deeds. Grandma was good with her hands and was kind, gentle, knowledgeable, sincere, and responsible; these virtues became life examples for me and my sister. She inspired me to study, to become educated, and to hang onto my beliefs and interests regardless of being rich or poor (a lot of females were illiterate during that era). Life is never 一帆風順 (jat1 faan4 fung1 seon6 / smooth sailings); it is full of challenges, and we need to learn how to deal with difficulties in a calm manner. I raised my son and taught him the same, that is, to not yield to 命運 (ming6 wan6 / fate) and to never give up! That is the reason I want to share my story.

Though I had experienced all kinds of hardships, paid heavy prices, and sacrificed a lot in the face of all the misfortunes, I persisted in the pursuit of a meaningful life. My adversity not only reminds me how difficult life was, but also makes me think of my sister-in-law (my husband’s fourth sister). We were born in the early 1960s and grew up in the countryside. As with many Chinese compatriots, my sister-in-law and I experienced lots of difficulties. However, we all dealt with those adversities in different ways.

Whenever I think of my sister-in-law, I am saddened and my heart is heavy. I really want to know where she is now and what she is doing, as the life of my sister-in-law is a tragedy. I first met her in 1983, when I first started dating my son’s father. She was two years older than me and was quiet and beautiful, and had big eyes and rosy cheeks. My husband—then boyfriend—and I were in college, and we had been together for two years and loved each other

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31 一帆風順 (jat1 faan4 fung1 seon6) - This is a common saying like a blessing, similar to well-wishes, where one wishes upon another that they would not encounter difficulties or blockages in the future or their lives.
32 命運 (ming6 wan6 / fate) – Common in a Chinese mindset that the decisions that one makes dictates their life. Similar to the idea of bad karma.
very much, but in 1985 my sister-in-law was kidnapped. At the time, she was working in the Water Quality Assessment Department of the water supply company and went to Guangzhou with her colleagues for a business trip. After a few days of working, she spent time with her colleagues in a park in Guangzhou for some leisure. Her colleagues decided to go rafting on the lake, but since my sister-in-law was an introvert and did not know how to swim, she decided to wait for them on the shore alone. When her coworkers came back, they could not find her. Her colleagues eventually informed my husband’s family that she was missing. The whole family was very anxious. They rushed to Guangzhou and frantically searched for her day and night, but it was in vain. After a few days of searching, they decided to report it to the police and posted advertisements in major newspapers. Yet, she was gone. I still recalled I was quite scared as we were similar in age; I was afraid something similar would happen to me as well.

About forty days later, my sister-in-law's family suddenly received a phone call, and was informed that she was kidnapped. The family received a demand for 60,000 yuan in ransom in order to release my sister-in-law. According to the standard of living and income level at that time, 60,000 yuan was a huge amount. Despite knowing the demand from the kidnappers, it was a relief for the family, as they knew my sister-in-law was alive. The family decided to discuss the whole issue with my uncle (father’s brother) and asked for his help. My uncle worked for the 公安 (gung1 on1 / the public security bureau) in the Guangzhou public department and had an essential position there. 33 As he worked in the political and legal system, he managed to have personal connections. My uncle immediately connected with some of the significant people in

33 公安 (gung1 on1 / the public security bureau) – The Chinese public security bureau which is a government office that is similar in function to a police station.
the department, and caused the attention of Public Security Police to focus on a blanket search of my sister-in-law. This vigorous act might have alerted the kidnappers. Eventually, the kidnappers drove my sister-in-law, who was blindfolded, to the campus of Zhongshan University in Guangzhou where my husband was studying. Amazingly, the kidnappers released my sister-in-law without demanding any ransom money. Immediately, my husband’s siblings took my sister-in-law home. After she returned home, she did not mention anything about how she was captured or the kidnapping event. We did not dare to ask her for fear that further questioning might provoke her emotion.

A few days later, she cried as she described her difficult experience. She recalled two middle-aged women by the lake informed her that her colleagues had already gone to the restaurant. When she asked where the restaurant was, the two women offered to take her there. She was too simple-minded and, without giving a second thought, she simply followed them. When she woke up, she realized she was locked in a house in the outskirts. There were no windows and she was not able to see sunlight all day. In the house, there was a big wooden barrel for her to pass urine and stool. Within the same room, there were another six young women who were locked up like her. Daily meals were delivered through a small window. She could not distinguish between day and night when she was locked in that room without windows.

I was scared and horrified when I heard of this—心里一直有陰影 (sam1 leoi5 jat1 zik6 jau5 jam1 jing2 / a shadow was casted upon my heart). The incident affected her whole family and changed her life and 命運 (ming6 wan6 / fate). Since then, she closed herself up and did not

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34 心里一直有陰影 (sam1 leoi5 jat1 zik6 jau5 jam1 jing2) – Direct translation means cast an unfading shadow on my heart. The meaning however refers to an extreme anxiety and fear, the idea that this fear or trauma can never be erased.
want to eat and talk with her family. She was by herself all day in her room and was no longer motivated to go to work. She was reluctant to date; even when we attempted to introduce people to her, she simply refused.

At that time, we never thought she may have suffered from mental illness. The condition of my sister-in-law was so severe that she often complained of seeing, hearing, smelling, or feeling things that did not exist outside her mind (e.g. she complained the house was filled with toxic air, and felt that someone was trying to kill her). My husband and his siblings had attempted to take her to the hospital to consult a psychiatrist. However, she refused to take any medication and denied that she was sick. She even accused us of not trusting and respecting her. She expressed that she simply did not want to go back home to the 鄉下 (hoeng1 haa6 / countryside) and emphasized that she was not sick. She then rented a room in the suburbs of Shenzhen and stayed there. We managed to give her a cell phone for connection. My husband always came from Hong Kong to visit her and took her out for meals. He even paid her rent for a whole year. Unfortunately, about six months later, she could no longer be reached by cell phone. We went to the place she rented and she was no longer living there. We only saw the windows sealed up with tape. She had gone missing. We felt very helpless and sad as we had not heard any news from her for four to five years. It is sad that the kidnapping ruined the life of this young and beautiful woman! I still dream of her and feel sad for her tragic life.

Childhood. I was born in 1965 right before the Cultural Revolution in Chaozhou. The whole country was a mess. I don’t think my parents suffered during that time, but I remember when I was really young my parents were never home at night, as they had to attend classes that taught them communist values. They would work all day and go to meetings at night. Sometimes I would fall asleep before they got home. They were very busy, and I didn’t get to
see them much as I was growing up. My childhood was different, because we were part of the
Sixties and people’s thinking and ideology were very simple: do whatever you are told and don’t say no.

As a child, I was very lonely. I remember feeling scared whenever the sky got dark. Back then, China was very underdeveloped. We didn’t have a washing machine, nor did we have faucets or running water. We had to draw water from the well or from the river, and as a young girl I was in charge of getting the water because my parents worked all the time. Drawing buckets of water from the well was very heavy for a child and it was sometimes heavier than myself. My sister, who was a year older, was in charge of washing the clothes. She would get up really early before school to go to the river to wash the clothes. If she was late, there would be no spots left at the river.

After school, I would go fetch the water with two buckets. The water was very dirty, so you needed to get water from the middle of the river where it was cleaner. I would pull up my pants really high and walk to the middle. One time, when I was walking, my whole body fell into the river. I didn’t know how to swim, and I almost drowned, but luckily there was a man who pulled me out. I remember crying afterwards and went home with two empty buckets. I was really scared. This left a terrifying memory. When I got older, I would have nightmares about falling into the river or the well. Even after all these years, I would dream of my childhood. I never dreamt about the happy times growing up, only sad and heart wrenching moments.
Back then, everyone was poor. Growing up in Chaozhou, which was a third-tier city, meant that our city had less resources and opportunities than a first-tier city such as Beijing.\textsuperscript{35} It was common back then to pick up pig feces on the streets and alleys to sell to the farmers. As children, if we saw feces, we would be really happy and would use a sweep pan to pick up the feces and collect them into a pile. The farmers relied on feces and urine as fertilizer and would pay for the excrement. We would even collect our own urine in a urine bin. As a whole family, we would urinate into the bin and sell it for 2 分 (fan) to the farmers.\textsuperscript{36} Our home was smelly, but at least we could make some additional money. It’s ironic: when I was young, children would be happy when they saw feces; now, when people see feces, they think it’s disgusting.

I remember receiving an egg for my birthday, which was fortunate, because other children might not even get that for their birthdays. As children, we didn’t have toys either. For entertainment, we would collect rocks from the ground and play with them. Our households didn’t have a washroom, so if we needed to go to the washroom, we had to use a public washroom that was far away. The public washroom back then wasn’t like the ones now where you can sit on it; instead, it was a very deep feces hole that you had to squat to use. It was terrifying, and as a child, I was really afraid of falling in. Even as an adult, I have nightmares of falling into the hole.

Pork was such a luxury back then. Even if you had the money, you could not buy it. There was no supermarket where you could conveniently purchase it; it was rationed out, and if

\textsuperscript{35} The city classification tier system was originally a bureaucratic ranking system used to differentiate cities according to population and priorities. As part of China’s economic strategy, first-tier cities are prioritized for disbursing fiscal resources, whereas third tier cities are lower in the development priorities. Generally, lower ranking city receive less resources (Chan, 2009).

\textsuperscript{36} 分(fēn) - 1 分 = 1/100 of a Yuan (元)
it sold out, there would be no more available. Back then, each family was given 粮票 (loeng4 piu3 / ration stamps) and pork could only be bought with these stamps. So, early in the morning before school, I would line up to buy pork for my family. If we were lucky, we could get fatty pork, which could be fried up and used to cook vegetables and steam fish. As it was so scarce, it would be such a luxury to scoop a piece of pig fat onto rice with soy sauce. It would taste so good! A simple meal like that would make us very happy.

Thankfully, my parents had jobs that meant that we could go to school. Though everyone was impoverished, we were more fortunate than others because my parents were accountants for factories and had completed high school. A lot of people couldn’t go to school or afford paying for supplies to go to school. Many children around my age, especially the girls, didn’t have a chance to go to school. Typically, families would only support boys to go to school because of their financial limitations. As we were more well off, my neighbour’s daughter would often come by to “borrow” rice. After my parents went off to work, she would bring big cups and borrow two cups of rice and would only bring back a small cup of rice in return. We had enough rice to feed ourselves, but my neighbors did not. Sometimes during dinner, our neighbors’ children would stand by our front door and watch us eat. I remember seeing the desperate looks on their faces as they drooled. I felt so sad for them, but I also knew that we barely had enough for ourselves. We were better off, but we were not rich.

Our neighbour had two daughters and the older one was about my age. She never got an education, so she was illiterate, but we used to play together as kids. About ten years ago, when I returned to visit the country side, I found out that her younger sister had committed suicide. I was very surprised, because she was married and had kids. I was told that she walked into the river and drowned herself. Suicide was very common. I had a classmate who hung herself to
death. She was married and had a daughter, but one day she had an argument with her husband and she killed herself. A lot of my comrades and classmates had difficult childhood experiences. All of us had gone through hardships as children, even if it was different for some. These experiences affected us all—our thoughts, beliefs, and values. I am not surprised by the suicides, but I also realize I am pretty fortunate that I did not die then.

The nightmares of falling into the well and into the feces hole remind me of how grim my childhood was and how 辛苦 (san1 fu2 / difficult) life was.37 I didn’t have many things as a child. I didn’t see happiness. The nightmares reminded me of how my parents used to discipline me; they used to hit me and threatened to throw me into the well. I was afraid of my parents, because they were very strict and, though I could talk to them, I would not discuss personal or difficult matters with them. I now know that they didn’t know better. They didn’t know any other way to discipline. Even as an adult, when I talk to my parents about these incidents, they don’t remember them. Now that I’m older, I realize that I needed to be a good child to my parents back then.

My grandma. I think the most fortunate thing for me was staying with my maternal grandparents when I was younger. My grandparents were very progressive for their generation. Both of them were educated and came from affluent families. Even back then, my grandma told me, “If you have a daughter, you need to give her an education so she can be independent.” She had a significant impact on my life. She was the one I talked with about personal or difficult topics. I could ask her about anything if I didn’t understand it. She was an elementary teacher and she taught and inspired me to learn many things, like how to knit, make flowers, and fish. In

37辛苦 (san1 fu2) - Along with difficult, this term can also refer to laborious or exhausting.
the past, girls don’t usually have opportunities to get an education, but my grandma did. She was the daughter of a relatively wealthy family and received private education. She was multi-talented: she made delicious food, sewed flowers, made clothes, and even made me nice dresses and clothes when I was young. I remember being complimented by others about the new clothes she made for me. We would read books together and she would tell me stories and teach me life lessons. She was so kind to me. She cared deeply for me.

My grandma taught me that it was okay to be a girl because I once thought it was unfortunate to be a girl. In the village, baby girls were sometimes killed after birth. It was not that baby girls in general were being killed off, but if a family had no boys and more than one girl, they might feel they were in a disadvantaged situation. Therefore, they might kill the next child if she was a girl. It was sometimes out of necessity. People didn’t have money for abortions, or else they may not be able to afford having another child. My father’s older brother and his wife who were farmers had a baby girl, whom they ended up drowning in the urine bin that was used to sell to farmers. I heard and saw this happen to others because it was the easiest way to kill a baby.

Back then people didn’t value girls the same as they did boys. Boys were expected to take care of their parents when they got older; girls, when they get married, were part of their in-law’s family and were not expected to be responsible for their own biological parents. Especially among people in the countryside, there was a fear that, if they did not give birth to a

38 Back in traditional Chinese culture, having a son meant that he would be expected to take care of his parents when they got older. This was not the case for girls, as they would be part of their in-law family when they were married. Culturally and economically, it was more beneficial to have a boy. This was a more common mindset back then for those who were illiterate or were peasants, though the mentality persists and pervades the whole of Chinese culture (according to the participant).
boy, then no one would take care of them when they were older. This was a legitimate concern because there was no such thing as pensions or social security back then. It was tradition for parents to be taken care of by their children. As this was the culture and economic situation that I grew up in, my grandma taught me that as a girl I needed to get an education. So, when I was young, I said to myself, “I need to be educated and learn lots of things.”

During the Cultural Revolution, my grandma was captured and was imprisoned for two years. This happened because she was wearing a very nice pair of foreign leather shoes that she received from her brother. At that time, most shoes were made out of fabric in China, not leather, so it was easy for people to identify her shoes as being foreign. As the Communist regime promoted equality, it was expected that everyone had to dress the same. It was distasteful and wrong to show your wealth, for if you had wealth you should have given it away. They accused her of showing off her wealth and desiring foreign goods, then imprisoned her. My grandma suffered a lot of reprimands from the country. It was wrong what happened to her. However, through her hardships, she taught me what she learned from her experience.

My grandma taught me how to take care of myself and what it meant to be a woman. She told me, “You need to get an education. Don’t be scared; girls with an education, with insight, can leave here and see what’s out there for them.” For her, it was not only important to be educated, but also to be handy, to be able to cook, and to be able to take care of the family—that way, I could get married and would not be looked down upon. If I didn’t have a job and didn’t know anything, then I would just be a farmer and people would think that I am not of worth.

My grandma instilled in me a sense of self-worth, and she taught me that with an education I would be able to leave the village. So, from the village, I needed to walk out to the
city to change my 户口 (wu6 hau2 / household registration). 39 I attended high school in Chaozhou, where very few girls attended school at that time, and I took a test at the end of the year to get into post-secondary. I ended up getting into post-secondary in Guangzhou and moved there for school, which also meant I could convert my 户口 (wu6 hau2 / household registration) from Chaozhou over to Guangzhou. If it were not for my grandma’s lessons, if I didn’t persevere, I would probably still be in the village at home just taking care of kids and cooking.

**Deciding to move to Canada.** I got married in 1989 and had my son a year after in Guangzhou. After I graduated, I worked in a hospital. I was very young, but I felt that my job was good and comfortable. I was proud of myself, because I competed for it, but it was also very辛苦 (san1 fu2 / difficult / laborious / exhausting). I was a hard worker and I wanted to work well, but I felt the workplace was unfair. People were constantly scrutinizing me and analyzing my social connections. They plotted against me and would say things about me that were untrue. My workplace would end up pressuring me to work more and work harder. Others were scrutinized as well because no one trusted each other. They were only looking out for themselves.

In 1991, a year after my son was born, I was pregnant again. This was unexpected, because back then after you gave birth the first time, you had to wear a contraceptive coil to prevent you from having another child. I really loved children and I wanted to give birth, but

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39 户口 (wu6 hau2 / hukou / household registration) – the hukou system regulates internal movements of its citizens. It is a household registration required by law that determines where citizens are allowed to live. Originally developed as a system for collecting statistics, in the 1950s it was used as a way to plan and control macroscopic and microscopic facets of a society and its economy. There are multiple hukou classifications determining certain privileges for the individual. One’s hukou status remains unchanged regardless of where a person moves, unless they go through a formal hukou conversion (Chan, 2009).
there was the One Child Policy in China. If I were to give birth, I would be fired and criticized. When I tested positive for pregnancy, my employer found out, and then people at my workplace tried to force me to have an induced abortion. They wanted me to perform a dilation and curettage.

Every organization had a government department that specialized in implementing, regulating, and policing employees to ensure that no one was breaking the rules. Once they found out that someone was pregnant, they would take action to reinforce the rule and make the woman have an abortion. They did not care which trimester you were in; even if the woman was in her third trimester, she would be forced to have an abortion. If the child was born illegally, they would not be granted an identity. Also, hospitals would not assist in the birthing process if they knew that the mother already had another child.

The people from this department would show up at my workplace and ask me when I would have an abortion. They told me I couldn’t get pregnant again and informed the 区委 (keoi1 wai2 / district committee), because their job was to check on people in the community. They knew where I lived and monitored when I walked in and out of my apartment to see if I was still pregnant. Whenever I went in and out of my apartment, they would try to find me and harass me. Every day at work, I would be asked about getting an abortion and when I got home there would be people waiting to ask me the same question; every day, I would tell them I am not ready yet and go home and cry because I wanted to have this child.

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40 The One-Child Family Policy was introduced in 1979 as a strict population containment strategy that was part of economic reform and improving standards of living (Hesketh, Lu, & Xing, 2005).
I told my husband that I wanted to give birth, but he told me we couldn’t, because I would lose my job and affect his job as well. I kept on waiting, hoping for some sort of solution or compromise. I waited and waited. Eventually, I was told that I could not work anymore and only after I had the abortion would I have my job back. They told me that if I wanted to have a child, I needed to sign the Family Planning Permission card, otherwise they would force me to have the abortion. They would kill the baby in my womb. After fifty days, I got the abortion.

My son also had some challenges; he suffered some harm at school. One time, I forgot to bring his red neck tie, and they prevented him from going into the school because he didn’t have his proper uniform on. He was really afraid and had to walk to my hospital, which was close to the school, to look for me by himself. He told me “Mom, they won’t let me go in,” but because I had to work and take care of patients, I wasn’t able to help him. It was not right how they treated my child. This event hurt him and it reminded me of how unfair the society in China was.

When my son was six or so, a student about my son’s age got kidnapped right in front of their school. When I heard this, I became very scared that my son would get kidnapped too. It reminded me of what happened to my sister-in-law. My son’s father was working in Hong Kong at the time because he was sent there by his workplace a year after we were married. He couldn’t be by my side. It was only me, my son, and the nanny. It made me feel unsafe to be in China. I felt 緊張 (gan2 zoeng1 nervous or tense) and stressed and I had difficulty breathing. I couldn’t sleep. Every day there would be a feeling of mounting pressure—I was alone, I was

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41 The family planning permission card is part of China’s strategy for managing population and is associated with the one-child policy. There are broad social impacts of the one-child policy and significant debate on the ethics of this policy (Jiang, Li, & Feldman, 2013).
42 緊張 (gan2 zoeng1 nervous or tense) – Can mean nervous, tense, or strained.
scared that my son would get kidnapped, my husband was away, and I had to take care of my son and maintain a full-time job in a stressful work environment.

The pressure affected my health. It affected my heart and my joints started hurting to the point where I could not walk. I would have to take deep breaths in order to breathe better. I had no strength. I ended up staying in the hospital because of stress and was in the hospital quite often. Eventually I saw a specialist and was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis possibly induced by my heart condition and I needed to take shots, painkillers, and medication. After three years of taking this medication, I found out from the newspaper that the drugs I was taking was fake and would not help with my sickness. I remember I almost fainted; I broke down crying. I could not believe the pharmaceutical company was producing this drug and falsely advertised its legitimacy. It was so unethical! I had taken these pills for 3 years, 3 times a day, and there could have been huge repercussions.

There was also a situation with my son’s father’s work that made me realize again how unfair the Chinese government was. At the time, my son’s father worked for the Chinese government importing/exporting of pharmaceutical ingredients. When he was in Hong Kong, he did business with someone who got caught for cheating someone else of their money. People from the 公安 (gung1 ngon1 / Chinese public security bureau) wanted to arrest my husband because of his association. Back then if anyone was suspected of doing something illegal, the authority would put you in prison without a trial and force you to disclose everything. Even then, if you were wrongly accused, you weren’t allowed to appeal. Lots of people were wrongly accused and, at times, even wrongly given the death sentence. The situation was so bad that my son’s father wouldn’t dare come home. I had to find someone of a higher authority to help. Eventually I found someone from the Shenzhen city government who offered to be the guarantor
for my son’s father. The whole ordeal lasted for six months, but it made me even more 緊張 (gan2 zoeng1/ nervous or tense) about what could happen to my family.

The accumulation of these events made us decide to leave. After all these experiences, I felt anxious, and I couldn’t sleep. The air in China was no good, the state was unfair, and I felt unsafe. It was enough to convince me that it was unsafe to stay in China. We had to leave.

In a Foreign Land. When I immigrated to Canada, I was unfamiliar with the environment and 不適應 (bat1 sik1 jing3 / couldn’t get used to it / not well suited). My son’s father had to go back to Hong Kong to work and was only here for the first ten days. My son was young, didn’t know English, and was only eight, and I had to take care of him alone, as we didn’t have any friends or relatives. I felt that I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t take care of him; I couldn’t take care of myself; I couldn’t do anything. I was very anxious and I had to take deep breaths in order to breathe better. I ended up calling my relatives. I didn’t want my parents to worry, but once I picked up the phone, I couldn’t speak; I just kept crying. My parents told me to come back, but I couldn’t because my son wanted to stay. I felt so 慘 (caam2 / pitiful /awful). I said to my son, “Mom can’t get used to this lifestyle. I feel very exhausted and it’s hard here,” but my son told me to slowly get use to it. He didn’t like Guangzhou, and he had some negative school experiences, so I said to myself that I needed to stay to support my son’s growth. I needed to learn how to survive.

It was scary learning to get around in Canada. I didn’t know the roads and the language. There was no GPS back then, and I didn’t know the difference between East, South, West, or North. There was one incident where I nearly got into a car accident with a pickup truck. I had stopped at an intersection and the driver of the truck yelled at me. I didn’t understand him. I said sorry, but he looked like he wanted to hit me. I kept saying sorry, then he kicked my car. At
the time, I bought a Mercedes Benz, thinking that it would keep me safe. I didn’t drive for many
days, because I was afraid that I might die from a car accident. I remember my son’s father
saying that he would buy me an even bigger car so that if I ever got into an accident I would not
get hurt. I couldn’t sleep, and I was already very anxious. My mental health worsened. I would
get sick from my anxiety, and I wouldn’t know what to do about it. I would tell my husband, “I
can’t live.” He told me to come back, but I didn’t want to leave because of my son.

**Miscarriages.** I had three miscarriages. The first one was when my son’s father came to
visit for about a month after my son and I had lived in Canada for half a year. We went to visit
my sister in California and brought my son to Disneyland. I thought I was pregnant at the time,
but when we got back, I realized I had a miscarriage. I wanted to have another baby, but I lost
the baby. I couldn’t keep it. I just kept bleeding and bleeding, I begged the doctor to stop the
bleeding to save my baby, but because it was a natural miscarriage, I bled for about ten days. I
was so distraught to lose another baby.

In 1999, I had another miscarriage, and two years later, I had one more miscarriage.
During the third miscarriage, I was quite worried about my family because my son’s paternal
grandfather had passed away from a stroke. I was pregnant, but I was alone and no one took care
of me. I ended up having a miscarriage. I really wanted another baby. I didn’t want my son to
be alone and I wanted him to have another family member. I was dealing with severe
depression. When I slept, I would have nightmares of having a baby with deformities, with no
hands or feet. The babies could not be saved, and I felt that there was no way I could have
another.

During Christmas of 2002, I noticed that I missed my period and I told my husband that I
might be pregnant again. We were in Hong Kong at the time and had tickets to go back to
Canada for Christmas Eve. I got a pregnancy test and confirmed that I was pregnant again. My husband wanted me to go back to Canada, but I didn’t want to go because no one would be there to support me with the pregnancy. I was scared that I would have another miscarriage. We ended up making arrangements for me to go back to Guangzhou to the hospital where I used to work at. I ended up staying there, by myself, in bed for the next three months for my first trimester. I wanted to make sure I was taken care of to prevent another miscarriage, and the plan was to return to Canada after the first trimester.

During my stay, there was a SARS outbreak, and it started in the hospital that I was at. I was really scared; I knew I had to go back to Vancouver where my son and my husband were at. Because of the outbreak, my co-workers told me I’d better leave quickly. It was chaotic in the hospital, and I was so scared. I didn’t want to get infected, because it was everywhere. To make sure I got to Hong Kong safely, my co-worker’s friend drove me from Guangzhou to Hong Kong for my flight to Vancouver. He was going to leave the next day, but then he developed a fever and diarrhea and was constantly vomiting. I thought, “Oh no, he might have SARS.” I was really scared. I went to the hospital with him in the middle of the night in Hong Kong. Afterwards, we went to the emergency, and I called my god-brother to take him back to Guangzhou because I needed to leave the next day to Canada.

Not too long after I got on board the plane, I started to have diarrhea and vomiting. This continued for over ten hours, without stopping. The flight attendants were very concerned and contacted the staff on the ground. They told them that they could not help relieve my symptoms and, because I was also pregnant, they were afraid of any complications. They were really nervous because they thought I might have SARS. After over ten hours of vomiting and having diarrhea, I couldn’t even walk off the plane. I needed a wheelchair, to be pushed out. Before I
boarded the plane, I talked to my husband, and he thought everything was fine. But when he came to pick me up at the airport and saw the flight attendant pushing me out, his face turned white with fear. I went straight to the hospital afterwards.

They sent me to the emergency room at Vancouver General Hospital. Once they heard that I had come back from China, the staff were extremely intense and nervous. It was a big incident and there were a lot of police. They wanted to know what was wrong, so they drew a lot of blood. Because of the symptoms on the plane, I was afraid it would affect the baby, and they were afraid that I might have SARS. I was so worried I couldn’t breathe. When results came out, they found out that it wasn’t SARS, and we were able to go back home. Finally, I let out a sigh of relief.

At that point, the baby was three months in my womb and I needed to do checkups. They wanted to draw amniotic fluid during the twenty-second week, but I refused. I suffered this much; I didn’t want to take any more risks for the baby. I knew that it was a high-risk pregnancy because I was thirty-nine and had three miscarriages, but I didn’t want the doctor to draw amniotic fluid and make me risk losing the baby. I told the doctors that I didn’t agree, so they told me that they were afraid the baby might have Downs Syndrome. With high-risk pregnancy, they were afraid that the baby would come out with abnormalities. So, since the first day that I was pregnant, it was very difficult for me. In the end, the doctor told me to just get a blood test.

At twenty-three or four or weeks, I was told to get an ultrasound. During the ultrasound, they saw something abnormal: there was a light and I knew what that meant because of my previous experience. The light was on the heart and brain, which meant that there might have been something wrong with those areas. After I saw that, I couldn’t eat and I couldn’t sleep. My husband told me to listen to the doctors and give up on the baby. If I gave birth to the baby, it
might be unhealthy and have Downs Syndrome. I told him, “No, we can’t; I won’t give up. I would rather trade my life for his. I can’t have another abortion.” For this many years, I really wanted to conceive a baby, but every time I planned it out, it did not happen. I did not want to lose another. Even if he was disabled, I would take care of him and nurse him. Afterwards, the doctor gave us no other choice but to draw amniotic fluid. I agreed. I did not have a miscarriage; the baby was still in my womb. I remember waiting for the results for about one or two weeks, where I couldn’t eat and I couldn’t sleep. Every day, I worried and waited. When we got the call, they said the baby was okay and everything was normal. I was so happy I cried. We were finally able to have a baby and, in August 2003, my second son was born.

My mental health and regret. The birth of my second son had a huge cost for me and my family. During that pregnancy, my emotional and mental state was not good, so my husband was always with me to take care of me. He neglected his job and lost his business; we lost finances and business relationships. There were so many losses. All the experiences I went through caused me to develop depression. I didn’t know that I would not have the energy to take care of my newborn after his birth. I was worried that I wouldn’t be able to raise him. I was exhausted and spent. Every day, I was with a crying baby. I thought that my husband found me annoying. I was constantly worrying and didn’t have energy to care for my newborn. I began to think to myself, “living is so tough, I don’t want to live anymore.” I wanted to die. I thought about suicide a lot. My first son was about thirteen-years old. I didn’t think he knew that I was suicidal. I believed that he attributed my tiredness and not being present to being exhausted from caring for the newborn.

When my first son was in high school, he also had depression, but I didn’t know. I thought he was being rebellious. I didn’t feel good about myself, so I would scold him. I
immigrated here, gave up so much, lost my job, and lost my business. I used to have my own business selling masks to the hospital and was making a lot of money, but in the end, we had nothing. I felt bad about myself.

When I think back about it, I regretted choosing this path of immigration. If I was in Guangzhou maybe 命運 (ming6 wan6 / fate) would have been different. In the last couple of years, because of immigration, my husband and I were always apart from each other, and our relationship and feelings became bland. We went from classmates who loved each other to now being separated. The worst part about this is that both of my sons have depression, and as a mother, I felt very remorseful because I couldn’t give my sons happiness.

I often think about what was lost because of immigration. I had to leave my parents for ten to twenty years, and now my mom has cancer. My parents took care of me, but as they got older, I wasn’t able to be by their side to take care of them. It breaks my heart. If I was in the country, I would only need two hours to go visit them. Now, I can only go back once a year. If I was still in Guangzhou working in the hospital and running my business, I would have retired by now. In these past ten to twenty years, the economy in Guangzhou has been much better. Back then, before I left, I bought some homes and they were really cheap; now the homes are worth about $1,000,000, but it turns out that I still have to work and struggle.

This immigration journey has been a tough walk. I was by myself, and any obstacles that came my way I had to solve on my own. I regret this decision, but I don’t at the same time. Sometimes, you win some and you lose some. We lost finances because of immigration, but we got a son, which you cannot buy; we lost business relationships, but we gained a renewed relationship with my first son. Money can’t always buy happiness. I lost material goods, but I
gained relationships. Though there were many losses, I can’t go back to the past. More importantly, I need to focus on the future; I just want my sons to be free and happy.

**A Letter to My Son**

My experiences made me become nervous and have affected me mentally. Maybe, when you were younger, you might have been impacted by this. I gave you pressure because you were my one hope. I gave up so much. I wanted you to be a smart boy, so I forced you to learn. I think part of my desire for you to learn was because when I was young, I always wanted to learn different things, but I didn’t have the chance to. I had a lot of interests, like calligraphy, but never had the opportunity to learn. So, when you were born, I wanted you to learn everything, and I wanted to give you everything that I missed out on when I was a child. I ended up giving you a lot of pressure because I wanted you to do everything that I couldn’t. Growing up, I would tell you that you were very fortunate because I could give you so many things to learn, but at the same time, I was very strict and had high expectations. I remember when you were learning to play violin, you had to spend two hours a day practicing, and if you didn’t, I would hit your hands. It was wrong of me to do that. I think maybe, when I compared you to my life’s experiences, I thought you were very lucky, and I wanted you to seize the opportunities.

When I got here, my life journey was still very long. Whenever I encountered any hardships, I learned how to stay strong. For many years, you asked me why I didn’t leave you by yourself in Canada like all the other Chinese immigrants. That is because I gave birth to you; you are a piece of me. I need to watch you grow and I needed to be by your side. You are a

43 This letter was co-constructed during the interview process with the participant and was intended for her first son (Ryan).
good son. When you graduated from high school, you hugged me and said, “Thank you for eighteen years of support in Canada.” I am sorry that you lost a lot: your golden period, your youth. I am sorry that you were separated from dad and that you didn’t have a normal life. I hope you can have the ability to survive in society, to be a competent person. Whether you are happy or not, I will always be by your side to support you. I didn’t leave you alone, because I wanted to give you a sense of family here. If I was here, then family was here; if I was not here, then family was not here. If you run into something unhappy, if you turn around, mom will be standing behind you. I will always support you. Whenever you come home, I will have a bed for you to sleep and 热饭 (jit6 faan6 / a hot bowl of rice) for you to eat. I have lost a lot, but I keep telling myself that I need to be strong. I need to continue to live to see my children grow.

My son, the Chinese have a saying: “言传身教 (jyun4 cyun4 san1 gaau3 / teach by words and deeds).” It is a very important saying that my grandma taught me. I want to teach you through my actions and with my life as an example. Traditionally, you need to be obedient and respect your family and parents. If you run into problems in your life, I can be strong and be here for you, because I have experienced so much of my grandma’s support. So, you need to give yourself confidence. No one can bring you down. No matter what you face, if you’re sad or if you fail, you can get up and start all over. This is very important in one’s life. If you fall, don’t be afraid, you need to get up and not stay down. No matter if you are good or bad, as your mom, I will forgive you. I will always forgive you, because you are my son. As long as you are

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44 热饭 (jit6 faan6 / a hot bowl of rice) – the literal translation means a hot bowl of rice, but idiomatically refers to having a hot meal ready. Rice is often associated with meals given, in that it is the main food staple in China.
healthy, even if you don’t do well in school, even if you are sick, even if you fail, in life there are chances to start again.

I am most worried about you losing your life. You need to know that you can’t lose your life. This is when you lose everything. If you go astray, if you fall down, you can get back up. Promise me, don’t give up on yourself. I tried to commit suicide, but you can’t. You need to promise me. Be strong. Live life. Stay alive. No matter what happens, we can face it together. No matter what, you are my son.

**Ryan Story: Traces of History and Diasporic Identities**

**Introduction.** Ryan is a twenty-six-year-old male, who identifies his mother and father as carrying psychological trauma. Ryan was born in the Guangdong province and immigrated to Canada when he was ten years old. Based on the LEC-5, he endorses that his mother learned about sexual assault and other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experiences (see Table 11). However, during the pre-interview, Ryan confirmed that he believed his mother had gone through traumatic experiences in the form of poverty as a child despite not endorsing it on the LEC-5.

Ryan’s story illustrates the impact of the post-migratory difficulties of his parents as he grew up in Canada. Underlying these post-migratory difficulties are his family’s past traumas, patriarchal attitudes, and costs associated with pursuing economic privilege. These difficulties caught up to his family after their migration and could not be completely precluded from their lives even though they moved to a different country. He identifies these difficulties as insecurities that contribute to his own insecurities in his familial and self-constituted identity. From stability to instability, to a redefinition of relationship and self—this is his story.
Table 11. LEC-5 Items Endorsed by Ryan (of His Mother’s Traumas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Learned about it</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault (rape, attempted rape, made to perform any type of sexual act through force or threat of harm)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Immigrating to Canada.** Before coming to Canada, my childhood was blissful. Though I was born in Guangzhou, the rest of my family was from Chaozhou. When I was growing up, the Canton region was the richest place in China. I realize I was very lucky that my family was able to catch on to this wave of economic prosperity. The mindset of my family at the time can be best summed up by what my mom said to me early on, “When everyone else is riding a bicycle, I am riding a motorcycle; when everyone else is riding a motorcycle, I’m driving a car.” They had this sense that they were part of the emerging Chinese elite—that they were pursuing more.

Before the age of five, I was living with my maternal grandparents, and afterwards, I was mainly raised by my nanny. Though I was well taken care of by the nanny and continued to have a relationship with my grandparents, I remember I would miss my mom—a lot. My mom was much more involved than my dad. She would take me to all these lessons like music, Chinese calligraphy, and 相声 (xiàng shēng), the Chinese version of stand up. She was also very involved in my education. Back then, there would be so much homework in elementary school, and I would not be able to finish it unless my mom helped me.

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45 相声 (xiàng shēng) – Mandarin or Hányǔ Pinyin, meaning Crosstalk, a comic dialogue
From my understanding, my mom worked full time as a nurse technician, and her job was to check for breast cancer. I got to see her everyday at work after school, because my school was next to her hospital. I would just hangout in the clinic, she’d buy me 鸡腿 (gai1 bei2, chicken drumsticks), and I would do my homework after eating. My father was never home, because he worked in Hong Kong, and he would be around once a month or a few times a year. I think we were the satellite family before it became a thing, except it was in China and not overseas.

Growing up, I thought my dad was great. I did not have a very textured conception of him; in my eyes, he was a very successful man and, in that context, he was.

In China, I lived a very privileged life and could afford things that other kids could not. I remember, in elementary, I invited two of my classmates to McDonalds for my sixth birthday and was accused of being bourgeois by my teacher. Turns out, they told their parents that they also wanted to have their birthdays at McDonalds, and then their parents told the teacher, who then scolded me. The teacher thought I was spreading bourgeois values among my fellow students. I know things like that wouldn’t happen anymore, but it was happening back in the early Nineties because of China’s Communist system. It was weird though. I was their star student because I was really good at calligraphy and wrote the banner for the school, so they liked me. Yet they also hated me because my family was seen as rich, and showing your wealth was viewed as not being proper. Even though I never did anything wrong back then, I could never get good conduct with the school. Nonetheless, life was great back then, I lived in the city, I learned English, and I had lots of friends growing up.

There are conflicting stories as to why we moved to Canada. My mom told me that we immigrated because I read about Canada in an encyclopaedia and listed all the good things about Canada, and somehow as a kid, I convinced them to move. However, my dad told me that it was
the only higher social status thing one could do as an elite Chinese person. As a member of the emerging Chinese elite, that is what you were supposed to do—emigrate. He even told me once, “Don’t believe in your mom’s stories, we came here because it looked good.” When I think back on it now, it does seem unrealistic that, as a kid, I would be able to convince my family to make such a huge decision.

**Growing up in Canada.** Everything changed when my family immigrated to Canada. I was happy and my mom was not. I did not realize how much immigration and her past affected her until I got older. I was ten years old when we first arrived in Canada. It was a surreal experience: everything was foreign; it was like a wall of sound; people would be talking to me, and I would not be able to understand them. The elementary school that I attended was heavily Chinese in ethnicity. I found myself hanging out with the newcomer kids and made friends with kids from China and Taiwan. The transition was relatively easy and the schoolwork was a breeze compared to China. I think that was why I was so happy, there was so much space, the school was chill, and I got to eat Cheerios everyday!

Even though it was relatively blissful for me, it was tough for my mom. Looking back, I didn’t notice how challenging it was for her. There was one time she fainted and had to see the doctor, and as a kid, I had an inkling that something wasn’t right, but I didn’t understand at the time. My mom used to get really upset, and my dad was working overseas, so my mom felt alone as well. The transition was hard for her; she went from “the queen,” having a nanny do all the house work, and being an ambitious business owner to moving to a new country with no supports and being alone in a huge house raising a kid on her own. The issue was not because of social status; after all, she still had her middle/upper-middle class friends who were Cantonese speaking immigrants, and I don’t think my mom cared about status anyways. I think what was
most challenging for her was that she was put into a life as a lady, the old-school, wealthy Chinese lady, a 太太\(^{46}\) (taai3 taai2). It was the lifestyle of not working and just socializing and playing mah-jong. She had a lot of ambition, and it was taken away from her. It was like she was forced to retire at the age of thirty-five.

Though my life seemed perfect in Canada, my mom really hurt me as I was growing up. My mom is a short-tempered person and has a very dominant personality. When I didn’t do things that she liked or if I did something wrong, she would say very hurtful things, like, “you’re useless” or 你去死啦 (nei5 heoi3 sei2 laa1, you can go die). It would be statements about my character which would imply that I was morally deficient in some way, like lazy, useless, or 痺 (jyu2), meaning I was not well-disciplined or well-behaved. I also got mixed messages as I was growing up. My mom can praise people to the sky, and I did get that as a kid, but it would be coloured with all these other opposing messages. It was confusing. I didn’t realize this at the time, but I’m a pretty sensitive person, and those messages had a significant impact on me, growing up. Along with the arguments, my mom would hit me using things like the Chinese feather duster to discipline me. It continued until I got to the point where I was too big for her to physically discipline me. The blissful Chinese-Canadian life I grew up in was interspersed with hitting and verbal abuse.

These memories still haunt me. I have told my psychiatrist about it. I would have nightmares about my mom screaming at me and telling me how useless I was. I was even told by my ex-girlfriend that I would yell out when I had nightmares. It is crazy to think that over

\[^{46}\text{太太(tài tāi) – meaning married women or missus.}\]
time her yelling, or the accumulation of stress in dealing with her, led to nightmares. It still happens to me when I feel stressed, even if the stress has nothing to do with her.

It wasn’t until much later in university, maybe in 2012, that I confronted my mom about her hurtful statements. I told her that she can’t talk to me in that way, because it was hurtful. When I brought it up to her, she seemed caught off guard, almost unsure how to take it. Later, she came to me and cried and said, “I don’t know what to do. I’m just frustrated. That’s what my parents did to me. I’m sorry that that happened.” She felt really bad about the things she said and to hear that I had nightmares about it. I think at that point there was a mutual opening up between us and that is when our relationship began to improve.

**Family Breakup.** In high school, I was such a depressed and apathetic kid. I think my family is full of sad people, even my younger brother is having existential angst, and he’s only thirteen. My brother is perpetually depressed, my dad is perpetually depressed, and I am perpetually depressed. I don’t know if my depression was because my family was generally depressed, or if I absorbed it from my mom in some way because, at the time, my mom’s mental health really deteriorated.

**Dorayaki.** After my little brother was born, my mother developed postpartum depression, which led to her seeing a psychiatrist. She was given meds to take, but she stopped taking them, because I don’t think she believed in it back then. She never saw a counsellor. Her mental health was anxiety inducing. She would have really bad episodes of depression and stay in bed for periods of time. She would be constantly getting into difficult arguments with my dad over the phone and whenever he was in Canada. I didn’t know how to deal with it, so I dealt with it by shutting out my family. My mom was never very open to me about these things, nor would she tell me what was bothering her. I remember there were other occasions where I would
overhear her say to my dad over the phone, “I’m going to die.” I didn’t know how to deal with this, so I coped by pretending not to hear it as I played video games. I ended up shutting away my family and my emotions.

My mom attempted suicide twice when I was in high school. The first time she attempted she made me this very specific food, dorayaki, a dessert with sweet red beans inside, covered with two pancakes. This was something that Doraemon, a Japanese cartoon character loved to eat. My mom knew that I loved dorayaki and watching Doraemon as a kid, so she made me a plateful of dorayaki and told me, “This will be the last thing I make for you, I’m going to go now.” I didn’t know what to make of it at the time. I thought that she was just leaving for a period of time. Later, I found out that she had either attempted suicide or pretended to, in order to frustrate my dad or scare him. Either way, I remember it involved a mug full of pills. I don’t remember much of the details, but she ended up being bedridden for days, often crying or arguing with my dad.

It doesn’t surprise me that my mom made me dorayaki; she is a very poetic person. I didn’t know what to do, so I pretended like nothing happened. I didn’t want to eat the dorayaki—what the hell was I supposed to do with it?

_The cheating._ During the summer between high school and transitioning to university, I found out that my parents were cheating on each other. It was a shock. I discovered that my father was cheating, initially, and I think my mother did it in revenge, which was really messed up! I remember my dad was Skyping with someone all the time, and I suspected something, because he’s never jubilant talking to anybody on Skype. I ended up putting a bug on his computer and collected evidence about his cheating. Seeing the contents of the surveillance and his communication between himself and his girlfriend made me very antagonistic towards my
father. I had this platonic ideal of my father, and it was very difficult for me to confront his humanity. My first glimpse of my father’s humanity was catching him cheating. After that, I didn’t want to talk to my dad, I couldn’t even look at him.

I collected all this evidence about his cheating and then one day, at the dinner table, I laid it all out in front of my parents. I didn’t care anymore; I just wanted to put everything out into the open. I remember I was pissed off with all the arguing between my parents. I got so sick of their bickering and I told them, “You are fighting about the most mundane things, why don’t you fight about the fact that you are cheating on each other!” I was thinking, “might as well just burn this whole family down!” Looking back, it was very difficult. I shouldn’t have done that, but I didn’t know what else to do at the time.

Afterwards, they started fighting, and my mom threatened to divorce, but somehow, they came up with some sort of solution and reconciled. They told me that it was none of my business—it was between them and they were okay—and to stop getting mad at my dad. When they said that, I was thinking, “No, my relationship with my dad is not subsumed by their relationship with each other.” So, I got angry at both of them. They wanted me to stop blaming them and to believe that their relationship was ok. So, their improvised solution was to pretend that they had figured it out and that they had everything under control. It was not only their marriage that was falling apart, but it was also their financial situation, and they tried to keep everything under wraps. It was frustrating, because I knew that they didn’t know what the hell they were doing. By keeping things under wraps, they were not being honest with me; and, it would freak me out even more, because it would just end up leaking out to me in other ways, like my mom making dorayaki and saying she was going to leave. It became harder to trust them. It felt like my family was falling apart. I felt like I was falling apart.
**My Breaking Point.** There was much more structure in high school, everything that was happening with me and my family didn’t affect school all that much. But in university, it was enough to ruin my academic career. I went from a Chinese-Canadian dominated high school to UBC to study philosophy. It was a total culture shock, with all these white people who could grasp the educational culture being transmitted in philosophy so much more than I could. I was really good at philosophy in high school, so I thought it would be a natural fit. It wasn’t that the content was difficult, rather it was the socialization into a different educational and disciplinary culture that was the challenge. I realize that not every discipline at UBC was like that, but philosophy basically consisted of a whole bunch of dead white dudes, and it exacerbated the cultural differences between myself and my peers. I had a mental breakdown in the first semester of my second year and failed two semesters in a row. My failing grades and my mental illness eventually led to my being kicked out of university.

I couldn’t concentrate. I wasn’t interested in my work, or in talking to anybody, and I became totally withdrawn. I would get so anxious that I would have to constantly read things to distract myself, like random news. I couldn’t even inhabit my own thoughts. It was scary to take showers because I had nothing to read or distract myself. I wanted to die. Though I never carried anything out to make that happen, I remember thinking, if somebody tried to rob me at gun point, I would dare them to shoot me.

I became very self-critical. I was telling myself, “I’m not doing what I’m supposed to do, and I’m not doing anything right.” Nothing was going right in my life. At the same time, I was trying to cheer myself up. Whenever I got to the point of being very upset even to the point of crying, when I dropped to rock bottom, it would trigger this attempt at recuperation and I would end up giving myself pep talks. I was trying to figure out what was going on with me and
wanted to understand why I was behaving a certain way. I needed to gain knowledge about my situation, but it was elusive because I had closed myself off from my emotions, and I had to learn to rediscover them. At that point, my thoughts and emotions were also very overwhelming, so it was difficult to concentrate and focus on the material I was reading.

I didn’t have a very good EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), so for the longest time, I just couldn’t figure out what was going on. I thought I was responsible for pulling myself out of it, so I kept giving myself pep talks. But they would not be enough, and I would end up being disappointed in myself—the same way that my mother was disappointed in me. I started smoking marijuana, and it had this sedating effect on me that allowed me to not be overwhelmed by my thoughts or emotions. It was totally strange, because I did not feel that for years. It gave me enough mental capacity to read things beyond random snippets of news, such as psychology. There was a “will to knowledge” that came out of this experience. As I read more and more, I realized I was depressed all throughout high school. It took me to the point of wanting to kill myself before I realized how bad my situation was. Eventually, I went to my family doctor and then he referred me to a psychiatrist. I ended up being diagnosed with ADHD, depression, and anxiety. . . I guess during one of my pep talks I convinced myself to go find a doctor.

For a while, I didn’t tell my parents, because I thought they were going to freak out. I wasn’t sure how to tell them about being kicked out of university and about my mental illness. I involved a professional so they wouldn’t overreact. That day, we made this solemn trip to meet the doctor, and when the doctor told them about my mental illness, my mom was like, “Oh my god, thank god! I thought you had AIDS; you’re just depressed.” They could see that I was unhappy, so they were paranoid that it could have been worse, but they were still freaked out when I told them. I was a smart kid and they didn’t foresee that I would ever get kicked out of
university for bad grades. They had their typical middle-class parental anxieties and they were concerned about my future, that I wasn’t going to become a lawyer anymore, but they kept that relatively mum and told me to get well. They were really supportive of me.

A year and a half afterwards, I returned to university. During this second time, I had to move out, because I couldn’t deal with my mom’s mental health and be in my family environment. I returned to university because I didn’t know what the hell to do with my life otherwise. In my mind, I had never doubted that I needed to get a bachelor’s degree. It was a very middle-class East Asian thing to do. If I don’t go to school, what else do I do? I’m not a handy person, so its not like I could do trades. I think education is a cultural pathway or a life pathway for middle-class East Asians, and especially, for myself. It was part of my background, and I found myself returning to it. I was very lucky to have parents who cared a lot about education. I couldn’t think of anything else but to go back to school. Perhaps this is a value that middle-class Chinese people or middle-class Chinese diasporas share. As a collective, Chinese people figured out the education part, though we may be missing other aspects such as emotional vulnerability. In that sense, I’m lucky I am part of this heritage, and I figured that out in my second time around. I ended up getting into UBC’s business school and excelled. Part of the reason why I applied for business school was because it seemed like all my middle-class Chinese friends went there, so it felt a lot safer to be in that discipline when I returned to university.

My Parents. My parents divorced earlier this year. They didn’t involve me as much in this decision, because they thought it was their problem. I think they tried to work things out, but they would continuously get into eruptive arguments. I remember telling them to get a divorce and just get it over with, but I think it was a difficult decision because they grew up in a culture where divorce was a huge deal and was looked down on.
*My father and his family.* I worry about my father. I worry about him a lot. It has been challenging for him and he has also been difficult to connect with. I worry that he is going to kill himself or have a stroke from being so stressed. He internalizes everything. He’s like the typical stoic male; he thinks a man should be stoic and refuses to seek any professional help. I am no longer antagonistic towards him; in fact, I have become one of the few people that he can talk to.

My dad was very successful, but then his business became bankrupt. He was never an entrepreneur in the first place and got into it by accident. He originally worked for a pharmaceutical company and then owned his own pharma-ingredients business as an offshoot. His degree was in English, which was not related to anything he did. After his business crashed, my parents got into lots of arguments over money. I would think it was crazy because they were by no means poor, yet all they argued about was money. I think it was difficult to have a big income and transition to having less money. It was the difference in lifestyle that was hard for them to deal with. I also think it had something to do with social status, because status and money became an identity for them, especially for my dad.

After I found out my parents were cheating on each other, they kept arguing about money. My dad ended up losing a lot of money in the stock market, and since my mom thought that was basically gambling, she’d go to the casino to spite my dad. I didn’t understand that my dad was essentially gambling his money away in the stock market. His behaviour was not visible, while my mom’s behaviour was very visible. I became very wary of my mom’s behaviour, because I thought she was going to gamble all her money away. She ended up hustling money, not all her schemes legal, and I was very worried about what would happen to her if she went into jail. Oddly, out of that, my dad and I bonded over our fear of my mom’s erratic behaviour and shady business dealings. My dad’s characterization of the money problem
was that my mom liked to spend a lot, and indeed, my mom does like to spend a lot. It was
difficult for me to see that he was essentially doing the same thing, because stocks were abstract
and not concrete. I could see my mom’s purses, but not my dad’s stocks. She would also spend
frivolously on food, to the point where we couldn’t possibly eat all the food in the fridge. I
think, with their conflict over money, my dad brought me over to his side, because we had a
similar mindset, and I could sympathize with my dad’s viewpoint more than my mom’s spending
habits.

My father and his side of the family do not speak much about their history. However, in
a recent trip back to China, I learned more about my father’s family background. When I was in
China, I interviewed my great uncle, the youngest brother of that generation, for a course I was
taking in university. It was important to get his story because he was the last one of that
generation, and I didn’t want the stories of that generation to be lost. It was a surreal experience
to hear my great uncle’s stories; neither my dad nor my uncle had ever heard these stories and it
took me going there to ask him in order to learn about these stories.

I learned that my dad’s family were peasants, and during the Sino-Japanese war when the
Japanese invaded, my great-uncle had to crawl through irrigation canals to avoid the Japanese.
As a ten-year-old, he would have to setup these makeshift camps in the marshes that were off the
field to hide from the Japanese. It was absurd—they even had to go back to farm for their own
food and run away whenever there were Japanese patrols. I think my grandfather was caught
during one of the farm runs, and he ended up being enslaved and forced to do hard labour by the
Japanese. People who were enslaved were made to eat sand mixed up with sweet potatoes. The
Japanese would dump the sweet potatoes on the ground, mix it up with sand with their feet, and
tell them to eat it. My grandfather ended up escaping by jumping off a hill one night. He went
through some traumatic things when he was only about fifteen or sixteen years old. I am pretty sure if he did not escape, they would have killed him.

During the Chinese civil war in the late Forties, about the time the Communists were about to win the war, my great uncle served as a Communist propagandist. He was basically the village organizer, while my grandfather was the leader of their village. My great uncle got directives from the higher-ups to go to the landlords and tell them to give their land to the people. So, he rounded up everyone in the village to demand land, but the landlords hired goons, which resulted in a huge brawl. My great uncle told me that my grandfather almost got beaten up and ended up running away. Reinforcements came from another village and the landlord was driven away.

When the Communists took over, there was the division of land, so the land was divided amongst the peasants. Mao did that to bring the peasants onto his side. My family ended up getting their own land, but five years later the Great Leap Forward happened. They had to give up their land, because all the land was collectivized and agricultural practices were centralized. There was no more private land and everyone’s land in the village got turned into a huge plot of land. This resulted in poor agricultural production, because they had people who didn’t know how to farm work on farms. My great uncle told me that, during that time, they were so hungry they didn’t even have sweet potatoes or yams, which were the staple food for peasants. He told me he would mix some well water with sugar, and that was his food. When the Cultural Revolution happened, it didn’t really impact my paternal family because they were peasants; they were considered to be the “good” ones.

Though I don’t know what specifically happened to my grandfather, I could only imagine that he must have gone through similar situations to my great uncle. Learning about my family
background feels like I am being linked into the greater flow of history through my own family’s experience. It makes me more grounded in history and makes me understand my place in this historical moment. I am lucky to be here. If my grandfather didn’t run away, I wouldn’t be alive.

My mother and her family. I wish I knew more about my mom. She went through a lot as a child. Is that what shapes her to be the way that she is now? Was it because she was always a free spirit, and the patriarchal society and my dad cut her ambitions dry? I’ve always wanted to sit down with my mom over 饮茶 (jam2 caa4) to interview and record her. I wanted to understand what went on in her childhood to make her into the kind of person that she is today.

She used to tell me about her experience of poverty as she was growing up. She would tell me stories about how on her birthday she would get an egg, but would try to savour as much of it as possible by cutting it up into small pieces and eating it throughout the day. For her, this was a luxury. There was not enough to eat during that time, so she would just have soy sauce and rice. One time, she kept on pestering me to try it so that I could experience what it was like. She also had to make straw hats to help supplement income for her family, and back then, her family would have to piss in a tank to sell to farmers as fertilizer. Maybe there is something about the poverty and being malnourished as a kid that contributes to insecure behaviours on her end.

I believe my mom’s aunt was part of the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution. When the Cultural Revolution happened, my mom was just a kid. She doesn’t talk about it

\footnote{Cantonese expression of “let’s go to dim sum house” is let’s go to ‘yum cha’ (jam2 caa4); ‘yum cha’ (jam2 caa4) as a verb means to drink tea.}
much, but she told me that my grandparents had to go study Mao’s Red Book and go for study sessions with their colleagues. The only other thing that I am aware of is that my mom’s family had to give up their fourth kid, my mom’s younger sister, because they could not afford taking care of her.

Aside from her past, I think the immigration had a really negative impact on her. She came from having a very high social status to an ambiguous one. She could see her status continue to go down because my dad’s business wasn’t doing well. It must have been difficult for her because she had no control over it, as my dad refused to let her do anything. I think she began to lose her mind. She probably felt this sense of impending doom and could do nothing about it.

I think my mom grew up in a society that held her back. She faced constant misogyny from my father. He never beat her or assaulted her, but he would constantly belittle her. He married her for her looks and wanted her to be a beautiful housewife—a trophy wife, which was the complete opposite of what my mom actually was. I think she had her ambitions constantly denied. I don’t think she would have had the same challenges had she been a man. She is sort of like a caged bird, and it makes me respect her that much more, because she was still a fiery and emotional person, and she never covered that up. She would express her anger and sadness and, even though it may not have been the most constructive way of communicating, she still found ways to express herself. She didn’t fit within conventional ways of expressing herself; she would write some of the most heart wrenching poems. I respect her so much because she still preserved her passion and creativity.

My mom does sketchy business dealings, and I worry about her, but there is a part of me that also trusts her and knows that, in doing these actions, she is expressing who she is. Maybe
she is finally at the point where societal shackles are no longer restraining her, and I am ok with it, as long as nothing bad happens to her. I also need to realize that my mom can take care of herself. Maybe it was me and my dad’s anxiety that were being projected onto her, and we lacked the spontaneity and street smarts that my mom has. That was probably why they got divorced, because she was not going to let a man hold her back.

My mom is much more open with me. I think she believes that I can deal with it. In a way, I have become both my father’s and mother’s confidant. On the other hand, I am still hesitant in telling her everything that is going on in my life, because I am afraid, she might not completely understand my perspective, given that she grew up with very different values. It would be hard for me to talk to my mom about less traditional ways of living my life, like not having kids or getting married, whereas my dad would be more open to these discussions. Nonetheless, my relationship with my mom has grown a lot and I trust her.

My parents’ impact on me. The impact of my family resonates in me. Recently, I broke up with my girlfriend, and there were things I did in that relationship that were unhealthy. I think some of it came from traumas and insecurities similar to those my mom experienced that would lead to depression and frustration. Like my mom, I have a more pragmatic way in which I express love. How I love people is that I feed them. But I also think there is an inherent vulnerability in the way I engage in relationships, where I have this feeling of insecurity. When I lack security, I act out, kind of like the way my mom acted out when she didn’t have a sense of security as an immigrant. I think I am living my parents’ insecurities. The trace of their history

48 During the final member check (September 2018), the participant wanted to clarify and expand on this section of his narrative. He informed that, though his relationship with his father did improve for a period, it had since deteriorated and that he is currently not connected with his father. The participant felt it was important to make this clarification to illustrate that his narrative is not as complete as it may seem in the presented text.
is within me—their migration, and their social journey, and the trajectory of their identities is very much caught up in Chinese history of the last two decades—this enormous economic expansion with a spiritual deficit and the trauma that comes with that. I think I am experiencing the cost of what has happened to China, distilled through its impact on my parents, thus I am living out their insecurities through my insecurities.

How my parents raised me makes me not want to have children and not want to get married. I think of marriage not as something that binds your commitment together, rather there should be something already worked out before you get married, which is what my parents never did. They never lived together, so they never worked out a way to communicate and be with each other. It should be worked out first before committing to work it out. I also feel like I paid my parental dues already. I took care of my brother. I changed his diapers, read to him, and I still give him pep talks and had a huge hand in his education.

I believe my mom had my brother because she wanted a daughter to understand her. I think she felt that a daughter would be able to do so. I’ve tried to be in that role, to be understanding, but I can’t completely comprehend the struggles of what it’s like to be a woman. It wasn’t until I started reading feminist literature that I understood a bit of what she was going through. I have come to appreciate the way that she is now, whereas before, I thought she was crazy doing all these sketchy hustles, but maybe that was because it conflicted more with my personality than something inherently wrong with her. I’m so thankful for her, because she came here and basically raised me on her own. Now, she is finding a way to fulfill her own ambitions and what she wants to do in this world, and I admire that in her.
My Personal Creed. My goal is to intervene in the world intellectually and artistically, which is why I’m training to become a critic. When I went to UBC's business school, it was an intellectually and spiritually dead place: just a bunch of rich spoiled kids looking to protect their lifestyles, because they didn’t know what else to do; plus, a bunch of poor working-class strivers looking up to these rich brats, because they didn’t know what else to dream of. I remember my teachers completely ignoring the Great Recession of 2008—what was and still is probably the most significant failure of Capitalism since the 1930s—and just went on, teaching the relentless drive for profit, business as usual. How could they be in the business world and not examine how things got so messed up by the very bankers whom they looked up to and tried to mould us into? I lost all respect for them then. We all deserve more in our teachers than sycophants and cowards.

I think it’s time we stop thinking of ourselves (Chinese-Canadians) as always merely the oppressed, the downtrodden—even if those things are undeniably in our history and present. But weakness is only the case if you only know how to look West and not East. I actually think we inhabit a very ambiguous place in the global power matrix now: Canada and the Western capitalist system is in its sunset years, while Chinese Capitalism is the thing everyone has been prophesizing to replace it. But we need neither of those. Not a Western capitalism in its postwar imperialist mode, nor a Chinese capitalism in all its mixture of ancientness and futurity. My goal is to hold up a Left space for hybrid identities like my own. Like Camus said, "Don't walk behind me, because I don’t want to lead. Don’t walk in front of me, because I don’t want to follow. Walk beside me, because I need a friend."

49 This last section was directly written by the participant as a summative reflection of his narrative.
Narrative of Ms. Leung and Ryan’s Sharing

Presented below is a narrative including the dialogue and reflections of Ms. Leung and Ryan as they shared their stories with one another. The interview was video-recorded to capture the visual nuances of their dialogue. It was facilitated by myself and my co-researcher (C. Huang) who helped with language interpretation. This narrative is my story that captures this moment between mother and son. It represents my own perspective and incorporates my reflections. Thus, it can always be constructed differently should the account be drawn from another witness.

As previously described in Lina and Henry’s (other family dyad) dialogue, the narrative presented emphasizes key parts of the participants’ narrative sharing and utilizes “narrative smoothing” (Kim, 2016; Spence, 1986) to provide coherence to the narrative. In the process of narrative smoothing, various nuances may not be captured. What is represented reflects those aspects of the dialogue I perceive to be meaningful for the purposes of this study. Furthermore, some dimensions of the story are left unsaid to honour the notion that the intended audience of the storytelling process was the person opposite. This story of the family dialogue has been reviewed by the Ryan to ensure that what has been included is consensual. The “characters” in this narrative are referred to by their relational roles to emphasize the relationship found within the dialogue and within this study.

The dialogue between Ms. Leung and Ryan. This interview was the first family dialogue that was arranged for this project. As such, there was an elevated level of anticipation and uncertainty as to how the dialogue would unfold. Despite the preparations and forethought through the process, this was my first time I facilitated this type of dialogue in a research setting. I remember having a sense of excitement as I pondered their stories, what it meant for them to
initially share their story with me, and the possibilities that could emerge for the participant
during and after this dialogue. I reflected about how much courage it took to engage so
vulnerably with another, especially to another person who had become so familiar with certain
visages of the other. This process was foreign and perhaps in its foreignness I hoped that new
awareness of other could emerge.

It almost seemed fitting that this interview was fraught with unpredictability. A few days
prior to the interview, we received feedback from Ms. Leung requesting changes to her narrative
based on her translated copy. As such, to accommodate her request, we had to make changes to
both the English and Chinese versions, which was a time-consuming process for my translator,
especially being last-minute. Even on the morning of the day of the interview, I received more
requests for last-minute changes. I remember wanting to accommodate these changes (which
were later incorporated into the final story), but also recognized that this was likely the last
opportunity we had to get both members to take part in this dialogue in-person. We had already
rescheduled the interview from a previous date, and this was the last day available before Ryan
was to leave the province to continue with academia.

When Ms. Leung and Ryan arrived, Ms. Leung chimed in right away with a number of
questions. She remarked how there were issues with the translation, and that there were aspects
of it that were too redundant. Later, she queried whether to cancel today and book the interview
for another day. I remember feeling pressure in the situation. I was concerned about our limited
opportunity for this interview and wanted to prioritize this over her request. However, I
recognized that view was my own sense of urgency that I was prioritizing over hers. Though it
was stressful as a researcher to negotiate these sudden changes, I realized these shifts paralleled
the unpredictability of her own story and, in a way, such was reflected through this momentary
interaction. At that point, I remember shifting my posture and affirmed the concerns that she had brought up.

I recognized how important it was for her to do this right. This project was important to her. Her story, her son’s story and how they were represented were important. I acknowledged her feedback and requests, and assured her that she could share her story in whatever way or form that she wanted to. At the time, I was carrying the belief that regardless of how refined the story was, there was always going to be an element of spontaneity when sharing one’s story and that it was vital for it to be an authentic process. Co-researcher (C. Huang), the interpreter, tactfully navigated the situation and assured the mother that changes would be made to the final draft and invited her to start the dialogue. After the reassurance, I could see her calmly settle into her seat, and she indicated that she was ready. The air of uncertainty settled.

As we started the formal dialogue, we arranged for the participants to sit across from each other, while the interpreter and I sat perpendicular. The camera pointed directly towards myself and at the back of the interpreter’s head, while the focus was on the two participants sitting across from each other. The room was bright, as it was early afternoon. I provided both of them Chinese and English copies of their own and the other’s story. As they started, there was an uneasy calm in the atmosphere—a readiness to share unknown parts of self to each other.

**Ryan’s sharing.** Ryan stated that he wanted to share his story first. We discussed whether he wanted to share his story in Cantonese or English, and he replied that he would share his in story in Cantonese. We then began the narrative sharing process.

**Fred:** Before we start, I want to just ask you what you are feeling. What are you noticing before you start sharing your story?

**Son:** Anticipation mostly… for my mom to hear that I love her in the depths of my heart. *he proceeded to share this to his mother in Cantonese, but modified his message slightly by stating that in telling his story he hopes his mother would hear that he loves her.*
As the son began to share, I saw the mother pay detailed attention to her son. And then, she would look back to the sheet.

Fred (translated): It may be helpful for you to put the paper down as your son is going to speak in Chinese anyways. Do what you need to do to be present with your son.

As the son began to share his story in Cantonese, he had in his hands both the Chinese and English narratives. As he progressed in telling his story, he referred to both interchangeably. His Cantonese was fluid, at least to my limited understanding, and there was a confidence in how he presented himself. He began sharing from the translated version, and as he came across translation work that was not reflective of his own representation, he would correct it to refer back to what he had originally intended to share. As he was sharing, the mother sat back and wrestled with her paper. At times looking up and looking back onto the paper. Ryan spoke candidly. There were moments, it appeared, that he was able to find his own rhythm in sharing his story, yet in other moments he had to juggle between the English and Chinese text to find the words that he had intended to share.

When Ryan started to share his difficulties with his mother, I could see Ms. Leung wanting to jump in, perhaps to provide her own take of the situation. The interpreter and I looked subtly towards her to reassure her of the process and to remind her to let Ryan finish. I realized the process must have been difficult for her to hear her son’s representation, as it may not have reflected her own reality. It was risky and courageous for her to partake in this process, to hold the space, and to listen to the difficulties her son faced, including the ways she contributed to them. Ms. Leung looked down at her copies of the story and occasionally she would look up and smile at her son.
As the sharing continued, I wondered if there were too many details in the drafted stories. I had based this process upon the methods of Guided Autobiography, in which one would typically share a one or two-page summary. However, in this case it was nearly twenty pages. Yet, despite the length of the stories, it almost seemed that the details were necessary. In a way, it provided the space and depth that was required to recognize the complexities of their lives.

Towards the final sections of his narrative, Ryan’s tone and posture began to shift. Tears filled his eyes as he felt the emotional weight of what he wanted to say. I looked over and told him to take his time as he fought through his emotions. Ms. Leung gazed upon her son to find the right moment to connect with him. Ryan paused for a moment, and that point, his mother left her chair to embrace him. It was a profound moment between a mother and child. Familiar, yet unfamiliar and seemingly the response needed for Ryan. Though it lasted for a second, the image of the embrace was etched into my mind as I felt a sense of joy in witnessing this moment. After the embrace, the son continued to wrestle through the tears and, in a tethered voice, he shared, “these are tears of joy.” These were words of honour and admiration for his mother—a blessing to tell her that he made it.

Both Ms. Leung and Ryan wiped away their tears. A moment was provided to allow both of them to recollect themselves before Ryan was invited to listen to his mother’s reflections.

Mother (translated): First, I want to thank my son. . . he understands me. Back then, the [parenting] method that I was using when he was young affected his life. At the time, my mood and emotions were impacted by the immigration. It was a big change, and it was challenging and stressful. I took it out on him, and I didn’t notice that I was taking my anger out on him. I gave up everything—my work, my business—to accompany him to this place as we immigrated. So, when he didn’t listen, I would feel frustrated.

Fred: [nodding]

Mother (translated): My son is really smart. He wanted to immigrate, and even when he was seven, he gave me ten reasons as to why we should immigrate, such as sanitary reasons, air quality, and technology. I thought at the time, wow, this seven-year-old child is so
thoughtful [she beams as she shares]. Initially his father, my husband, was not supportive of the idea as he thought in terms of material needs, but I told my husband that our son was not like a regular child—he had a talent to be fostered. So, I always had very high hopes for him.

As Ms. Leung continued, I could see Ryan following his mother and attentively listening to each word. Ms. Leung at this point was communicating to both the interpreter and me, despite multiple gestures to direct her reflections towards her son.

**Mother (translated):** When my son was young, I brought him to different learning activities, and I would tell him that he was not afraid of hard work, that if he worked hard now, he would be smarter in the future. I was so happy and proud of my son. At a young age, he was in the newspaper and was famous for his writing. I had extremely high hopes for him. I kept thinking, “my son is an extremely smart son.” So, when he was lazy and did not listen or do his schoolwork, I was so angry. I would say to him that he would be useless if he always played games. I didn’t know that he was playing video games as a way to relax from stress. As my hopes were so high, when his behaviour did not meet my expectations, I would lose my temper and get angry. I would think, “what will happen to you in the future [directed towards her son]?” I didn’t have the financial ability to support him further, so I wanted to focus on the present and invest in his learning more, so he could be smarter in the future. When I’m older, I want to count on him to take care of me, because I will have lost my job and my business.

**The interpreter:** So today, you heard Ryan share his story. What are your feelings? I hear you sharing why you behaved the way you did back then…

**Mother (translated):** My feeling right now is, I am thankful for my son and for his understanding and empathy. My son spent seven years to finish university, and even though his father’s financial situation was not good, we still wanted to support him financially. I didn’t want him to take out a loan. I told him that, even if I needed to take a job, I would do that for him so that he could have an education. I wanted him to see that I was strong, and that he could also be strong in society. I remember, when he was kicked out of school, I was worried that he had HIV [in reference to Ryan’s disclosure about being “kicked out” of school]. My son can get back up. All that matters is that my son’s health is good. I learned to be a mother, and no one taught me how to be a mom, but I learned and changed. I didn’t want him to give up on his life. He must be strong. So, this was also part of the effects of my life story. So, don’t give up on yourself [directed towards her son]. So today, hearing my son share his story, I really believe that my son has grown up. I can really be at peace. Because, all along, I was worried about him that his mental and physical health....
Fred: I know you are talking to us, but can you tell your son…

Mother (translated): So now, mom really thinks you’ve grown up. I can relax… [pause]… In society, in work, in life, I think he has the ability to survive. I won’t worry anymore. I feel, as a whole, relaxed. … [she begins to cry] I suffered a lot of pain, a lot of unhappiness, and experienced a lot of things, until now, [but] the most important thing is my two sons are healthy.

[Ms. Leung reached out for a hug and pulled her son towards herself. She recognized that she needed comfort this time. They settled back into their respective chairs and took a moment to recollect themselves.]

Fred: What is your experience as you reflect on your mother’s story?

[Pause]

Son (translated): So actually, these things, to say it all at once, you now think that I have grown up and you don’t have to worry anymore. Knowing how you think, my thought is that in the future, I want, I hope to understand you more. I think of what you were saying earlier, what father was missing was understanding. I can understand you more, but I think, you are more of a doer, not a listener. You are more active, not passive. So, I can be on the more passive side to listen, to hear you. I understand that you are not like that with others. You like to give people things to eat or do things for them. But what I think you need is not for someone to do something for you but for someone to understand you. So, I hope in the future, I can take on this role.

Mother: Thank you for your understanding [smile].

Both participants had a chance to share their reflections and a brief break was provided.

It was already more than an hour and a half into the interview, and I wanted to make sure that there was sufficient time for the rest of the dialogue, as we had scheduled the sharing and dialogue to finish taking place within the hour.

Ms. Leung’s sharing. We resettled back into the interview process. Following the same format previously used, we started by asking how Ms. Leung felt prior to sharing.

Fred (translated). Before we start, how are you feeling?

Mother (translated): Good

Fred: As you are sharing with your son, you do not need to follow exactly as was written—share what comes from your heart.
Mother: Ok.

I shared these instructions, as I wanted to ensure it was clear that we supported the direction she needed to take for the sharing of her narrative. I was hoping to do more preparatory discussion, however there seemed to be urgency in beginning the process. As I ended my instruction, she began immediately to share her story. The paper copies sat on her lap as she looked down at her cell phone and started reading her story to her son. It was clear she had made some of her own modifications and wanted to follow the changes she had made. As she spoke, Ryan sat back into his seat, initially following the story with his paper copy, and then looking back at his mother.

I wondered how much she deviated from the story we had originally translated. I followed with my limited Cantonese and was able to appreciate that the essence of her story remained intact. These words and how she depicted herself were significant. It was important for me that she share her story in the way she needed to her son. It reminded me that her audience was her son first and foremost.

As she shared her story, she would look up and manoeuvre her hands in an expressive and fluid motion. These movements conveyed the layers of the story that she was telling. She was very expressive in her tonality; it reminded me of when I first heard her story. Her story was spoken—both verbally and non-verbally—and performed through her expressivity. For certain parts of her story, she shared without looking at her device. These sections touched upon her childhood. It was clear that these were stories that she had shared before or had reflected upon often in her life. She appeared confident in her speech and displayed vividness in her expressions. She moved her hands as if pointing out the event’s unfolding in front of her, as if
performing the story in front of her son. I could see the attentiveness in her son as he followed his mother’s story.

There was a sense of improvisation midway through her storytelling. She would touch upon a point and continue to expand upon it, drawing from her own memory. At one point, it almost appeared that she had lost track of what she was saying and referred to her paper copy. As she subsequently read from her paper, it was clear that aspects of her story were already told, and she moved towards speaking about her abortion experiences. When she began to talk about these experiences, her voice softened with tenderness in her tone.

Towards the end of the narrative, she began to talk about her mental health and regrets. She spoke even softer. She looked down and paused. She spoke slowly, and it appeared almost as if she was speaking in a trance. There was a heavy sadness that came across her face—a look that reflected the losses she had accumulated throughout her life. Though she spoke softly, at a whisper at times, there was a sense of agony in her tone. I imagined that if she could wail, she would wail, yet it was clear that the depth and heaviness of her heart was resonant in her silence. She sniffled and wiped her tears with her hands. Paused. And continued. It was clear that she wanted to share the last parts of her story with her son.

**Mother (translated):** It was painful for my husband to lose his business. I thought all of this was happening because of me, that I was to be blamed. My son was not listening to me, was not studying, and was always playing games. I was disappointed with life. Originally, I was more ambitious and courageous as a person, but now I felt that I was useless and couldn’t do anything. I couldn’t teach my son, and I couldn’t support my husband. I didn’t have a job and I didn’t have a business. I was very down, and during that time, I tried to take my own life. I wanted to leave everything behind, to not be in so much pain [she described this moment softly and gently gasped for air].

[Pause]
Mother (translated): During that time, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. . . I felt so helpless. I couldn’t do anything [She continued to share almost to the point where her voice was nearly inaudible] . . . My mom was sick, and my son got kicked out of school, and my husband’s business was failing. I blamed myself. I felt useless. I couldn’t be a good mother, or a good wife, or a good daughter.

[Pause]

Mother (translated): . . . I thought more clearly, “don’t give up.” I would miss my sons, my parents, my sons’ father. I had to be strong to continue to live. I had to be strong to stand up. I have to support the family. So, I said to myself, “I can’t lie down.” [Ryan] hasn’t grown up yet, his younger brother hasn’t grown, and my parents: these were the reasons for me to continue to live.

At this point, she spoke with more vigour, occasionally wiping her tears away. She began to share her letter to her son. Tears continued as she sniffed. The mother continued as the words felt weighted, almost forced out of her mouth slowly and deliberately. Her words strengthened as her son leaned in, and she continued to share her words to her son as they looked at each other. There was a knowingness and understanding of the depth of her words in this encounter.

I invited Ms. Leung to sit back and to hear from her son. The two participants faced each other, and at this point, Ryan seemed to be sitting a few feet away from his mother. He sat almost as if creating some distance from the impact of listening to the story. I invited him to come closer to his mother. He reached out his hand and his mother pulled him closer to her. At this moment, Ms. Leung shared briefly.

Mother (translated): [Speaking in a near whisper] Mom can do it. So, I hope in the future, no matter what you encounter, that you can be strong. When I wanted to give up, you didn't give up on me. All the struggles. . . I knew I needed to stay alive because I had responsibilities. I have parents that I must take care of and I have children who must grow up. So, I knew that I had to stay alive.
I gestured towards Ryan to share his thoughts. Ryan sat there momentarily. It appeared he was trying to make sense of all that he had heard. He paused and collected his thoughts and began to share.

**Son (translated):** I didn’t know... I heard about it a little before, but some of this I hadn’t heard. Hearing you talk about your life, sounds like there wasn’t any happiness at all. And I didn’t know how much you wanted a second child... I didn’t know. You always say to turn your pain and struggles into strength, or to persevere. It makes me understand you better... You are a sorrowful poet.

**Mother (translated):** Yes, mom is. My classmates who have seen my poems also understand that my poems are sorrowful. So, the poems that I write, a lot of my classmates who have seen them think I resemble that poet.

**Son (translated):** So, I better understand. My personality has been passed on to me. Our family is full of sorrowful people.

**Mother (translated):** Sorrow is internal for me, but what I display on the outside for people to see is great strength. There isn’t much that can come in mom’s way.

[Pause]

**Son (translated):** I hope you can have more time to chase your talents and explore ways to express yourself. Because if this is your life’s development, it’s best not to lose it but to turn it into something beautiful. I hope you can give yourself more time to do things like these.

**Mom (translated):** [Directed towards myself and the interpreter] I now feel like my son has really grown up. He understands me, my ups and downs.

I remember feeling very moved as I watched them share with each other. Despite all the sudden changes and shifts that had to occur right before the dialogue, it seemed that both participants were able to engage meaningfully in their sharing. There was an exhausted smile—but an assured smile—that came across both of their faces. I briefly glanced over at the interpreter, and she too shared the same expression. Something quite profound and rich about the immersion into their stories had elapsed. There was a sense of accomplishment for all who were involved in the process.
As we began to wrap up, we slowly transitioned to chatting in a lighter tone. Ms. Leung showed a drawing that her friend drew and a poem that she incorporated into it. I provided instructions for the next steps of the project.

Fred: Was there anything else you wanted to share?
Mother (translated): [Expressed with a smile on her face and strength in her tone] After sharing our stories, I feel that I better understand my son and my son better understands me—the struggles that I endured as a mother. So, I feel like we got closer and I am very thankful to my son.

A reflective dialogue. After Ms. Leung and Ryan left the room, the interpreter and I looked at each other with an understanding that we had both witnessed a profound encounter between a mother and son. The look reflected a sense of endearment and exhaustion. The whole dialogue had spanned more than three hours, hours in which we attempted to engage in an attuned manner. It was an intimate experience. Both were raw in their expressions to each other, evincing a sacred moment that we had an opportunity to witness and share. There was a sense of joy and accomplishment, an understanding that there was a meaningful constructive process that all of us had undertaken. This was the kind of encounter that we had hoped for in the rawest form—an opportunity for healing and connection through narrative sharing.

We began our reflection and debrief. We followed a format similar to the “reflecting team” process (Andersen, 1990), which involved reflecting on our own experiences and the voices of the participants. The interpreter (C. Huang) began by sharing how she thought of the metaphor of a “maze of interacting.” She described vividly an experience of watching a “ball maze” that she would have seen as a child at Science World, where there was a sense of awe and wonderment as to how these balls moved from point A to point B. For her, the process was mesmerizing and unpredictable. The two participants were, for her, the balls in the maze that would collide and distance themselves and come back together. These movements reflected the
ups and downs, the highs and lows, of their relationship and story. For the interpreter, Huang, she saw us, the co-researchers, as the children mesmerized and looking into the process, trying to understand the complex weaving of interactions.

Her description was poetic. In a way, a phenomenon like this co-constructed narrative sharing cannot be described as, or broken down into, a systematic process. The essence of it can only be captured metaphorically. As she described her experience, an image of a torch being passed on came to mind. I shared my reflections on their journey, not only the journey the participants had described in their story, but our journey to get to this point. For myself, it felt like all the behind-the-scenes work—the interviews, transcriptions, translations—all had culminated in this moment where mother and son were able to share their stories with each other. The display was mutual acknowledgement: for the mother, the acknowledgement of her son as a man; for the son, the acknowledgement of his mother as a torch carrier with the smouldering responsibility no longer hers to carry.

We reflected on the power of story and about the moments that continued to resonate in our minds. The moment where Ms. Leung leapt forward to embrace her son stood out as a particularly meaningful moment. Not just the gesture itself, but it was a powerful image of a mother extending love and support in a moment of vulnerability. Perhaps it was a universally understood moment, that regardless of age, a mother embracing a child whether young or old was instinctive and familiar.

Our discussion shifted towards reflecting on how storytelling may be influenced by cultural dimensions, as we witnessed from Ms. Leung. It seemed to us that she used stories as a way to convey context for understanding content and her emotions. We wondered if this was a conversational style that might be culturally influenced and might not fit with our own
preconceived notions of how stories were to be told. It was valuable for us to remember that a story’s sharing is shaped by our culture whether that be within a therapeutic or research interview.

We discussed the potential impact on Ryan. It seemed significant for him to recognize the role of his mother’s abortion and miscarriages, including why it was so important for her to have another child. Originally, he interpreted her actions from a feminist perspective, and based on his sharing, learning about these events from his mother seemed to broaden his perspective. His perspective was shifted towards a posture of wanting to understand his mother more—to be the “passive” to her “active.”

As we ended our reflection, we again recognized our privilege in witnessing a facet of their relationship and shared story through this co-constructive dialogue.

**Epilogue.** We followed up with Ms. Leung and Ryan about a week after the dialogue. The interpreter chatted with Ms. Leung, while I chatted with Ryan. We debriefed our experiences and recounted their reflections afterwards. A summary of Ms. Leung and Ryan’s responses are provided below along with my reflections afterwards.

**Ms. Leung.** The mother expressed that she was busy and had returned back to her own busy life style. She expressed gratitude for being part of the project and shared that she had gained a better understanding of her son. She was happy about her experience as she felt a greater empathy for and appreciation of her son’s experiences. She shared her felt responsibility for some of what had happened to her son and was sorry about her son’s experience. However, she also recognized that her son had grown as a person and felt that he was brave for being open to this process. From her perspective she felt her son understood her and she understood her son.
The interpreter inquired about her general well-being after taking part in the project and if there were any concerns. Ms. Leung responded that there were no concerns on her end and that it had been a positive experience. She answered that hearing of the impact on her son did make her feel guilty, however she recognized it was an opportunity for her to do things differently in supporting her son. She provided some feedback for the research team by emphasizing the process of translation. She wanted to ensure that the Chinese was correct to make certain that, when translated to English, it would be representative of what she had intended. The interpreter expressed her appreciation for the feedback and for her participation in the project.

Ryan. Around the same time, I contacted Ryan. I informed the participant I wanted to check to see “how things were going.” I asked him a few questions regarding his well-being since the dialogue, particularly, any key moments that had stood out to him, how it had impacted his relationship with his mother, and how partaking in the project had impacted him.

Ryan expressed that it was, overall, a beneficial process and did not have any negative impact on him. He replied that he and his mother already had a close relationship prior to this project so it felt like a natural step for them. He noted that they had already begun to talk about some of their past issues before taking part in the study. He acknowledged it required a level of emotional effort to be able to talk openly about their stories, and he found it helpful to have a process to follow. He found it to be a good excuse to deepen his relationship with his mother. For him, there were parts of her story he was not aware of, and he appreciated being able to learn about it through the project.

Towards the end of the conversation, Ryan referred back to his father. He felt it would be different if the procedure involved his father. He noted he and his mother were close, but there was much he did not know about his father. It would be “cathartic,” he shared, but more
challenging for his father. It seemed the participant desired to engage in a similar process of sharing with his father.

As we ended the conversation, he shared his hopes that his involvement could be something useful for the long run and was “thankful to be part of this.”

*Reflections from the lead researcher.* After the debriefing with Ryan, I recalled sitting in my car with sense of wonderment. Coincidently, I had also sat in my car parked to the side when I first contacted Ryan about the project several months prior. In a way, the project’s manifestation was a full circle that sequentially embodied the many layers of planning to arrive at this point. It also inculcated a sense of accomplishment, for as the process unfolded, it did so in a way that was beneficial for these individuals. This was the *storying* process, an unfolding of narrative, that yielded at last a sense of completion, yet it would remain incomplete. It was incomplete in the sense that what I had experienced was a mere glimpse into the participants’ storied, albeit culminating in a sense of resolution at to this point. Yet, their lives would continue, and their future story I may never know. The participants will continue with their lives and in their interactions with each other, changed or unchanged by the project, and this final effect I will not know. As I sat in my car, I only had a sense of joy that at the very least I witnessed an interfacing of stories; I had contributed to creating that space for them to have and to share with each other.
CHAPTER 5: ACROSS-NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The following is an across-narrative thematic analysis of the parental (Hua, Henry, and Ms. Leung) and offspring (Stacy, Lina, Ryan, Ken, and Joan) narratives based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis. From the analysis, content themes were developed according to an intergenerational trauma construct (see Felsen, 1998) including parental traumatic experiences, transmission processes, and offspring experiences.

Overall, five parental and five trauma transmission content themes were developed. Each theme consists of respective subthemes based on categories developed through the analytical process (see Tables 12 and 13 for themes, subthemes, and categories). Parental themes involve those parental aspects of trauma endorsed in both the parental and offspring narratives, while trauma transmission themes incorporate both those processes of inheriting trauma and offspring experiences of trauma’s consequences. Both transmission and offspring experiences were subsumed under the “trauma transmission” label as these derived mainly from offspring narratives and were found to be highly interconnected. For the five parental trauma themes, these included: (a) Decimation of Social Structures; (b) Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse; (c) Desperation for Survival; (d) Personal Losses and the Denial of Education and Opportunities; and (e) Maintenance of Values and Emphasis on the Future. While for the five transmission themes, these involved the following: (a) Silence, Shame, and Disconnection; (b) Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of Interdependence; (c) Fear and Discipline; (d) Education as Survival and Identity; and (e) Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage.

Parental Themes: Understanding Parents’ Perspectives of Intergenerational Trauma

Presented in Table 12 are the themes associated with parental experiences of trauma. These themes are based on the traumas endorsed in the parental narratives and incorporate
offspring understandings of those traumas. Offspring perspectives are incorporated in order to affirm the explicit knowledge transfer and relational interconnectedness between parents and offspring. The precedent of affirming offspring knowledge and endorsement of parental trauma was established in Yehuda et al.’s (2014) study. In this research, the psychological trauma perceived by the offspring offers insight into those traumas or dimensions of trauma that were not directly given through the parental narratives. The categories derived from offspring narratives were consistent with those categories found within parental narratives, thus the offspring categories could sufficiently be incorporated under the same themes. The following table presents five parental themes along with their respective subthemes and categories. Each theme is elaborated upon in the following sections.
### Table 12. Parental Themes and Corresponding Subthemes and Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Themes</th>
<th>Decimation of Social Structures</th>
<th>Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse</th>
<th>Desperation for Survival</th>
<th>Personal Losses and the Denial of Education and Opportunities</th>
<th>Maintenance of Values and Emphasis on the Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subthemes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Manipulation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oppression</strong></td>
<td><strong>Poverty and famine</strong></td>
<td><strong>Denial of education and opportunities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Propaganda, manipulation, and encouragement to betray family and friends</td>
<td>Oppression, injustice, and betrayal by government</td>
<td>Famine and poverty</td>
<td>Denial of education, opportunities, rights, and privileges</td>
<td>Persistence and protesting against injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oppressive and manipulative government practices (O)</td>
<td>Living in the countryside</td>
<td>Poverty and starvation (O)</td>
<td>Desire to be educated for social, personal, familial, and survival reasons</td>
<td>Parental guilt, shame, and regret (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patriarchy and cultural forms of oppression (O)</td>
<td>Mistreatment and persecution of family members</td>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of opportunities and education (O)</td>
<td>Escape and migration for better means (O)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subthemes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Loss of face</strong></th>
<th><strong>Violence, abuse, and death</strong></th>
<th><strong>Desperate practices</strong></th>
<th><strong>Personal losses</strong></th>
<th><strong>Protective relationships</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Class conflict, public humiliations, and false accusations</td>
<td>Near death experiences and witnessing death, suicide, and violence</td>
<td>Circumstances destroying cultural practices and fostering desperation</td>
<td>Personal losses and mental health</td>
<td>Protective relationships and instilling of values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familial shame and witnessing familial suffering</td>
<td>Parental anxieties, neglect, abuse, and fear of parents</td>
<td>Social relations as vital (guan xi) and social pressure</td>
<td>Mental illness and suicidality (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social persecution of family and family members (O)</td>
<td>Witnessing murder, death, war and violence (O)</td>
<td>Loss of faith in humanity</td>
<td>Challenges with immigration and post-migration (O)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neglect and abuse from parents (O)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subthemes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Chaos and instability</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>No stability or control over own circumstances / hopelessness and helplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insecurities and anxiety and lack of control (O)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Any category developed from offspring narratives are denoted by (O), while categories without any indicators correspond to parental narratives. These categories are subsumed within broader subthemes (*italicized*), of which the themes (*bolded*) are composed.*
**Parental Theme 1: Decimation of Social Structures**

All the parents, corroborated by offspring perception, reported experiencing forms of manipulation, humiliation and the loss of face. Central to these experiences are social structures—cultural, societal, and familial—decimated through oppressive and manipulative strategies imposed upon the participants. These losses essentially constituted the disruption of social order. Throughout participants’ stories, these traumas were often endured during the parents’ time in China. These experiences were often specific to the class conflict that manifested during Mao’s reign, with the propaganda and manipulation experienced by citizens at the time. Within participants’ narratives, The Cultural Revolution during Mao’s reign disrupted culturally-bound aspects of social identity, those being *face*, one’s reputation and public self-image (Chen, Lai, & Yang., 2013; Yang, 1995) and associated concepts such as *guanxi* (Chen et al., 2013) and *renqing* (Hwang, 1987). Social structures once familiar to these participants were torn apart, creating a culture of fear and suspicion. The theme can be broken down into its core aspects: experiences of manipulation and the loss of face.

**Manipulation.** The decimation of social structures involved the disruption of social structures and the propagation of information through propaganda, censorship, and class conflict. People’s perception of one another and of the Communist leadership was manipulated. From a broader perspective, during Mao’s regime, the disruption of social structures was accomplished in part by the intentional targeting of social classes, creating enemies from neighbours (see Hua’s description):

Class distinctions were formed. There were the ‘good families’—parents who were peasants, workers, communist soldiers, and communist leaders, who were referred to as the 红五类 (hóng wǔ lèi / five good red families) . . . Then there were the 黑五类 (hēi wǔ
leï / five black families)—landlords, capitalists, intellectuals, rightists, and anti-revolutionary elements—families that were treated as enemies. (Hua)

The parents who endured Mao’s regime recalled being encouraged by the government to criticize and betray one another. “Big character” posters and other forms of criticism were used to publicly question people’s integrity and social status. The class conflict and culture of suspicion fostered de-humanizing acts towards one another:

Everywhere, from factories to government offices, people started to attack each other by publicly humiliating one another. Big character posters were posted at government buildings, with people accusing their leaders of shameful things they had done in the past. (Hua)

In the parental narratives, it appeared every citizen was encouraged to criticize and betray each other, even their own family members. Even as a child, Henry was instructed to criticize his own father:

When I was seven or eight, my older siblings had to write letters to government officials stating that they denounced my father and were cutting ties with him. I had to do this as well, but because I was so young, I did not understand the implications... What made these manipulations particularly subversive was their desecration of Confucian social norms that were inherent within Chinese societies, such as filial piety and social hierarchy.

Disrupting the social traditions created mass confusion with regards to moral identity as the traditional moral structures were disordered. Participants had difficulty in discerning who was good or bad because the expectations and rules were constantly changing. They even questioned the moral integrity of their own family members, as Henry explains, “There was a brief moment where I hated my father because I felt like my father put me in this position, and I questioned whether or not my father was a good person.” The participants experienced
brainwashing, sanctioned by a government that deified Mao and distorted knowledge that was available to the public:

We were heavily brainwashed by Mao Zedong. . . He was like a god. Everyday, we had to read his little red book; every morning, we had to dance and sing to him; and every night, we had to report to him to show our loyalty. It was like a religion, ‘Oh, Chairman Mao, we love you so much, you are like the sun, you are like our father.’ (Hua)

Propaganda was distilled throughout the educational system. Joan described her father’s telling her that they had learned a distorted history of the civil war between Kuomintang and the Communists, “He said that, during the war, the Communists would use civilians or hide behind them or kill them if necessary, and he grew up thinking that was a normal part of war.” The propaganda of the Cultural Revolution fostered a culture of fear and suspicion that continued to exist years after its events, as one offspring participant observed of her mother:

Growing up, she would tell me about how I should read Mao’s poetry and basically say how great of a man he was. I remember refuting that idea, and she would respond with, ‘Oh if you questioned him back then, you would get arrested; I saw people getting arrested.’ When she said that her voice changed, as if trying to warn me from speaking ill of him today. (Stacy)

Generally, the participants experienced manipulation of social structures, traditions, and roles, along with distorted information that was available to them. There was a sense of violation and confusion that came with the experienced manipulation.

**Loss of face.** Ultimately, the manipulation and disruption of social structures interrupted several core facets of Chinese social identity, including *face* and *guanxi*. Face is one’s reputation and public self-image, while guanxi refers to one’s social identity and positioning within their social networks (Chen et al., 2013; Yang, 1995; Yang & Kleinman, 2008). To understand the unique disruptive aspects of the trauma endured by the participants, it is valuable to appreciate that losing face is akin to the idea of “social death” (Yang & Kleinman, 2008). Yang and
Kleinman (2008) propose that face and guanxi are kinds of social capital, where the loss of face signifies a loss of communal trust, reputation, and morality. This loss is subject to shame, social sanctions, and isolation, and one who is subjected becomes less human in a moral sense. Face is a personal possession loaned by the larger society, and it is up to the individual to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of it, otherwise it could be taken away (Goffman, 1972; Qi, 2011). Thus, the construction of face and face-based concepts in Chinese societies powerfully reflect social inclusion, exclusion, and power (Yang & Kleinman, 2008, p. 8). In the case of the participants, the public humiliation endured was aimed at cutting them off from the heart of Chinese social organization. This was social murder.

Public humiliation and criticism of self and others was commonplace during Mao’s regime, as indicated by Joan’s father’s account: “There were public humiliations; the government forced people to go against each other. People were made to publicly apologize as they were berated by their own community.” This was a form of control directly targeting one’s face. In appreciating the value of face, it becomes conceivable why actions such as suicide could be understood as a logical decision at the time, as was the case for Hua’s uncle:

He was then classified as a rightist, and he was put under house arrest. He was forced to self-criticize and acknowledge that he was wrong. It was too much for him to bear; he ended up jumping off his office building and killing himself.

Other examples of public humiliation and its impact on individual and familial face are illustrated throughout the parental narratives. For instance, Henry provides a vivid description of his father’s humiliation and its impact on face. The loss of face and its effects extend beyond the individual and implicates family, as shown:

He was no longer allowed to be a doctor and was made to sweep the school, the streets and the roads. Around 1965, he was forced to wear a tall hat made from newspaper and a
sign around his neck that labelled him as a “大右派” (dà yòupài / big right or big rightist) and ‘an American spy’. Everyday for 8 months, he wore this to and from work and could not take it off until he got home. . . I felt embarrassed for my father and I felt very shameful. I didn’t have the 面子 (miànzi / face) to see anyone.

The loss of face, as well as the gaining of face, is associated with emotions (Qi, 2011). In the case of this study, the loss of face for participants was often mired with shame, either of their own making or their family members’. Henry’s description of witnessing his father cry twice demonstrates the deep sense of shame associated with losing face:

I was still young, and I didn’t understand why it was so unfair, so I expressed that I didn’t want to go to that kind of school. At that moment, I saw father cry for the first time. I was twelve years old. My father said that he was wrong and that I must go study.

The emotions expressed by Henry’s dad can be understood as his feelings of letting his family down. Because of his loss of face and social standing, he is unable to protect his son’s face.

The social structures and social identity of the participants appeared to be intentionally targeted in the efforts to promote class conflict and disturb traditional Confucian values. Traditional values such as filial piety was traded in for worship of Mao and communist ideology to foster a culture of suspicion. Meanwhile, the loss of face pervaded beyond one’s own social image—the social capital lost led to imposed feelings of inferiority and shame, and consequently, silencing. This theme of social desecration was illustrated throughout all the parental narratives and was itself a significant part of the trauma experienced by the parental generation.

**Parental Theme 2: Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse**

The parents experienced oppression, abuse, and chaos throughout their narratives, which contributed to the felt importance of seeking stability later in their lives, and further, creating an environment stable enough for their children. At the heart of the oppression and abuse was a fear
of instability and having no control over their own lives. These experiences of instability, lack of control, and perceived lack of safety were experienced during the time participants were living in China. Aspects of this theme overlap with the previous, in that aforementioned manipulation is itself a form of oppression. However, the focus here is on the sense of having no control and of instability, whereas the previous centred on disrupted sociocultural structures. This theme is based on the sub-themes of oppression, witnessing and experiencing violence, abuse and death, and instability.

**Oppression.** The oppressive experiences endured by the participants indicate how they and their families were specifically targeted because of their superficially identified social class. As Hua shared, “My family was targeted because we were a ‘black family.’ My parents were intellectuals: my father was a civil engineer, while my mother was a principal in elementary school, and my grandparents were landlords and rich peasants, all considered ‘bad’ classes.” Being targeted would involve the removal of one’s social status, being publicly ridiculed, and/or being beleaguered by Red Guards as shown in Henry and Hua’s narratives.

Other forms of oppression were experienced through government policies and rules. For instance, Ms. Leung shared her experience of being forced to have an abortion, in order to abide with the One-Child Policy at the time:

> I was told that I could not work anymore, and only after I had the abortion would I have my job back. They told me that if I wanted to have a child, I needed to sign the Family Planning Permission card, otherwise they would force me to have the abortion. They would kill the baby in my womb. After fifty days, I got the abortion.

For others, the experience of being forced to go to the countryside was itself an oppressive act that took away their freedom:

> Being in the countryside was like being in a third-world country: there was no support from the government, and one’s livelihood was based on what one produced. Peasants
were regarded as sub-citizens or third-class citizens, because they could not get out of the villages and were doomed to work in the fields. (Hua)

These experiences fostered a sense of instability and uncertainty among the participants, as in, “Regardless of how successful I may be, there is no control over what the government decides to do. There is no predictability. Things can change quickly, and there is no way for control, and because of that, I felt afraid” (Henry). The setting created a sense of fear and helplessness for the participants as the circumstances around larger political systems dictated their lives. There persisted a fear that circumstances might instantly change, regardless of how prepared or protected an individual might ostensibly be.

There were also systems of patriarchy present in the parent’s stories. Though “patriarchy” was not the language parental participants used to describe their situations, these instances were interpreted by the offspring participants as patriarchy:

I think my mom grew up in a society that held her back. She faced constant misogyny from my father. He never beat her or assaulted her, but he would constantly belittle her. He married her for her looks and wanted her to be a beautiful housewife—a trophy wife, which was the complete opposite of what my mom actually was. I think she had her ambitions constantly denied. (Ryan)

This oppression was also witnessed by other participants as well, as Stacy shared, “I think I wanted to be a boy so that I wouldn’t have to face misogyny. My dad treated me differently than boys my age and was verbally abusive towards my mom.”

These circumstances that the participants faced can be understood as being socially and historically constituted, and perhaps, exacerbated by the social difficulties at the time, as Ms. Leung explains in her story:

Back then people didn’t value girls the same as they did boys. Boys were expected to take care of their parents when they got older; girls, when they got married, were part of their in-law’s family and were not expected to be responsible for their own biological
parents. Especially among people in the countryside, there was a fear that, if they did not give birth to a boy, no one would take care of them when they were older. This was a legitimate concern, because there was no such thing as pensions or social security back then. It was tradition for parents to be taken care of by their children.

This elaboration is vital for understanding some experiences faced by the female participants. Incidents described by participants may not be understood as patriarchy at the time, however there is a social reality that shaped these interactions, one deeply rooted in Confucian cultural structures (see Hwang, 2011). Overall, the narratives illustrate aspects of oppression that are deeply rooted in the systems in which they lived.

**Violence, abuse, and death.** Episodes of witnessing and experiencing violence and abuse were dispersed throughout most of the narratives. These experiences can be defined ecologically—trickling down from macroscopic (e.g., the systemic violence that was being perpetuated by the political powers at the time) to microscopic (e.g., abuse experienced within family systems) levels. It is important to note that from an ecological perspective, micro-level features are influenced by macro-systemic factors occurring at the time.

At a macro-level, two of the parental participants recalled experiences of on-going civil conflict and memories of death and violence during the Cultural Revolution:

> The struggle for power among the factions led to gunfighting within the city and streets. The fights were between Red Guards and Red Guards from different factions. They would show their weapons and power by shooting towards the sky. Sometimes, they would randomly shoot at bystanders. They ended up killing my neighbour who was just washing vegetables. No one would take responsibility for the murder, they just drove away because they were too powerful. (Hua)

Witnessing death and suicide appeared to be commonplace at the time. As explained to Joan by her father,

> [My father] told me that as a kid he saw a firing squad execute his neighbour. . . He told me that the fire squad lined up several people, including a young child, and executed
them. . . these executions were public events to show other people not to be “bad elements.” That same family also had a young servant who killed himself by jumping off the building.

The use of violence to threaten and manage citizens behaviour reflected the larger political conflict and oppression within China.

At a micro-level, within families, parental generation participants described strict forms of discipline that could be interpreted as neglect or abuse. Many of these parenting practices may have been illustrative of the survivalist context at the time; however, they remained negative and threatening experiences. In her narrative, Ms. Leung provides an example:

The nightmares reminded me of how my parents used to discipline me; they used to hit me and threaten to throw me into the well. I was afraid of my parents, because they were very strict and, though I could talk to them, I would not discuss personal or difficult matters with them.

These experiences of abuse were also communicated to some offspring participants: “[My mother] used to tell me that her mother, my grandma, would hit her all the time when she was growing up” (Stacy).

These narratives illustrate the normalcy of violence and abuse that existed within these periods. It could be understood that the violence was perpetuated systemically—disciplinary efforts participate ecologically as a response to protect the family from further harm. Otherwise, discipline could constitute a distillation of personal experiences of trauma. Regardless, the existence of the on-going violence manifest in traumas that shape the narratives of the parental generation.

**Chaos and instability.** Participants described coping with chaos and lacking control over their circumstances. As Hua describes the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, “From May 1966 to December 1968, there was no school and people didn’t have to work. It was the
pure revolution, and everything was in chaos.” Meanwhile, Henry indicates the absence of predictability as to who would be accused by the Red Guards during the period:

The Red Guards ran amok in the city. They could just accuse and capture anyone; there was no court or police. They could just take you away because they thought you were a “bad person,” as in the case of my father.

Lives were completely transformed during these political periods—self-understanding of their lives and any semblance of stability was completely shattered. For instance, Henry identifies 1958 as the year his life changed: “Suddenly, I became the son of a bad guy. In 1958, the Chinese government launched a large scale anti-rightist movement (反右运动 / Fǎn Yòu Yùndòng) which targeted my father and his colleagues.” Hua similarly describes the impact of her relationships suddenly derailing:

It was surreal. In grade seven, we were in the same class for two years, and we did everything together—we had performances, travelled, and took classes everyday for the past two years. My classmates were some of my best friends. And then, overnight, people got divided and became enemies to each other. I had no power or any way to protect myself; I was part of the ‘bad families.’

The fear of not having control persisted throughout the participant lives. For instance, Joan learned that her father conducted an act that violated the tenets of Mao’s Red Book, which he feared to share for over thirty years because of the implications. This persistent fear of instability and unpredictability can be best described by Henry:

When I came to Canada, I was still afraid of China. People can say whatever they want in Canada, but in China you must be careful. Before I left for Canada, I had a very good job: my income was good, my position was high, but in my heart, I was still afraid.

This aspect of fear and anxiety maintains itself throughout the life narratives of Henry and other parents. The ravages of fear highlight the significance of the loss experienced by the participants and how there was no sense of control over their own circumstances.
Parental Theme 3: Desperation for Survival

This theme concerns the desperate circumstances and desperate acts in which participants engaged in to survive. It relates to the previous two themes in that desperation can be understood as a response towards disrupted social structures, oppression, and violence. However, this section uniquely describes the extreme circumstances that the participants survived, as well as their engagement in survival-oriented actions that could themselves be traumatic and embodied over time. This theme includes experiences of poverty, famine, and taking part in and witnessing acts of survival.

Poverty and famine. Participants indicated experiences of poverty linked with starvation or famine. Poverty, famine, and starvation fit within this theme of “desperation” as it illustrates how essential needs were compromised. The actions taken and/or witnessed by participants to mitigate poverty and starvation is indicative of the desperateness of their circumstances. Poverty, famine, and starvation are connected to other themes (e.g., Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse), as shown by the historically oppressive decisions of the government and their contribution to the development of the Great Famine (see Dikötter, 2010).

In her narrative, Ms. Leung illustrates the impoverishment she experienced as a child, “I remember receiving an egg for my birthday, which was fortunate, because other children might not even get that for their birthdays.” As the circumstances were dire, children were forced to engage in unfavorable behaviours to make ends meet:

As children, if we saw feces, we would be really happy and would use a sweep pan to pick up the feces and collect them into a pile. The farmers relied on feces and urine as fertilizer and would pay for the excrement. We would even collect our own urine in a urine bin. (Ms. Leung)
Meanwhile in Henry’s narrative, circumstances of poverty and famine led to feelings of helplessness when he witnessed his brother’s death, “I saw my younger brother die. We could not save him—it was too costly to take him to the hospital. My family didn’t have money. My father didn’t have money. We could not save him.” Other participants shared how they observed the desperation of others when it came to food and survival.

Everyone was suffering. . . . I remember one time I was holding a pot with three little balls of cooked rice, one for each person in my family. As I walked back from the canteen, a homeless person lunged at me and grabbed two of the rice balls. His fingers were all dirty and black; he was so hungry that he stuffed the steaming rice into his mouth. I was so shocked. (Hua)

The poverty and lack of food forced people to engage in extreme behaviours to survive. For example, Ms. Leung explains in her story that baby girls were sometimes killed at birth due to the financial difficulty of having children and the inability to take care of them.

In the village, baby girls were sometimes killed after birth. It was not that baby girls in general were being killed off, but if a family had no boys and more than one girl, they might feel they were in a disadvantaged situation. Therefore, they might kill the next child if she was a girl. It was sometimes out of necessity. People didn’t have money for abortions, or else they may not be able to afford having another child. My father’s older brother and his wife who were farmers had a baby girl, whom they ended up drowning in the urine bin that was used to sell to farmers. I heard and saw this happen to others because it was the easiest way to kill a baby.

Infant drowning illuminates the circumstances people were subjected to. These practices were not normal, but a necessity given the life-threatening conditions explained in Ms. Leung’s story.

The impact of starvation and famine persisted even into adulthood, as conveyed in the offspring narratives. For example, Ryan describes of his mother, “There was not enough to eat [when my mother was a child], so she would just have soy sauce and rice. One time, she kept on pestering me to try it so that I could experience what it was like.”
Elsewhere, Ken learned the manner in which impoverished circumstances impacted his mother:

[My mom] told me that when she was younger, she visited her mother in the countryside and brought her food. The journey was treacherous and the weather conditions were bad with rain and thunder. When she reached her mother, the food had already gone bad and was rotten, but my grandma ended up eating it anyways. It really impacted my mom to see how her parents were treated, to see them working in the countryside, and to see that her mom was so impoverished she would even eat the rotten food.

The significance of not having food has cultural implications when it comes to Chinese hospitality. For example, “Have you eaten?” is a common phrase of greeting as opposed to “How are you?” Food itself is important from a cultural standpoint; the lack thereof and its implied significance is appreciated even from the offspring perspective, as shared by Joan:

My dad would tell me about how he would always feel hungry when he was growing up. . . They would have these jokes where, whenever he asked if a friend could come over, my grandma would be like, “Ok, I’ll just put another ladle of water in the congee.”

The humour in the quote derives from the joint understanding of Chinese hospitality, where because of the circumstances, one had to be creative with their hospitality. Perhaps the idiom, “Have you eaten?” is a cultural response indicative of the reality of food scarcity. This scarcity is exemplified by the impact of famine and poverty on the participants and at various points in Chinese history.

Desperate practices. Due to political circumstances, people engaged in actions not indicative of their moral standing and engaged in desperate bids for the preservation of self and family. Hua describes two such instances in her narrative. The first consists of her mother’s engagement in a drastic act in order protect her family.

[My mother] was afraid the Red Guards would come and accuse her of being an anti-revolutionary for saving these items. So, my mom did a very drastic thing, and she burned all the paintings, calligraphy, and books, even my father’s academic books. These were precious heirlooms, and she had to destroy them all. . . Her concern was for our
safety, but she always regretted doing that and cries when she talks about it. You never know when you will be attacked.

The second instance illustrates the moral decay that resulted from the class conflict during Mao’s regime. On one hand, because class conflict was endorsed by the government, it was normative to take part in behaviours that promoted class conflict. On the other hand, people may have also engaged in these behaviours to protect themselves and their families. Regardless of reasoning, it was clear that these rationales resulted in extreme behaviours reflecting the desperation of the times. Hua shares the second instance in witnessing the acts of her classmates bullying another student:

[My classmates] just waited for her, bashed her along the way, and continued to ridicule her when she stopped. They could have helped her, but they said that it was not their job. After we found her, we helped to get the rice back. We were so young, we were only fifteen. How could my peers do such a thing? I had such a vivid memory of that time because it was so devastating to me.

This example “left a deep impression” on Hua that human hatred “could be so deep,” contributing to her loss of faith in humanity, as expressed later in her story.

Another component of the Poverty and Famine subtheme, in the significant acts taken to preserve self and family, was the use of social influence – one’s guanxi – to protect oneself and others. It is important to understand that using one’s social face for something ostensibly dishonourable comes with significant costs. For an individual of a traditional Chinese mindset, to give up face indicates one’s desperation. To do so is akin to giving up a part of one’s self. Some participant narratives show how social relationships had to be utilized dishonourably, to curry favour to survive. The social significance of this sacrifice is described in Henry’s story:

Even though my father was also relegated, he retained a lot of friends who were good doctors, so I connected the individual with a doctor from my father’s university hospital . . . eventually this man was reinstated as the county head. He offered me any position in
the county, but I told him that I didn’t want anything, I just wanted to go back home. It was very difficult to get a release notice. . . My father is a very proper and traditional man, separating business from personal life. But at this particular moment, he did something against his principles, using his former status for a private matter. My father said all his life he had never begged anyone for anything. It was a degrading moment for my father to put himself in this position and to set aside his reputation. He lost a lot of face (面子 / miànzi) that day he begged a favour on my behalf.

The example captures the concept of renqing (the exchange of social favours, and broadly, social transactional dynamics; Hwang, 2011), the execution of which comes with the cost of personal reputation and moral integrity. Guanxi was therefore the important social capital that had to be depended upon to survive.

Overall, this theme highlights desperation, of the participants, of their families, and of neighbours, in the engagement of actions that ran against their own values and social structures to survive. It demonstrates how extreme the circumstances were—specifically with respect to poverty, oppression, and starvation—giving rise to the individual and social cost of survival. This theme fits appropriately within a trauma perspective, given its notion that traumatic behaviours are normal responses to extreme and abnormal circumstances (Shalev, 1996).

**Parental Theme 4: Personal Losses and the Denial of Education and Opportunities**

This theme is pertinent to all the participant stories and is centred on the losses and sacrifices made by the participants. It takes the form of personal losses and the denial of education and opportunities. The losses correlate with the circumstances at the time, specifically, during the parent generation’s residency in China, as certain privileges were stripped away because of one’s identified social class. Participants reflected on the losses that were incurred not only due to past events, but due in part to their migration to Canada.
Denial of education and opportunities. Education plays a vital part in the participant’s narratives and serves as a point of self-reference. Seen through a cultural lens, the value of education can be developed from traditional Chinese Confucian virtues (Gu, 2006). Education was stressed in traditional Chinese thinking as being basic to the formation of the nation and of individuals, as it contributed to moral character and personhood. Hence education itself was a tradition upheld by Chinese people (Gu, 2006). Not only is education central to identity, but it is vital to one’s worth. Pragmatically-speaking, it contributes to one’s survivability and social mobility, as shown in Ms. Leung’s quote: “My grandma instilled in me a sense of self-worth, and she taught me that with an education I would be able to leave the village.”

Abiding with the cultural lens of education emphasizes the significance of loss when educational opportunities are denied or taken away. These experiences were prevalent throughout the participant narratives. For example, Henry explained how he was unjustly denied educational opportunities because of his social status:

[I] was not allowed to be accepted into a public school. Each student had their own file, and my file stated that I could not be accepted as a student. Even though my marks were top-notch, maybe second highest in the school, I was not allowed to go.

For the participants, it was felt vital to be educated. Not only was it a personal value, but also reflective of their family’s values, further demonstrating education’s importance.

Similarly, the career opportunities to which one was privy intersected with the politics of the time. Being of a certain class, and then, being sent to the countryside dictated the future opportunities one could attain. The latter’s significance included the fact that one’s rights were stripped away, since people in the countryside essentially had little-to-no privileges. This notion is in the following quote from Hua’s story:
I tried every effort to become a student again, and every time, because of my family background, I was turned down even though I was capable. That was the worst thing about being in the countryside. . . Even if I tried to help myself or worked hard, I was the child of a “bad family,” so there were policies that prevented me from any promotions or future jobs. That was the darkest part about being in the countryside: there was no hope.

The social implications of being sent to the countryside can be appreciated in the interaction between Henry and his father:

It broke my father’s heart when I was sent to the countryside. It was the second time in my life I saw him cry. He said to me, “How can you live there… you're only 16.” My heart wrenched when I saw my father cry.

**Personal losses.** Personal losses refer broadly to losses accumulated and experienced over time in the areas of mental health, finances, social relationships, and family, along with the social and practical costs of immigration. With mental health issues, offspring participants provided details about their parent’s mental health. For example, Ken shared the following about his father: “It’s a weird idea, but I think, when I was growing up, and even now, my dad had an eating disorder. I think he was stress eating. He couldn’t find a job, so he ate; it was like binge eating.” While Lina described characteristics of her parents’ anxiety and depression:

I am pretty sure my mom has anxiety and depression—and maybe even my dad to an extent, because he is always super overprepared, and that may be a response to going through times where he didn’t have anything.

Lastly, Ryan details his experience of dealing with his mother’s suicidality in his story:

My mom attempted suicide twice when I was in high school. The first time she attempted, she made me this very specific food, dorayaki, a dessert with sweet red beans inside, covered with two pancakes. . . [She] told me, ‘This will be the last thing I make for you, I’m going to go now.’ I didn’t know what to make of it at the time.

Two of the participants shared about their financial losses due to immigration.

Specifically, Henry referred to how he was once financially secure but gave that up in order to
have a sense of stability in Canada, while Ms. Leung gave an account that immigration not only resulted in financial losses, but also personal losses.

This immigration journey has been a tough walk. I was by myself, and any obstacles that came my way I had to solve on my own. I regret this decision, but I don’t at the same time. . . We lost finances because of immigration, but we got a son, which you cannot buy; we lost business relationships, but we gained a renewed relationship with my first son. . . In the last couple of years, because of immigration, my husband and I were always apart from each other, and our relationship and feelings became bland (Ms. Leung).

Likewise, Ken received the wisdom from his mother, “I have to work ten times as hard in order to get a portion of what they [i.e., Caucasians] get.” Such wisdom portrays the systemic vocational barriers experienced by his mother due to immigration, barriers representative of the opportunity costs of migration.

Central to this theme is the notion of stripping away one’s identity and stability. The loss of education had a profound impact on participants, as it was important to both cultural identity and practical survival. Desperation to be educated necessarily persisted, and the stripping away of education, along with its associated privileges, was a traumatic experience. The personal losses within this theme might be ascertained as being a secondary loss—a consequence of the systemic oppression and decimation of social structures described earlier. Nonetheless, though it may be secondary, it remained significant to the participants, and the build up of these losses contributed to the cumulative stress and personal challenges that participants faced in their lives.

**Parental Theme 5: Maintenance of Values and Emphasis on the Future**

The parental narratives portrayed a sense of resilience, as illustrated through the values that persisted amid hardships and were endured, preserved by people around them. These qualities were self-protective and contributed to a future orientation for the participants where their emphasis was on the well-being of their offspring and their family’s future. The protective
factors were imperative for the participants, protecting them from the mayhem and from compromise of their own moral integrity.

In each narrative, the protective factors were often sustained by key relationships in the participant’s life. For instance, Ms. Leung explains how her grandmother was able to instill self-value in her younger self, a female growing up in a period of time where it was not as valued to be female. The following is one quote Ms. Leung shared about her grandmother:

My sister and I were raised by grandmother’s words and deeds. Grandma was good with her hands and was kind, gentle, knowledgeable, sincere, and responsible; these virtues became life examples for me and my sister. She inspired me to study, to become educated, and to hang onto my beliefs and interests regardless of being rich or poor. . . My grandma taught me that it was okay to be a girl because I once thought it was unfortunate to be a girl.

Similarly, in Hua’s narrative, her parents were fundamental in sustaining her values. She even describes how, if it were not for them, her own integrity might have been compromised, as they protected her from manipulative propaganda—these parents “paid great attention to my education, and it was their principles and lessons that protected my integrity as a person.” The lessons from her story resonate throughout her narrative.

My mother always told me that sometimes doing the right thing meant sacrifice, and it was important to see the bigger vision. . . If my parents didn’t teach me these principles, I might have done something terrible during the Cultural Revolution; after all, everyone else was doing it. Education, integrity, and justice—these were the principles my parents instilled in me.

The support that Hua received came not only from family members, but others who sustained her integrity and spurred her interests in education. She describes how a professor she met in the countryside ended up contributing to her eventual career as an educator herself:

The woman professor once shared a room with me, sleeping in little bunk beds. . . She inspired me to continue to explore my passion for literature, and I spent many years
looking for that book [Spartacus] afterwards. . . I felt validated because she showed great interest in what I was doing and reading. I never had this heart-to-heart conversation with someone who was above me and more knowledgeable; she talked to me as a peer and affirmed my interest in literature. I could never forget our conversations. She valued me and my opinions and, as someone who was well-educated, she was someone I aspired to become.

These protective factors contributed to the future orientation and forms of protest engaged by some participants afterwards. For instance, Hua describes her protection of her own students during the Tiananmen Square incident. Her response and actions powerfully showed her resistance and can be traced back to the integrity and justice espoused by her parents. Vividly shown are her values, in the moment she challenged the social norms during the announcement of Mao’s death in an act of protest:

All the peasants were wailing and crying as if their parents died. I remember thinking to myself, ‘finally this moment has come, Mao can no longer exercise his power over millions of people.’ I had suffered too much because of him; I could not pretend to be sad. I refused to bow my head.

The parental narratives often made clear the desire to create a better life for family and children. Henry knew he must “leave for the sake of my children. I did not want them to experience not having opportunities or an education.” This concept of leaving China for the betterment of family was generally appreciated in the offspring narratives. It was understood that parents had sacrificed exceedingly in order to focus on the betterment of their future.

The five themes above constitute the parental themes. As indicated, the themes overlap and correlate with one another; such overlap highlights the complex and difficult historical circumstances endured by the parental generation. The next section provides an overview of the transmission themes. Both direct and indirect linkages of these transmission themes can be
narratively constructed back to their respective parental themes. The parental themes therefore serve as a reference point for understanding the next section on trauma transmission.

**Transmission Themes: Transmission Processes and the Impact on Offspring**

The transmission themes refer to processes (practices, behaviours, and communication) whereby psychological trauma is transmitted from one generation to the next through an intergenerational exchange. As there is a passing-on or exchange, this theme is composed of both the parental and offspring perspectives where the continuity of trauma is constructed through the interactions between generations. Both generations are, in a sense, carriers of trauma, as this study presumes that traumatic processes impact behaviours in both generations.

The transmission themes incorporate both the trauma-transmission processes (the transmission subthemes) and consequential impact of trauma on offspring narratives (offspring subthemes). The rationale for incorporating the offspring and transmission subthemes under the umbrella of “transmission” consists of the fact that both these subthemes were largely based on offspring narratives, with a minority of content derived from the parental narratives. Transmission processes typically reflected offspring perspectives; such processes established the link between traumatically influenced parental behaviour and consequential offspring impact. The narrative continuity of parent-offspring stories was utilized to construct the participation of parent’s behaviours in the trauma transmission processes. The narrative meaning structures from which this study derived impact on offspring and the corresponding transmission processes are therefore both intimately tied together. Secondly, the parental narratives and their self-reflection on patterns of behaviour that may have impacted their children are also woven into these themes.

Transmission subthemes and corresponding traumas found within the parental narratives indeed overlap. The transmission processes ostensibly connect the direct trauma experienced by
parents and such trauma’s impact on the offspring through behavioural and communicative interactions between the two. Parental trauma and parental impact on offspring are connected narratively, even if the processes that connect the two are not completely linear or sequential. Presented in Table 13 are the five transmission themes and their associated transmission process (“T-P”) subthemes and offspring impact (“O”) subthemes. The determined labels for the transmission themes highlight the key characteristic of trauma transmission that narratively link the subthemes together.
Table 13. Transmission Themes and Corresponding Subthemes and Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Themes</th>
<th>Silence, Shame, and Disconnection</th>
<th>Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of Interdependence</th>
<th>Fear and Discipline</th>
<th>Education as Survival and Identity</th>
<th>Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subthemes</td>
<td>Communicative silence, trauma and shame (T)</td>
<td>Saving face and interdependent expectations (T)</td>
<td>Fear and control (T)</td>
<td>Primacy of education (T)</td>
<td>Maintenance of values and hope for the future (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Silence about the historical past (T-P)</td>
<td>Expectations of self placed on children (T-P)</td>
<td>Control and anxiety about safety and future (T)</td>
<td>Emphasis on education, stability, and success (T)</td>
<td>Preservation and maintenance of heritage, values, and language (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silence regarding family stories and heritage (T)</td>
<td>Maintaining face, social mobility, and image of success (T)</td>
<td>Fear for offspring’s future (T-P)</td>
<td>Education as a value and desire for educational opportunities for offspring (T-P)</td>
<td>Transmission of family values (T-P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect communication (T)</td>
<td>Immigration and dependency on offspring (T)</td>
<td>Manifestation of psychosocial issues in relation to entering post-secondary (O)</td>
<td>Emphasis on personal educational desires (T-P)</td>
<td>Proud of offspring and hope placed in offspring (T-P)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Subthemes    | Cultural indirection and fragmented communication (T) | Preserving familial integrity (O) | Strict disciplinary action (T) | Accumulative stress and mental health challenges (O) | Connecting to heritage: Grandparents and honoring family (T/O) |
| Categories   | Passive-aggressive and avoidant communication around issues (T) | Preserving parental integrity, filial commitments, and affirmation of parental past experiences (O) | Strict discipline, high expectations, and abuse (T/T-P) | Manifestation of psychosocial issues in relation to entering post-secondary (O) | Appreciation of parental commitments and filial piety (O) |
|              | Arguments, tension, and mixed messages (T) | Self-silencing to preserve familial face (O) | Minimization of offspring experiences (T) | Mental health issues attributed to stress and academic stress (O) | Grandparent(s) as a resource (O) |
|              | Disconnection with emotions in communication (T) |                                    |                                    |                                    |                                    |

| Subthemes    | Disconnection and the desire for connection (O) | Conflicting values (O) | Ruptured relationships and avoidance (O) | Education as a cultural pathway (O) | Cultural criticalness and reclaiming heritage (O) |
| Categories   | Desire for emotional connection with parent (O) | Conflict with traditional parental values (O) | Ruptured relationships in response to disciplinary efforts (O) | Academics as definition of self and cultural pathway (O) | Reclaiming values in response to heritage and family experiences and personal values (O) |
|              | Frustrations with communication gaps (O) | Racial identity and conflict with parental and cultural expectations (O) | Disconnection and coping through avoidance (O) | Pressure to succeed and familial expectation regarding academic achievement (O) | Critical reflection on experiences of class, privilege, and race (O) |
|              | Desire for offspring to know familial past (T-P) |                                    |                                    |                                    | Navigation of identity with racial and oppressive experiences (O) |
|              | Attempts to understand offspring circumstances (T-P) |                                    |                                    |                                    |                                    |

| Subthemes    | Silence and shame (O) | Internalization and mental health (O) |
| Categories   | Silencing of personal and family experiences (O) | Self-criticism and internalization of family issues and parental discipline (O) |
|              | Internalization of shame (O) | Mental health issues attributed to family (O) |

Note. Any subtheme or categories that are predominantly based on transmission processes will be denoted by (T) next to it, while the consequential impact on offspring will be identified with an (O). Categories based on parental narratives will include a (-P) next to the identified transmission process, for example (T-P). These categories are subsumed within broader subthemes (italicized) which the themes (bolded) are composed of.
Transmission Theme 1: Silence, Shame, and Disconnection

At the core of this theme is silence preserved through shame, fragmented communication, and trauma itself. Silence overlaps with many other subthemes (both transmission and offspring) in direct and indirect ways, however what is emphasized in this theme are aspects of narrative that directly link silence and its consequential impact on the offspring generation. In the narratives, the transmission of silence itself produces disconnection between parents and offspring and further perpetuates feelings of shame.

This theme parallels Danieli’s (1998) *Conspiracy of Silence* (see literature review). In these narratives the “non-verbal agreements” that maintain silence manifest due to sociohistorical trauma experienced by the parents. These agreements contribute to self-silencing and cultural misunderstandings between generations. The traumatic past of the parents is brought into the present through interactions that preserve silence itself. The narratives illustrate that offspring are provided with glimpses of parental traumas. These glimpses are sufficient enough to contribute to their wondering about their parent’s past experiences, however they remain insufficient for the offspring to fully understand their parent’s experiences. These descendants are left to their own devices to indirectly piece together their parent’s stories, where such a situation contributes both a knowingness and unknowingness that pervades through their own story.

The silence of trauma is understood mainly from the offspring perspective. Much like the narratives of those painted by the children of Holocaust survivors (see Danieli, 1998), the offspring perspectives highlight the known silence discovered through both indirect and direct means. Consequently, this theme is largely based on the offspring’s constructions given that the
carriers of trauma, the parents, are too the carriers of silence. This theme can be further broken down into the transmission subthemes of silence maintained through trauma attended by shame and the fragmented communication manifested because of culture. The consequential impact subthemes include disconnection attended by the desire for connection, along with silencing and shame.

Communicative silence, trauma, and shame (transmission process). There is silencing that is made manifest through the act of indirect and non-verbal communication. Communicative silence is part of the transmission process and can be fostered through trauma and shame. The offspring narratives highlight a desire to know more about their parents’ experiences as their knowledge of these stories are limited. However, as the offspring are left with only glimpses of their parent’s past lives, such scarcity may contribute to fear of asking about these experiences; the silence implies reasons for that silence. Silence may suggest something horrific happened, or else the offspring may choose to respect their parent’s silence. As described in Lina’s story, “My mom doesn't talk about her experiences nearly as much as my dad does, and I don't want to dig at it if she doesn't want to talk about it.”

The preservation of silence can be attributed to either the offspring, parents, or both, where the message conveyed through silence is that discussions about the past are problematic or distasteful. For example, Joan shared the following, “My dad has told me some stories about his time in China. As we were growing up, he would just tell us random stories over dinner, and sometimes my mom would get upset at him.” The mother’s response highlights the distaste in sharing about the past, despite the father’s willingness. The preservation of silence about the past can also extend beyond parent-offspring and be communicated through other family members.
My maternal grandma was a teacher back then, and I have no idea what horrors she might have experienced. When I brought it up to my aunt, she told me not to ask my grandma about the Cultural Revolution—all of grandma’s behaviours can be attributed to that time. (Stacy)

As both cases illustrate, silence communicates that issues of the past should not be explored.

Silence can be created by parents through limited or indirect communication of their story. Parents may either choose to remain silent on certain facets of their narrative, or they themselves may not have access to parts of their narratives because of traumatic processes. Aspects of the known story are either communicated by the parents through indirect means, as Ken describes knowing his father through, “eavesdropping on conversations he’s had with his friend.” Otherwise, they may be skewed toward a positive frame of reference that silences other dimensions of their narrative: “[My father] rarely talks about himself, but when he does share, it’s only small details from his perspective, and he tends to frame himself in a positive light, so it’s hard to gauge what actually happened” (Stacy).

Examples of communication where the story is told indirectly highlight those aspects of story that are left untold. In both Lina and Joan’s narratives, their respective fathers shared their stories in humorous ways that silenced the emotional valence of the situation—“My dad often uses humour to talk about his experiences, which is a good entry point, though he doesn’t talk about how it affects him, which I try to infer on my end” (Joan). The silence about emotions indirectly communicates that there is something about the story that is left untold, as Joan continued to recount that her father’s fear “must have been pretty internalized, that [my father] would be scared for his life for doing something like that.” The offspring are left with enough information to know that their parent’s experiences were difficult, but not enough to know
exactly why. Such communicative practice creates a sense of disconnection and a fragmented understanding of parents for offspring participants.

The silence is also a consequence of the relational tensions and disconnections between the parents and offspring. This is illustrated in both Stacy and Ken’s stories, where the problematic relationships with parents prevented opportunities for learning about family story: “I am unable to learn more about my family from my parents, because of how broken our relationship has become, and that is unfortunate” (Stacy). It remains unknown whether the trauma itself perpetuated relational tensions for Stacy, however what is known is that her disconnection continues to create silence.

From the silence, there is an implied trauma inferred by participants, one that continues the silence. This was previously illustrated in Stacy’s narrative where it was suggested that her grandmother’s behaviours could be linked to the traumatic experiences she faced. Trauma is conceptualized through the banal interactions, behaviours, and communication (or lack thereof) that illuminate the past. As Ken describes, “I remember she had these scars on her face and I’m pretty sure they were from torture or from physical assaults.” These aspects of narrative are known through the remnants and scars of the past—physical, behavioural, and metaphorical—that are explicit in the present. These aspects provide sufficient information to the offspring generation to know much more of their family stories are left unsaid.

Cultural indirection and fragmented communication (transmission process). The communicative silence between parents and offspring reflect both cultural and linguistic challenges to communication. Culture contributes the rules that dictate how story and emotions are communicated, while linguistic barriers refer to physical inability to communicate story. The
silence in this subtheme is reflective of both the cultural and linguistic gap between the two
generations that gives rise to misapprehension.

In the case of Chinese families, it is known that culture contributes to the silence in the
offspring narratives, however it is unclear how much of the silence is also due to trauma.

I don’t know why my dad is the way he is. There is so much vagueness and the details
about him are sketch. Part of it is because we don’t talk and we don’t get along. It’s hard
for me to tell if that was normal. I could never tell if that was because of culture or if it
was because of his own trauma. (Ken)

Likewise, Stacy shared the following anecdote: “Both my parents have a lot of internalized stuff
for sure, but it’s unclear to me what made them internalize those things.” Both instances
highlight an appreciation of traumatic elements in parents’ stories, but there remains uncertainty
as to other contributing factors. The difficulty of teasing apart trauma itself may lie in its being
intertwined with the cultural norms of communication.

The lack of emotional connection or communication can also be understood culturally.
In the offspring narratives, the expression of emotion is often implicit or unspoken. This idea is
illustrated in the following statement from Lina:

[My mother] seems like she doesn't really want to talk about emotional things. I feel like
that’s probably part of Chinese culture. Chinese culture is not very big on emotions. It
seems like she has been through a lot of unfair circumstances, and she probably
internalizes that as, “I can’t change it; this is the way the world is.”

This quote highlights the cultural gap in communication, as Lina interprets her mother’s silence
and internalization of “emotional things” as being Chinese. Ryan also shared similar reflections:
“As a collective, Chinese people figured out the education part, though we may be missing other
aspects such as emotional vulnerability.” The cultural gap illustrates the differences in offspring
expectations for emotional expressivity and what is communicated from their parents; it
illuminates cross-cultural difference and contributes to a sense of disconnection for the offspring generation. For instance, Lina shared the following after hearing her father’s stories: “. . . it sometimes feels overly factual, like he removes himself from the story. It is still personal in that it is about him, but it feels disconnected, as if he were reading from a storybook about someone else’s life.”

The cultural elements of communication may not be fully understood by the offspring generation and can be interpreted by the offspring as being indicative of trauma. Certain messages from the parents/grandparents may be perceived as passive-aggressive from the offspring perspective. However, for the parents, they may reflect implicit and face-based communication (Gao & Ting-Tommey, 1998). An example is shown in Lina’s narrative, in her miscommunication with her mother:

Neither my sister nor I help out as much because it feels like a chore every year, but [my mother] would get upset and say things like, "You don’t care about your family. . . who knows how long you are going to be seeing these people; you don’t care about me; you don’t care." It is frustrating. It’s not that we don’t care, we just have other priorities.

For Lina, this situation is experienced as being frustrating, though such a reaction may not be the intention of her mother, who may be trying to communicate values of face-saving and familial respect. Similarly, Stacy experiences a sense of guilt when dealing with her grandmother, who like Lina’s mother may be communicating differently due to different cultural rules.

[My grandmother] also does this thing where she will not eat until everyone else has eaten and will only eat a little bit of what was left over. She would make these huge breakfasts for me and insist that I eat everything. I would feel it’s a huge waste, but she would make it anyways and get upset if I didn’t eat everything. I know she has digestive issues, but it felt like she was doing this to make us feel guilty.

Stacy interprets these behaviours as both guilt-inducing and a reflection of her grandmother’s traumas in the act of placing other family members first. Again, both instances illustrate how
silence and misunderstanding are created when communicative intentions are lost in translation due to different cultural understandings and, perhaps, due to trauma.

Culturally, filial piety and the preservation of individual and familial face contributes to the ways in which story is silenced. For example, Joan described the following:

My mom has shared that her father, my grandpa, was abusive towards her. This was the same for my dad as well, but his dad also abandoned the family when he went to America. My parents don’t really share much detail cause both their fathers have already passed away and they don’t want to say bad things about them. Maybe it’s also respect for the older generation.

She interprets her parents’ silence as “respect” and an intentional effort to preserve the face of her grandparents. Another cultural aspect of communicative silence lies in the parent’s intentions to protect their children from issues of the past—an aspect of Confucian benevolence (see Wong, 2009). This may explain Joan’s parents’ avoidance of talking about financial issues in her story, and Ryan’s family’s attempts to hide their issues from him, as he states, “It was not only their marriage that was falling apart, but it was also their financial situation, and they tried to keep everything under wraps.” Though there may be aspects of shame or trauma attributed to the silence around past and current issues, the silence also reflects role hierarchies, saving face, benevolence, and filial piety which constitute cultural rules followed by the parental generation. Silence, from that perspective, may serve a protective function to preserve face, even if that result is not the experience of the offspring or how they perceive these behaviours.

Lastly, silence itself may be perpetuated by linguistic limitations. Joan describes in her story her realization of the advantage being conversant in her native language. However, this realization was not always found in all the participants. For instance, Ken could not understand his father’s stories, because of his limited apprehension of Chinese, one of the barriers to his
learning about family: “I couldn’t really understand them because they used Chinese terminology specific to the Cultural Revolution and Communism, which I was unfamiliar with.”

As portrayed in the transmission subthemes, the transmission of silence has layers of both trauma and shame, but also cultural and pragmatic dimensions, contributing to silence. This is consistent with the literature regarding the intersection of culture and trauma in the trauma transmission process (Danieli, 2007). The next section provides detail as to how silence impacts the offspring generation.

**Disconnection and the desire for connection (offspring impact).** The silence about parental and family history contributes to a sense of disconnection with one’s parents and, consequently, a disconnection with both self and heritage among the offspring generation. Descendants’ yearning for connection to parents and heritage is found throughout the offspring narratives. The disconnection with parents due to silencing contributes to offspring desire to understand self-identity, being as they are left with a gap in their own narrative identity. As illustrated by Ken’s statement about yearning to understand himself through his family story,

> In the past few years, I have wondered about my parents and how they grew up… I have learned more about my family recently, but it’s hard for me to know whether these stories are true because most of it comes from my older brother. It makes me wonder whether these stories have influenced my parents to be the way they are now and how that, in-turn, affects me. (Ken)

Others, such as Stacy, shared similar sentiments:

> The photo is important to me because my parents do not talk about the past, yet they have this little photo in the corner of their picture frame. It is evidence that the past existed and pre-dates all the traumas that my parents have gone through. It still matters, and the empathic part of me can connect with that past. Even if they can’t fully acknowledge the past, I can acknowledge it in my own way. (Stacy)
In both narratives the appreciation and understanding of self is grounded in their attempts to understand their parents. However, because of disconnection from parents’ key stories, both participants are left with their own ways to try to understand their own identities, history and past.

Both Ryan and Ken share the same sentimentality of wishing they had known more about their respective parents: “I wish I knew more about my mom. She went through a lot as a child. Is that what shapes her to be the way that she is now?” (Ken). The known and fragmented aspects of the parental narratives manifests into wonderment regarding the unknown, interspersed among the offspring narratives. The disconnection creates a space for desiring for emotional vulnerability and connection to their parents.

I want to know more, because there is also a part of me that empathizes with my family. I don’t think that is a side that I like to draw attention to because it is buried underneath many layers in me. Somewhere beneath the damage that they have done is a part of me that empathizes with them, that wants to know what they have experienced that has some semblance of care. (Stacy)

Similarly, Lina offered the following anecdote illustrating her fear of engaging vulnerably with her mother:

I would like to be more open with my parents without worrying that they’re going to close the door on me. For instance, because my mom is not that open, if I share vulnerably, will she respond vulnerably as well?

These quotes illustrate that, despite the desire to connect, there remains fear of whether parents will meet their need for connection. The fear remains, because of the implications of silence and, possibly, previous relational ruptures resulting from trauma itself.

The disconnection is, however, not solely perpetuated by the parental generation. It may also find contributors to silence among the offspring generation. There is also a desire for
parental participants to connect with their offspring, though the desire’s expression may be perceived differently by offspring. In one of the parental narratives, Hua’s story, she describes wanting to connect with her son about the past, but not finding reception by him:

I never told [my son] about the Cultural Revolution or other traumas. He wouldn’t understand, and he was never interested. Even now that he is in his thirties, when I bring up these experiences, he would say something to the extent of, “Oh that was the past; you guys just want to talk about old stuff.”

Hua illustrates a key aspect of the silence itself—that it is interactional. Whether it be attempts to listen or to be heard from one party or the other, both parties often contribute to the ways in which silence is constructed and maintained between the two.

Once more, the narratives portray that silence impacts the offspring generation, manifesting disconnection and a desire to connect. Disconnection and connection are interactional—a dance between two parties of wanting to know and be known, an interpretive space to be filled. It is in this void that silence can be interpreted as being inherently problematic or indicative of shame or of disinterest as in the example above.

**Silence and shame (offspring impact).** The transmission of silence from the parental generation can manifest in the form of shame, maintaining a silencing character in offspring behaviour. This is represented in Ryan and Ken’s narrative, and most vividly demonstrated in Joan’s story. For Joan, the silence about past events due to financial difficulties was experienced as shame:

They told us not to tell other people and to never talk about these events. They drilled this message into me, and I became ashamed about my time in Compton and did not talk about it until I got to college. Even though this was such an important period in my life, it had to stay hidden because I knew they were ashamed and upset by it, and I didn’t want to see them like that. So, I started feeling ashamed about it too. I felt that I should be silent so my parents wouldn’t have to fight or feel ashamed…
Parental shame regarding to what happened to Joan having to live elsewhere because of their financial difficulties contributed to her own internalized shame. She was unable to speak about her experience despite its significance, where self-silencing was an effort to preserve her parent’s face. However, the behavioural pattern of silence disseminated into other areas of her life, as she describes:

Sometimes I find myself acting like my parents. I have never told them about the abusive relationship because they worry about me a lot, and I don’t want them to worry even more, so I act like them, [saying], “it’s in the past.”

The silence appears not only as a product of shame, but a learned coping mechanism for the shame transmitted from one generation to the next. The behaviour’s message—shameful experiences should remain silenced.

Other offspring stories parallel this message about silence. That there is something about the past that should remain silent, something potentially interpreted as shameful, is the message seen in Ryan’s family hiding their personal and financial issues. As the communication of familial stories is fragmented, an implication arises: silence indicates that trauma should be perceived as shameful. The implication is inherited and experienced as shame in the offspring generation.

Throughout this theme, the narratives convey the concept that silencing, whether culturally defined or trauma-based, contributes to relational disconnection and a sense of shame for the offspring generation. The ensuing disconnection results in desire and effort to mitigate that gap. Silence weaves its way throughout the narratives and into other themes. As a theme, it is a core tenet of the trauma transmission process constructed within these narratives.
Transmission Theme 2: Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of Interdependence

This theme highlights the cultural and interdependent expectations and the face-maintaining efforts that are transmitted from parents to offspring. The interactional dimension of this theme can be captured by the notion—*my pain is their pain; their pain is my pain* (Asian Canadian Asian Migration, 2018). The parental narratives illustrate situations when the parent’s face or standing was disrupted through trauma (see parental themes). Thus, the face-preserving efforts in this theme can be understood as inherently tied to the experience of loss of face. Since people of Chinese cultures tend to view the self as interdependent (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991), offspring are in a sense responsible for preserving the face of their parents and vice-versa. As such, the trauma transmission process in this theme involves the notion that the expectations placed onto offspring are connected to past traumas involving losing face. Expectations for the self and for offspring to save face result. Due to the interdependent nature of self, offspring are impacted in that they internalize their parental expectations and take part in face-saving efforts initiated by parents.

The communicative efforts of parents may indeed serve the purpose of saving face and creating harmony within groups. However, this may not be reflected by what is understood within the offspring narratives, which may not experience harmony. Rather, offspring narratives illustrated confusion and conflict between their own values and cultural-familial values instilled by parents. These dimensions of intention and confusion are encompassed in this theme. Transmission subthemes include saving face and interdependent expectations, while the offspring-consequence subthemes include preserving parental integrity and cultural confusion given conflicting values.
Saving face and interdependent expectations (transmission process). This subtheme highlights the interdependent relationships and communication patterns of the parental generation. The notion of the interdependent self, the view of the self in relation to others (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991), is a frame of reference for understanding the interactions between parent and offspring as captured in the narratives. The parent’s social identity is interconnected with their offspring’s and vice-versa. One’s identification in this case cannot be a completely independent act (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, the actions and behaviours of one’s offspring reflects one’s self and impacts individual and familial face (Gao, 1998).

“Interdependent expectations” refers to expectations placed on children that are reflective of one’s expectations of oneself. This was shown in the parental narratives, in how self-reference is used to determine the expectations and desires for offspring. For instance, Henry describes the following:

I compare my experience to [my daughter’s], and I often tell her that she does not need to worry about having rice to eat and that her life is so good. That she is in a really good environment here. I tell her that she needs to find a stable job and work hard and study hard. I think, in a way, it is too relaxed here compared to how it was in China.

Likewise, Ms. Leung draws from her own experiences in shaping the expectations of her son, as shown in her letter to her son.

I wanted you to be a smart boy, so I forced you to learn. I think part of my desire for you to learn was because, when I was young, I always wanted to learn different things, but I didn’t have the chance to. I had a lot of interests, like calligraphy, but never had the opportunity to learn. So, when you were born, I wanted you to learn everything, and I wanted to give you everything that I missed out on when I was a child. I ended up giving you a lot of pressure because I wanted you to do everything that I couldn’t.

Both narratives reflect a desire for offspring to have something that neither participants had.

There is a vicarious and interdependent aspect to the expectations—a desire for children to have
what they could not and, by their offspring’s fulfillment, to fulfill their own internal desires and expectations. However, in doing so, large expectations create pressure on offspring, since the latter feel they must live up to these expectations as a filial commitment.

Parental expectations intend to maintain face for the family, as the image of their offspring echoes their own self-image. This perception or feeling that they must maintain a certain image was referenced throughout the offspring narratives. Narratives were reflective of their own understanding of parental expectations, as demonstrated in Lina’s quote:

It can seem like Chinese people are very monolithic: “oh we are a good family, we have such and such accomplishments, we don’t have flaws.” It’s that whole Chinese mentality: “oh, so-and-so’s kid did this, why can’t you be more like them?” Any issues are to be swept under the rug, because it would ruin the image of perfection we have to have. Her reflection connects her own experience with other Chinese-Canadians whom she believes have a similar experience. Continuity is found in the notion that the success of the offspring reflects the success of the parents, their status, and their social image.

The social image of success appears to be tied to social mobility and prioritized by the parents in Ryan and Stacy’s narratives. For instance, Stacy shared, “Even coming to Canada, it was all about class mobility for my family, or at least there was the pressure toward class mobility, even if it was unsaid.” This image of success inclusive of social capital and social networks connects back to the concept of guanxi (see Yang, 1995), as discussed in earlier themes (i.e., Desperation for Survival) was vital for survival. From this perspective, efforts to foster social capital and status can also be understood as a response to trauma, to protect self and family. The perceived emphasis on social relationships, status, and face becomes more pronounced in the offspring narratives as those factors were necessary for survival in the parental generation. These social values may themselves be overemphasized in the subsequent
generation because of the vital importance for the older generation to have social capital for survival, self-preservation, and preservation of family (see parental themes).

**Preserving familial integrity (offspring impact).** This subtheme highlights the consequences of parental expectations and face-saving efforts’ placement onto the shoulders of offspring participants. It encompasses the efforts taken by the offspring to preserve familial face, as such efforts were expected of them as a form of filial piety. Again, the notion, *my pain is their pain; their pain is my pain* (Asian Canadian Asian Migration, 2018) is expressed by preserving parental and familial face as an act of appreciation and understanding of the hardships parents endured. Self-sacrificial actions for the sake of familial standing can be understood through the framework of interdependent self-construal. Such actions are reflective of the internalized view of parents’ values as part of the offspring identity. This subtheme also portrays the instilled cultural values and sense of empathy that offspring have towards their parents.

Throughout the offspring narratives, concern for the parental well-being is potentially framed as filial piety. For instance, Ryan provided the following regarding his father despite their relational disconnection:

I worry about my father. I worry about him a lot. It has been challenging for him and he has also been difficult to connect with. I worry that he is going to kill himself or have a stroke from being so stressed. He internalizes everything.

Likewise, concern for parents despite negative past experiences is also shared in Ken’s assertion that his father “pisses me off, but I worry about him. He is my dad and I still care about him.” Alongside, Stacy laments, “I am conflicted about my parents. I can empathize with them sometimes, but I know I must set boundaries to protect myself from them, because they are the source of a lot of my traumas.” In all three cases, concern and filial piety towards parents are connected to an understanding of the pain their parents endured.
There remains an appreciation among the offspring participants that their parents’ behaviours are shaped by past hardships and challenges. This appreciation mitigates offspring reactions and creates space for offspring to understand their parents, even during conflicting times.

Though it can be frustrating to deal with [my parent’s] controlling behaviours, I feel that, because they have seen so many terrible and unfair things that can happen for seemingly no reason at all, they are that much more concerned when it comes to my going out (Lina).

This understanding contributes a protectiveness towards Lina’s parents—a preservation of her parents’ integrity. For instance, the manner in which offspring participants communicated about their parents, even given problematic behaviours, was in my estimation protective of how their parents might be perceived (i.e., their face). This was done in direct ways, but also subtly, in the minimization of their own experience or perspective. For example, despite disagreement with her mother’s way of coping, Lina shares the following:

. . . I think that’s probably a coping mechanism. She had to go through so many horrible things in the past, and if she let all of them affect her, she would feel awful. If that’s how she gets herself out of the mud, then I can’t discount that.

Likewise, Ryan describes his mother in the following way despite her behaviours:

My mom does sketchy business dealings, and I worry about her, but there is a part of me that also trusts her and knows that, in doing these actions, she is expressing who she is. Maybe, she is finally at the point where societal shackles are no longer restraining her, and I am ok with it, as long as nothing bad happens to her. I also need to realize that my mom can take care of herself.

These quotes demonstrate how the participants wanted to respect their parents despite disagreeing with aspects of their behaviours, thus leaving them in a conflicted position.
In terms of direct efforts to preserve parental face, the participants provided a perspective of their parents that took away the blame from their parents. For instance, Joan stated the following in her story, effectively minimizing her mother’s self-regret.

As we got older, my mom would tell us how she regretted not spending more time with us. Though I can understand where she is coming from, my brother and I were pretty happy and didn’t think of it that way…. Despite the challenges, my parents raised me really well and, even though a lot of shit happened, it wasn’t their fault.

She continues to share in her story how she silenced herself to protect her parents from being shamed: “I felt that I should be silent so my parents wouldn’t have to fight or feel ashamed.”

Throughout this subtheme, the preservation of face has come with an understanding of, and empathizing with, parental experiences of past difficulties, leading to engagement in filial piety. Efforts to maintain face may be initiated by parents through a cultural framework of interdependence, but the offspring take part in tandem, respecting and caring for their parents.

**Conflicting values (offspring impact).** This subtheme illustrates how the interdependence-based expectations and face-saving efforts can conflict with the offspring’s values, contributing to their own cultural confusion. For the offspring, there is conflict between the values they hold and the life their parents want them to live, manifesting in the form of confusion regarding their racial and social identity. This conflict is demonstrated in Lina’s story:

It still feels like I must be a ‘good Asian’, I must go to university and that has never been in question. I never even thought of any other possibility. I never thought about going into trades or arts. Other people do that, but not me.

She continues to explain how she experiences conflict between her values and her mother’s.

Personally, I espouse the idea that if you tell friends about issues, things will slowly change. Instead, [from my mother’s] point of view, thinking about sad and unfortunate injustices only brings yourself down. She does not want to hear me talk about large-scale issues, like police killing black people in the States. . .
Lina, who identifies with social justice efforts, feels challenged by her mother, who seems to ignore these values important to Lina. There is pressure to abide with parental viewpoints and expectations, even if such conflict with her own.

Broadly speaking, offspring participants also navigate the tensions of their own values and cultural expectations (e.g., the “model minority myth”), which can parallel parental expectations. The maintenance of the “model minority myth” may be perpetuated by messages received by the participants while growing up. For example, Ken describes how there was pressure for him to have to appear “successful,” after his family had moved to a new neighbourhood:

There was a mentality that people had to spend money or look rich in order to feel like they belonged there. . . It was not only about looking rich, but because the neighbourhood was so model minority, it was also about appearing successful as a model minority.

As with other stories, cultural and familial expectations to be a certain way conflicted with how participants saw themselves.

Lastly, Ryan’s narrative captures the difficulty of dealing with conflicting values and expectations. For Ryan, a tension mounts between not following the values his mother desires while still wanting to be connected to his mother.

I am still hesitant in telling her everything that is going on in my life, because I am afraid she might not completely understand my perspective, given that she grew up with very different values. It would be hard for me to talk to my mom about less traditional ways of living my life, like not having kids or getting married, whereas my dad would be more open to these discussions.

The quote illustrates how conflicting values place offspring participants in a position where they must choose between their filial commitments and desires to connect with their parents on the one hand, and their own personal values on the other.
Overall, this theme demonstrates how cultural expectations and worldviews reflecting parents’ desires are transmitted to the subsequent generation. These interdependence-based expectations manifest in two different ways—offspring preservation of parental face in order to honour their filial commitments, first, and cultural identity conflict associated with the differences between personal values and parental values, second. In a broader sense, the transmission processes are intimately connected to the historical and migration-related loss of face (see Decimation of Social Structures) endured by the parental generation. Given the interdependent conception of self in a Chinese worldview, perhaps losses experienced by parents contributes to their increased pressure on offspring to maintain familial face or appear successful. However, this outside pressure itself can conflict with personal values, creating cultural confusion and conflict between their filial commitments and their personal values.

**Transmission Theme 3: Fear and Discipline**

This theme focuses on avenues by which experiences of instability and trauma foster a fear-based orientation, often manifesting in the form of disciplinary efforts to protect children. Disciplinary action, though intended for protection, paradoxically contributed to offspring experiences of feeling controlled, disconnected and even harmed. These disciplinary efforts reflect, in part, the interdependence-based expectations from the previous theme. Traumas experienced by parents become a reference point for fears that their children may be exposed to similar types of difficulties, thus leading to disciplinary, ostensibly protective parental practices. The central emphasis of this theme is found in how fear and anxiety dictate discipline. This theme can be broken down into its transmission processes, involving fear and control, strict discipline and expectations, while offspring consequences manifest in the form of broken relationships and the internalization of parental discipline.
Fear and control (transmission process). This subtheme illustrates the aspects of fear and anxiety in the parental generation that contribute to those parenting behaviours experienced as controlling by the offspring generation. These anxieties correspond to parents’ own traumas and experiences of instability (see Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse theme). Anxiety arises from the fear that something traumatic might happen, in view of parents’ lack of control over their own lives during their time in China. These difficulties contributed to Ms. Leung’s decision to immigrate to Canada in order to gain some semblance of agency in her family’s future:

It made me feel unsafe to be in China. I felt 緊張 (gan2 zoeng1/ nervous or tense) and stressed, and I had difficulty breathing. I couldn’t sleep. Every day, there would be a feeling of mounting pressure—I was alone, I was scared that my son would get kidnapped, my husband was away, and I had to take care of my son and maintain a full-time job in a stressful work environment.

Henry shared similar reasoning in his story:

There was so much injustice to the people who had contributed to shaping the country. It was unfair and I knew that I had to leave for my children. I did not want them to experience not having opportunities or an education.

For both participants, the injustices they experienced led them to leave for Canada to consolidate opportunity and safety for their children. For both, the decision to immigrate was in response to the difficulties in China.

The further connection between past difficulties and parenting practices is illustrated in Henry’s narrative:

I know that’s my problem though. I put too much pressure on [my daughter]. I understand that my experience is not the same as hers. . . My family experienced a lot of injustice and I lost a lot of opportunities when I was younger. Because of that, I want her to. . . live a life that I never got when I was younger.

For the participant, previous lost opportunities and injustice conditioned him to put pressure on his daughter to succeed. By providing more pressure, he may feel some semblance of control
over the potential losses, losses he fears may befall his daughter just as they befell him. Henry’s quotation also illustrates aspects of trauma related to interdependence—Henry’s responses to his personal trauma influenced his understanding of his daughter and her circumstances, which further contributed to his desire to protect her from similar difficulties.

Despite good intentions, parental concerns over their children’s future is pronounced as anxiety-provoking and controlling in offspring narratives. For example, Lina describes in her story the anxiety and “leaps of logic” her mother engaged in when she worried about her future:

When I was six or seven, I remember when I got one thing wrong on a spelling test, and my mom freaked out: "Oh, you are going to start thinking that is ok and let everything slip and then you will be working as a gas station attendant for the rest of your life." My mom would have ridiculous leaps of logic like this all the time. . .

Later in her narrative, she describes her parents’ worry for her safety and well-being resulting in a sense of being restricted from opportunities:

Even as an adult, I lived near UBC for two years in third and fourth year, and they would still want to see me every single weekend. They would call me daily and ask things like, “Did you eat?” I realize it’s because they worry about me, but it’s stifling. . .

Parenting practices experienced as restrictive and controlling resonate with other narratives as well, as in Ken’s experience of his father.

I was trying to become more independent, but my parents—specifically my dad—didn’t want that. He was always trying to control everything in my life. . . My dad was always controlling. Even going out would be hard. There were times that I would tell him that I would be going out and he would agree, then in the middle of being out, he would call and yell at me, “What the heck are you doing, come back home, you should be studying!”

Offspring narratives identified these controlling behaviours as being overprotective and indicative of parental anxieties connected to their past traumas. However, these anxiety-based and overprotective parenting practices induced feelings of anxiety in the offspring themselves, as illustrated here in Stacy’s story:
[My mother] always talked about her father not being there when she was growing up. . . I think her upbringing is one of the reasons she became so overprotective of me; her father was never around, so she did the opposite and was overbearing and overprotective. . . She was afraid of any harm happening to me. I think her anxiety affected me early on because I remember being afraid of crossing the street even when I was eight years old.

Glimpses into a family member’s past traumas can be understood through parental behaviours. The wonderment of odd or de-contextualized actions provide offspring with insights into the types of traumas their parents or grandparents endured. Therefore, younger participants understood some parental behaviours as being trauma induced. For instance, Stacy offers the following attempt to understand her grandmother, depicting how the protective wisdom offered resounds with past traumatic realities:

My grandma was frequently paranoid. I remember when I was seven, we were making things with dough and I was making something into the shape of a human, and she said, “Oh let’s not say that (we’re making people out of dough), someone might hear us and think we’re cannibalistic.” I think that speaks to some of the events she may have experienced. There were other oddities as well. . . It must have been a very dangerous time growing up for her.

The narratives demonstrate that fear resides in, and is transmitted through, parental behaviours of control, as well as anxieties about their offspring’s safety and future. There is legitimacy in their fear, considering the sheer instability and chaos demonstrated in the parental narratives. Through both parental and offspring narratives, there is a connection established between trauma and controlling behaviours. It is generally understood that such behaviours were a way to protect offspring from the possible hardship that parents had experienced. However, despite the well-intentioned actions of the parents, for the offspring, these behaviours were experienced as pressure-mounting, anxiety-inducing, overbearing, and overprotective.

**Strict disciplinary action (transmission process).** This subtheme highlights those disciplinary actions perceived as being strict or abusive. The disciplinary actions of the parents
can be understood from the interdependent self-construal perspective, where expectations and standards placed on offspring projected their own experience and expectation of themselves. The types of disciplinary efforts that offspring experienced as being abusive, in fact, paralleled experiences found in the parental narratives. Ostensible discipline replicated parents’ historical experiences, whether these included abuses they experienced from parents or discipline received from other authority figures.

Ryan’s narrative is an example in which discipline came in the form of criticism, which may have been reflective of the cultural ecosystem out of which his mother’s parenting practices emerged.

When I didn’t do things that [my mom] liked or if I did something wrong, she would say very hurtful things, like, “you’re useless” or 你去死啦 (nei5 heoi3 sei2 laa1, lit. “you can go die”). It would be statements about my character which would imply that I was morally deficient in some way, like lazy, useless, or 瘸 (jyu2), meaning I was not well-disciplined or well-behaved.

Likewise, Ken performed disciplinary practices characteristic of the self-criticism practices in Communist China.

I guess [my father] was trying to set me up for success, but I couldn’t understand his logic for making me do certain things. For example, he would make me do very mundane things, like practice writing out letters, such as the letter ‘A’ repeatedly. He made me do a whole bunch of those things that was weird and not useful or applicable at all.

The notion of letter writing and criticism for self-improvement invokes the type of discipline Henry and Hua were exposed to in their narratives. Self-criticism was a normative aspect of growing up in Mao’s regime, and it appears that same criticism was commonplace in the discipline received by offspring. These stories illustrate how systemic disciplinary efforts potentially influence parenting practices.
Parental experiences of being abused by their own parents or dealing with extreme stress and difficulties influenced those parents’ disciplinary outlook towards their own offspring. One of the parental participants, Ms. Leung, shared about how her own parenting behaviours were a reaction to her own difficulties at the time.

I didn’t feel good about myself, so I would scold [my son]. I immigrated here, gave up so much, lost my job, and lost my business. I used to have my own business selling masks to the hospital and was making a lot of money, but in the end, we had nothing. I felt bad about myself.

Later, in her letter to her son, she explained her disciplinary actions’ linkage to her own experience of loss present throughout her migratory narrative.

I remember when you were learning to play violin, you had to spend two hours a day practicing and if you didn’t, I would hit your hands. It was wrong of me to do that. I think maybe, when I compared you to my experiences, I thought you were very lucky and I wanted you to seize the opportunity.

Ryan corroborates his mother’s narrative and further connects her disciplinary actions to the type of discipline she received growing up, thus constructing the intergenerational nature of abuse:

I told [my mom] that she can’t talk to me in that way, because it was hurtful. When I brought it up to her, she seemed caught off guard, almost unsure how to take it. Later, she came to me and cried and said, “I don’t know what to do. I’m just frustrated. That’s what my parents did to me. I’m sorry that that happened.”

The offspring participants experienced disciplinary action not proportional to their behaviours. These measures included verbal threats and physical discipline and aggression. Ken experienced yelling and verbal threats from his father, who would say, “I’ll kill you.”

Sometimes, the yelling would get so bad that the neighbours would call the police to check on us.” Likewise, in response to Stacy’s being “rebellious,” her parents said, “Even the dog is better than you.” Ryan, Ken, and Stacy all described incidents where they received physical discipline,
threats, and aggression which were constructed in the narratives as escalated disciplinary responses:

There was a lot of turbulence in the household in the first twelve years of my life. My dad was super strict and was aggressive towards us—all kinds of aggression. It never got too bad, but I don’t know what too bad would look like. He used to beat us with whatever object was available, like a feather duster or a ruler, and he would hit us with his hands. (Ken)

The notion of abuse being passed from one generation to the next reflects the literature on intergenerational abuse or the “cycle of abuse” (see Widom, Czaia, & DuMont, 2015). The inheritance of these parental practices become normalized over time, as explained in Stacy’s story:

[My mom] used to tell me that her mother, my grandma, would hit her all the time when she was growing up. Even when she was asleep, her mother would cut her hair without her permission. My mom would later justify my father’s physical abuse towards me, because, for her, abuse was normal.

These disciplinary actions in the narratives can be conceptualized as protective parental responses to the circumstances faced (see Decimation of Social Structures theme). The offspring demonstrate an understanding that disciplinary efforts and control echoed the unstable contexts their parents experienced. This notion is encompassed in a quote from Joan:

[My parents] wanted [my brother and I] to succeed, excel, and have stability, something that they did not have. Looking back, that is why I fought with my mom a lot and got into so many disagreements. I didn’t want to pursue a career that she wanted me to do, like an accountant or something like that. I just thought she was being a hard-ass for no reason, but I realize she was really worried about us and just wanted us to be stable and be able to provide for ourselves. The lack of stability must have been very scary for them.

Her reflection connects the transgenerational impact of trauma to manifest disciplinary actions—the instability and fear experienced by parents distilled into expectations of success and stability for their children, even if not received as such.
These narratives illustrate the cycle of abuse, including how past challenges and abuse, whether experienced within families or the larger system, can disrupt human practices and foster de-humanizing parenting practices. Despite the possible intentions, the abusive behaviours contribute to difficult memories for the offspring participants. The transmissive elements of fear and control and the manifest discipline becomes disruptive for the parent-child relationship and can become internalized in the offspring generation.

**Ruptured relationships and avoidance (offspring impact).** The consequential impact of fear and control-based discipline includes distance, disconnection, and brokenness within the parent-child relationship. The rupture in the relationship is exhibited by participants’ creation of distance between themselves and their parents. For instance, in Stacy’s narrative, she shares the following, “I felt that I could no longer trust them. In my second year of university, my mother even defended my father for hitting me. I felt betrayed by her.” Meanwhile, for Ken, the physical discipline and verbal abuse he experienced in his story developed a negative identification of his father with his own culture:

> As I grew up, there was a point where I hated my dad. I hated everything about my background as a Chinese person, because I associated my dad with everything Chinese. He was the epitome of being Chinese, and in my mind, because he is Chinese, I equated Chinese to being bad.

This quote highlights how the hurt Ken experienced from his father contributed to the negative impression not only of his father, but other aspects of his own identity as well. All three participants (Ryan, Ken, and Stacy) illustrate in their stories how the abuse, neglect, and violation of trust ruptures the parent-child relationship, creating distance in the relationship.
All the offspring participants indicated for coping with stress originating from parents through some form of avoidance. To deal with the conflict and challenges with her family, Joan stated:

I tried doing sports and drowning myself with extracurriculars and focusing on my grades so I wouldn’t have to think about my feelings. This behaviour was reinforced by others. I was encouraged to be busy by my mom and by other people.

As shown in her quote, Joan’s avoidance to keep busy strategically met the expectations of others, and further, was also reinforced by her mother. Later in her narrative, she indicates that substance use was also a way to avoid challenges at home: “I used the substances to numb me out and it was good because it didn’t feel like reality. In a way, I was avoiding reality because things were tough at home.” Though Joan did not endorse experiencing physical discipline, there remained constant conflict in the household she wanted to avoid. Similarly, Stacy engaged in other activities to avoid dealing with her family: “I read a lot of books to avoid my parents, but reading was also something I became very interested in. I was really into the book series.”

Others (Ryan and Ken) used video games to try to shut out the turmoil of their respective families.

I didn’t know how to deal with it, so I dealt with it by shutting out my family. . . I remember there were other occasions where I would overhear her say to my dad over the phone, “I’m going to die.” I didn’t know how to deal with this, so I coped by pretending not to hear it as I played video games. I ended up shutting away my family and my emotions. (Ryan)

As outlined in this sub-theme, the consequential impact of conflicts with parents and parental discipline is disconnection. In studied cases, disconnection came in the form of disrupted parent-child relations and offspring coping through avoidance behaviours.
**Internalization and mental health (offspring impact).** Finally, disciplinary efforts and transmission of fear-filled control on the part of parents were internalized by offspring, often manifesting in the form of mental health issues. It is important to understand that these sequential consequences are not causative but are narratively connected, seen through this across-narrative analysis. The internalization of issues and formation of mental health challenges appear to be connected to the discipline and high expectations placed upon the offspring.

Most of the participants seemed to internalize the family challenges and disciplinary actions they encountered. This internalization may be reflective of the interdependence-based self, where parents’ treatment or expectations are incorporated into personal identity. Joan shares the manner in which shame and silence were internalized: “So, I started feeling ashamed about it too. I felt that I should be silent so my parents wouldn’t have to fight or feel ashamed.” Meanwhile, Stacy elaborates how her experience of abuse shaped her own identity:

The physical abuse was a pretty core part of my life even though I don’t like to think about it in that way. I blamed myself for the abuse. As I was growing up, I thought the reason I received physical punishment was that I was always messing up and doing wrong. I didn’t see it as physical abuse because I was at fault.

Likewise, the internalization of parental insecurity and criticism experienced by Ryan was incorporated into his narrative of self-understanding, including how he engages relationally:

There is an inherent vulnerability in the way I engage in relationships, where I have this feeling of insecurity. When I lack security, I act out, kind of like the way my mom acted out when she didn’t have a sense of security as an immigrant. I think I am living my parents’ insecurities.

Throughout his narrative, Ryan also described how the internalization of criticism also manifested in self-critical nature and the eventual emergence of mental health concerns.
Issues with family, parental anxieties, and/or direct discipline not only shaped offspring’s self-identification, but also contributed to mental health challenges. For instance, parental anxiety created more pressure on participants such as Lina, who provided the following anecdote, “[A]s a kid, I would freak out a lot about the future. When I was seven, I remember thinking, ‘Oh my god, what if I don't do X right, and then I end up in some horrible place in the future.’” Lina later shares how the manifested anxiety to succeed contributed to the development of disordered eating.

After high school and before university, I developed a mild eating disorder. I ate less than 500 calories a day. I stress-ate in grade 12, and after IB, my life became very unstructured, so I did whatever I could to have a sense of control, and that came in the form of eating. This eating disorder resolved itself after I entered university, regaining a set schedule and being forced out of self-isolation at home.

Another example is in Stacy’s narrative, that illustrates the parallels between her grandmother’s, mother’s and her own anxiety. She outlines the transmission of anxiety between the three generations, “I think my grandma’s paranoia was passed onto my mom, because my mom can be quite paranoid as well. I guess in a way that got passed onto me, as I can still be really anxious myself.” Anxieties, pressures, familial challenges, and abuse eventually contributed to her own suicidality during her teenage years:

During that time, I became suicidal. I distinctly remember having intentions, and I even had plans for my suicide. Even when I was twelve or thirteen, I remember thinking ‘I’m going to go when I turn fourteen.’ I felt like I had no reasons to live. I had no connections, no strong group of friends I could trust, I was socially ostracized at school, and I felt that my parents didn’t care about me.

The core of this theme can be understood as a reaction to the instability, chaos, and abuse that manifests, emotionally, as fear and anxiety, and behaviourally, though parenting and disciplinary practices. The aspects of fear, control, and overprotectiveness in parenting practice
makes sense in the context of their historical trauma. However, for offspring who are the recipients of parental expectations and discipline, they may have difficulty comprehending the intentions of these behaviours, as their experiences of these parenting practices have been typically aversive. Ultimately, such discipline contributes to ruptures in the parent-child relationship, to disconnection, and to internalization of disciplinary actions and/or familial issues, thereby impacting the mental well-being of the offspring participants.

**Transmission Theme 4: Education as Survival and Identity**

The intersectional discourse between offspring and parental narratives characterize education as a vital aspect throughout the generations. Education serves as a foundation for individual and familial identity, for social mobility, and for survival. In the narratives, education itself even provides a structure for narrativization, for both the offspring and parental narratives. The value of education extends beyond personal commitments and can be understood as a familial and cultural pathway—to be Chinese and to honour family means that one must be educated and pursue professions deemed prestigious. This section is comprised of three subthemes. The first is the transmission process whereby parents communicate the primacy of education, while the second and third subthemes evoke the impact these messages have on the offspring generation—that is, accumulative stress, pressure to perform, and the use of education to define one’s identity.

**Primacy of education (transmission process).** To highlight the primacy of education, it is important to understand its cultural and practical significance. The context shared in the study that impacts all the parental narratives is their participation in a *hukou* (户口) system that determined what privileges an individual was granted (Chan, 2009). As Hua explained in her story, “If you could become a university student, you could change your hukou (户口) and
would no longer be a peasant.” The hukou system determined where citizens could live and was used to control both macro- and microscopic facets of a society and its economy (Chan, 2009). Thus, if he/she grew up in the countryside, he/she had less social and economic opportunities, because he/she was subject to the hukou registration; he/she was subjugated to it for most of their lives (Chan, 2009). The implications of being sent to the countryside—which was the case for most youth during the Cultural Revolution—was that they became peasants and were thus subjected to the sociopolitical reality of the hukou system (Dikötter, 2013).

The Hukou (户口, pinyin: hùkǒu) policy, the resident’s registration, meant that if you were registered to live in the countryside, you could not live anywhere else. To be sent to the countryside meant that we became peasants and were stripped of our city registration (hukou 户口); all our city-resident privileges (although limited) were taken away. (Hua)

Taking into consideration the implications of the hukou system, the sociohistorical significance of education during the Cultural Revolution is elaborated in Hua’s narrative.

There is a Chinese saying—跳龙门 (tiào lóngmén)—which means “to jump over the dragon’s gate.” This saying is in reference to a Chinese myth that if a carp can jump (跳/ tiào) high enough to soar over the dragon’s gate (龙门 / lóngmén), then it could become a dragon. Historically, this saying was a metaphor for intellectuals; if they could pass the imperial court exams, then they could become civil servants. This saying was also used in reference to people who received education to escape the countryside; dragon (龙/ lóng), sounds like agriculture or farmland (农/ nóng) and it was a play on words. Education was a social ladder upon which people could climb up, because China was still a class-based society. Education was one of the ways for peasants to get out of the countryside.

Education from this standpoint can be understood as a tradition and served a pragmatic survival function. To be educated was historically revered, as seen in the metaphor of a carp becoming a dragon used in dynastic times for intellectuals who became civil servants. Yet, this play on words was appropriated during the Cultural Revolution, as education had a pragmatic function for escaping the countryside and hence overcoming the hukou system.
sociohistorical context extends beyond just social mobility or social reverence—it's attainment was survival.

This context provides insight into the pragmatic socio-economic function that education serves in the narratives. For Henry, education offered economic and financial stability, a value passed on to his daughter through his concerns.

I don’t know if it’s a Chinese thing or if it’s universal, but I think there is a general belief that if you don’t study well you won’t find a good job, and if you don’t find a good job you won’t have money, and if you don’t have money, then your family life will be tough. These worries are very prominent, and these are concerns that I have for my daughter.

In Ms. Leung’s story, the socio-economic function of education is that it protects oneself from the challenges faced being a female growing up in China: “[My grandma] told me, ‘You need to get an education. Don’t be scared, girls with an education, with insight, can leave here and see what’s out there for them.’” From this perspective, it is understandable why education was emphasized for Ms. Leung’s son.

Education also served the function of a societal value. This was demonstrated in the following statement from Henry, “I don’t think everyone has these opportunities. Education was very important to me and my father, and it was taken away from me when I was younger.” For this participant, his future was connected to educational opportunities, and having such taken away meant he could not fulfill his father’s wish. This imparted value contributes to Henry’s own concerns about his daughter’s education, as her educational success is in a sense a fulfillment of his father’s desires.

Similarly, the transgenerational value of education resonated with Hua, who “Placed a lot of value in [my son’s] education, because to me, education was our family tradition.” For Hua, the pursuit of education was vital and a core theme of her narrative. The value of education and
her loss of opportunity due to being labeled as a “black family” drove her in attaining an education. She was both passionate and desperate for education. However, on reflections about her relationship with her son and the pressure she placed on him, she admits a sense of guilt for focusing on her own educational pursuits over her sons.

I felt guilty and I still feel guilty that I ignored his education for my own education, to make up for my lost opportunities. I didn’t give him as much attention as a mother should have. I wasn’t with him during his senior high school and college years.

Given the pragmatic and historical significance of education for the parents, its translation to offspring is often constituted into the form of pressure to succeed educationally. For the offspring, messages they received about education emphasized high expectations, pressure, stability and success. As Lina indicated, “Both my parents were the classic Asian parents. They would tell me things like, ‘Study hard, make sure your career is good, and don’t go through the same things we had to go through.’” These messages were often value-laden and placed additional pressure on offspring participants. Not only did these participants deal with norms of educational success for Chinese-Canadian students, as illustrated by Lina’s “classic Asian parents”, but there was an additional weight imparted by the parental generation: success represented survival.

**Accumulative stress and mental health challenges (offspring impact).** For the offspring, pressure to succeed educationally is in accordance with their parents’ standards of success. The narratives portray a connection between the pressure to succeed in education and the emergence of mental health challenges that tended to emerge in university. From the offspring narratives, it seemed as if the stress of school and familial expectations accumulated to a point where it became unsustainable for participants. The educational pressure was recognizable among the parental participants who wondered whether they placed too much
pressure on their children—“After I left, people told me that, when my son was asked if he missed me, he would say, “No, I’m free!” I wonder if I might have given him too much pressure” (Hua).

The pressure for educational success contributed to offspring’s sense of self-worth. Their identity was tied to educational accomplishments and was communicated as such by their parents. Value placed on educational achievement also resonated with interdependence-based expectations and notions of face. Students’ success was therefore a reflection of their parent’s success. This dynamic is portrayed in Lina’s narrative:

I felt pressure, both internal and external, to do well in school. Maybe I felt my worth hinged on my performance in school—after all, isn't that the Chinese immigrant perspective? —that your worth is tied to your usefulness and accomplishments. As a child of immigrant Asian parents, it felt like I was often compared to other children. Who played piano the best? Who had the highest grades? Who obeyed their parents the most? We were trophies to be shown off, not people to be listened to.

Unfortunately, for the offspring, not being able to meet these expectations came with a cost. So much of their own individual and familial identity was tied to educational success, where failure meant significant disappointment:

The first year of university was tough. In fact, it was one of the toughest years for me because I wasn’t ready for school. I failed the first year. . . My parents had extremely high expectations and I was failing. (Ken)

It was vital for the offspring to meet educational demands given its social and familial significance. This pressure to succeed would eventually lead to the development of mental health issues. This occurred especially during university years, as demonstrated in Lina’s narrative:

My fourth year was my most difficult year. I went through a bad breakup and had a lot of stress from school. I had a number of anxiety attacks and was dealing with severe depression and anxiety. I was not able to get out of bed to shower or eat. I became even
more depressed and started skipping class. I was emotionally flat. I was numbing out. I could not do anything. I was at rock bottom.

Mental health issues also emerged during university for Ryan. In his case, there was both the internalization of criticism from his mother, but also an attempt to navigate an educational environment that emphasized cultural differences.

I realize that not every discipline at UBC was like that, but philosophy basically consisted of a whole bunch of dead white dudes, and it exacerbated the cultural differences between myself and my peers. I had a mental breakdown in the first semester of my second year and failed two semesters in a row. My failing grades and my mental illness eventually led to my being kicked out of university.

Throughout the narratives of Lina, Ryan, and Ken, the pressure to achieve educationally and the internalization of parental expectations and pressures contributed to the development of mental health challenges. Their respective educational pathways can be connected back to their parents privileging education as a social necessity. Not being able to attain the parental standard for educational success meant failure not only for themselves, but also for their family.

**Education as a cultural pathway and identity (offspring impact).** Part of the saliency of education and its value lies in its understanding as a cultural pathway. The offspring narratives reflect an understanding of education as an aspect of cultural identity and as a pathway to what it meant to be Chinese-Canadian. The essence of this concept is captured in the following quote from Ryan, explaining why he went back to university:

I think education is a cultural pathway or a life pathway for middle-class East Asians, and especially, for myself. It was part of my background, and I found myself returning to it. I was very lucky to have parents who cared a lot about education. I couldn’t think of anything else but to go back to school.

For the participants, there was an understanding that their identity was partly oriented toward educational achievement, an orientation not only transmitted from their parents but
understood as a cultural narrative. This was illustrated in Lina’s joke, “My mom was the parent that I would be afraid to show my report card to. You know, that stupid meme, ‘you’re an A'sian not a B'sian.’” Even the mimetic notion of “A’sian” refers to a culturally understanding that to be Asian meant to succeed in education by getting ‘A’s. The educational pathway appears to be carved out for participants, and even if they realize a disinclination toward these pathways, they gravitate towards them. This gravitation is elaborated in Lina’s narrative:

   Even though I want to challenge the model minority myth, I think my life story still fits within it. It still feels like I must be a ‘good Asian,’ I must go to university, and that has never been in question. I never even thought of any other possibility. I never thought about going into trades or arts.

Lina’s explanation highlights the model-minority grand narrative that Chinese-Canadians face. This grand narrative may have been constructed through the emphasis on education by the parental generation given its importance and relevance to success, survival and cultural identity in their lives. As Ken further explained in his narrative,

   I thought what I grew up with was normal for Chinese people. . . like the focus on education was maybe because my parents didn’t have a proper education growing up. Because schools were closed during that time, and because they had to become workers at a young age; maybe that is why they focused so much on my education.

Education thus serves as a marker for cultural and self-identification, reinforced through interactions with parents, as illustrated in Joan’s story.

   I was getting into more arguments with my mom, as we didn’t agree with each other. I thought it was good for me to leave. During this time, things were tense between me and my mom. I learned that, if I got good grades, she really wouldn’t say much. I realize that, even now, I still need some sort of achievement to define myself.

Lastly, the challenge associated with identity being defined by education lies in a rigidity that overlooks alternative career paths conflicting with parental expectations. Both Lina and Ryan discussed how, even if they wanted to deviate from their cultural pathway, it would be
difficult because a certain type of educational and career achievement has become a part of their identity. Nonconformity would contribute to conflict with parents and their expectations, as was the case for Joan.

I went to art school which was what I really wanted to do, even though my mom was pretty against it. She thought I could have done more traditional “Asian” jobs, that I was wasting my potential, and Art School was a dead end.

The message relayed was that art school did not provide the type of educational success her parents wanted, and therefore her potential was “wasted.”

Overall, cultural messages about education are sustained by the parental generation. As there is a rift in cultural memory and identity in the offspring psyche due to disconnection with family and culture (see Silence, Shame, and Disconnection theme), offspring attempt to understand their cultural identity through education. That is, to be Chinese-Canadian means to succeed educationally. To reiterate, perhaps part of the desire for constituting education as identity is both its endorsement by parents (i.e., filial piety) and its alignment with the Chinese-Canadian meta-narrative. As education serves both a pragmatic function for survival and as a familial and cultural value for the parents, additional pressure is placed on offspring to succeed academically. Not being able to succeed academically, according to the parental standard, would mean disappointment to the family, loss of face, and loss of identity for the offspring generation.

**Transmission Theme 5: Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage**

This last theme highlights efforts for preserving culture and values between the generations. For the parents, these efforts come in the form of maintaining familial and cultural values through communicative and behavioural efforts. In the stories, parents are proud of their children and place hopes on their future. However, cultural heritage was not directly transmitted from parents to offspring. Instead, transmission was disrupted by the effects of trauma, and
heritage’s reception was shaped by the experiences of the offspring growing up as Chinese-Canadians. Trauma contributes to disconnection, high expectations, and discipline, as described in previous themes, that leads to the offspring generation constructing unique ways to connect and reclaim their heritage. This reclamation integrates facets of the messages and values received from parents and grandparents, weaving these into offspring’s uniquely contextualized lived experiences as Chinese-Canadians. Heritage reclamation attempts to honour parents and the trauma they endured, alongside honouring themselves and their own experiences as Chinese-Canadians. Thus, the offspring participants have a distinctively critical perspective on their narrative identity.

It is important to note that this theme overlaps with the theme of Silence, Shame, and Disconnection. The silence, disconnection, and disruption of culture due to trauma contributes to the loss of place and identity for offspring. It consequently shapes their efforts to connect with their heritage and to reclaim their cultural identity. The silence of family story unspoken by parents, along with the challenges living bi-culturally, contributed to the desire of the offspring generation to make sense of their experience and their storied lives.

**Maintenance of values and hope for the future (transmission process).** This subtheme focuses on parental hopes for offspring’s futures and the intentional efforts made to maintain familial and cultural values. Efforts to maintain values are illustrated in both the parental and offspring narratives, where hope for the future reflects the desire for generativity from the parental generation. Both the generativity, from the parental generation, and the maintenance of familial values, from the offspring generation, can also be understood as part of the structure of benevolence in Chinese families (see Yang, 1995).
Throughout the narratives, parents imparted lessons and values for their children in the form of emphasizing education or specific familial values. These values appear to be intergenerational, extending beyond the parents themselves, as demonstrated in Ms. Leung’s message to her son:

My son, the Chinese have a saying: “言傳身教 (jyun4 cyun4 san1 gaau3 / teach by words and deeds).” It is a very important saying that my grandma taught me. I want to teach you through my actions and with my life as an example. Traditionally, you need to be obedient and respect your family and parents. If you run into problems in your life, I can be strong and be here for you, because I have experienced so much of my grandma’s support.

Her statement reflects her own lessons from her grandmother, but also a desire to teach her son through her life as an example, as she states elsewhere, “I raised my son and taught him the same, that is to not yield to 命運 (ming6 wan6 /fate) and never give up! That is the reason I want to share my story.”

Offspring recognize that their parents shaped their values and who they are, as shown in the following quote from Ken, “Even though things were tumultuous growing up, it shaped me. My parents shaped me, my culture shaped me, and my community shaped me.”

Similarly, in Joan’s narrative, there is explicit appreciation of values instilled by her parents regarding language, culture, and familial values. For instance, when she was dealing with racial challenges at school, she received a lesson from her father that fundamentally shaped her identity:

I was pretty embarrassed, but I remember my dad telling me, “Why does it worry you? Grandma makes such good food. It doesn’t matter what other people think. You know, in this lifetime you’ll never be white so it doesn’t matter what you do or if you don’t speak Chinese or if you try to act like them. You will still look different and you will still be from a different place than them, so you might as well be proud of who you are.” This was a significant lesson. Up until this point in my life, I had never thought about it in that
way and, as I reflected about it more, it made sense. There was no point in fighting it: I am who I am and should be proud of my heritage.

Later in her narrative, she continues to identify how her parents taught her lessons in saving money and work ethic: “My parents have also taught me to be frugal and to save money, as well as the importance of work ethic. I admire them for their work ethic. They never gave up regardless of how difficult it was for them.”

For the participants, reflecting about their family narratives and legacies contributed to shaping their own identity and values. It formed their self-understanding and their continuity with their family heritage. For example, Lina shared that understanding her father created a sense of connection and appreciation of her own life, and later, contributed to her focus on social justice, “As my dad told me a lot of his personal stories from the first-person perspective, it helped bridge the disconnection between the harsh upbringing he experienced and my own privileged upbringing.” Joan mentioned that, in knowing her family heritage, she felt she was part of a family legacy of helping others:

When I was in China, I learned that my grandpa instilled this value in my dad and, when I think about it, my dad has always helped people, even though we didn’t always have resources or a lot of money. He would help people with their internet or their computers or do home renos, and he never complain about driving people home, even if it’s out of the way. Even though both my parents weren’t doing the greatest, they were still trying to help other people. Like my parents, I too am helping other people.

Underlying these efforts to transmit values appears to be the hope that parents have for their offspring’s futures. There is generativity in the passing on of family values, with a desire that children can have opportunities and experiences that their parents lacked. This idea is reflected in the parental narratives, the view that children carry their parents’ hopes and desires. The view can be conceptualized as a response to some of the difficulties and hardships parents
faced, where in a sense their children were their only hope—the hardships parents endured had meaning if their children could have a better future. For example, Hua explains in her letter to her son, “My experiences made me become nervous and have affected me mentally. Maybe, when you were younger, you might have been impacted by this. I gave you pressure because you were my one hope.” Henry shares the following:

I think she is much smarter than me. I am very proud of my daughter. I have seen a lot of dark things in my life. Even though there is a lot of darkness in the world, my hope is that my daughter can see better things, to see the good things in life.

Henry and Hua’s hope belies experienced trauma, emphasizing instead generativity for the future.

**Connecting to heritage: Grandparents and honouring family (transmission process and offspring impact).** This subtheme highlights the aspects of heritage received by the offspring generation and their own effort to connect to family heritage. The subtheme can be conceptually broken down into both a transmission process and its consequential impact on offspring. This subsection involves the role of the grandparents in preserving heritage and cultural identity, as well as offspring’s efforts to connect with their heritage and honour family.

A significant part the cultural maintenance for the offspring was found in the role of their grandparents throughout their narratives. Grandparents were involved in some caretaking capacity in nearly all the offspring narratives. This form of caretaking falls within norms, as explained by Hua: “So, we gave our son to my mother-in-law to take care of when he was one-year old. This was very common in China; in fact, most working couples asked their parents to take care of their children.” However, caretaking by grandparents can also be understood as a practical reality for immigrant households, where parents often worked full time.
Joan portrayed the experience of being cared for by her grandparent as being formative and beneficial for her growing up:

I have fond memories of my paternal grandma babysitting me and my brother. Everyday she would pick us up from school and cook for us. I remember so many smells associated with her cooking.

The grandparents were formative in shaping offspring’s values and lives. As Joan continues:

My grandma is a significant person in my life. She is such a loving and caring person, and I learned so much from her. She always told me to be humble and to work hard and to listen to other people, because you don’t really know who they are and where they come from. She also taught me to always be grateful, which was helpful when times were difficult.

Likewise, Ken finds that, through his connection with his grandmother, he secures a sense of connection to Chinatown as part of his identity.

My 奶奶 (nǎi nai / paternal grandma) raised me and I was very close with her. My 奶奶 lived here in Vancouver, she lived in an affordable housing unit and was in the same neighbourhood as us. Because my parents were working, she would pick me up after school, and my brother and I would just hang out at her place. My 奶奶 was a nice lady. I remember going often to Chinatown with her and, even though she didn’t live in Chinatown, I associated her with Chinatown because we spent so much time there. She even considered moving there before she passed away in 2013. I felt a connection to Chinatown because of her.

Even where exact connections are not explicit in all the narratives, there remains an enduring presence that grandparents had throughout the stories, contributing to a sense of identification and cultural grounding for the offspring participants. For instance, even though Lina never met her grandfather, she forged a connection with him through her identification as being part of a “blacklisted family.”
The importance of offspring’s relationships with their grandparents is clearly demonstrated when these relationships ended or became distant. Joan shared how moving away from her grandmother made it more difficult for her as she was growing up:

. . . the most significant change for me was not being able to see my grandma as much. She lived further away from our new place. . . Being away from her impacted me, because she was the person I saw the most when I was younger.

Ken likens the death of his grandmother to losing a parent: “I lost my grandmother, which was like losing a parent. It was a really tough time in my life.” The role of grandparents in the offspring narratives overcomes the ways in which trauma may have impacted the relations between offspring and parents. These men and women served as points of connection to heritage, history, and cultural identity, portrayed as they were as resources in the offspring narratives.

The offspring stories centre on their seeking understanding of cultural identity. This pursuit can be understood in the context of the bicultural experience of growing up as Chinese and Canadian, but also in relation to felt disconnection with parents who might serve as a source of cultural connection (see Silence, Shame, and Disconnection theme). This is illustrated in Ryan’s narrative where he seeks to understand the history of his father’s side of the family. In doing so, he describes having an experience of cultural and historical connection.

Learning about my family background feels like I am being linked into the greater flow of history through my own family’s experience. It makes me more grounded in history and makes me understand my place in this historical moment.

Connecting to heritage helped the participants appreciate their family history and parental narratives. In the offspring narratives, there is a sense of pride felt towards parents and the
sacrifices that they endured for their children. This is portrayed in the following quote from Lina:

I am proud of my parents and their accomplishments. They went through so much and are still okay. I feel truly loved and supported by them. They’re great parents, even though they have flaws—they are human after all. I appreciate the fact that they came to Canada, sacrificing so much for opportunities for their children. They did it—they won the immigrant struggle to settle here, and that’s amazing.

The pride remains even if there may be elements of relational disconnection with parents. The offspring narratives still convey a desire to fulfill their filial commitments. As Ken shared in his story, “I knew I needed to change my life. When I came back, I moved out and took out a student loan, and I was able to receive my parents’ blessing to do so. It was a big shift in my life.” Chinese Canadians often desire to want to do right by their parents, even when they veer away from the expected cultural pathway.

In sum, this subtheme highlights the ways offspring are connected to their heritage, as well as their desire to for a deeper connection to heritage. The subtheme finds expression in offspring’s appreciation of grandparents and parents, but also their efforts to connect with their cultural and familial heritage. By connecting to their heritage, they garner a greater appreciation of their place and their own self-identity. Yet, the desire for connection continues to highlight familial and cultural disconnection and the challenges of laying claim to identity as Chinese-Canadians. The next subtheme examines how these challenges are navigated through the reclamation of heritage and cultural identity.

**Cultural criticalness and reclaiming heritage (offspring impact)**. This subtheme concerns the messiness of navigating culture and historical-familial trauma, along with its contribution to the reclamation of heritage among offspring participants. Throughout discussion of this subtheme, offspring participants describe their experiences of navigating their cultural
heritage within the Canadian cultural landscape, growing up in an immigrant family, and dealing with issues of race and class. They reflected critically in their narratives to try to understand injustices they and their parents faced. Through these difficulties, the participants demonstrated a reclamation of their heritage that is unique to their lives as Chinese-Canadians.

Race and class play a significant part in the offspring narratives. There are parallels between the offspring and parental stories, since the loss of class and social privileges were a core part of parental narratives (see Decimation of Social Structures and Denied Education and Opportunities and Personal Losses themes). It may be that these aspects of class, privilege, and social power become even more poignant in the offspring’s narrative constructions, as these facets of their parental narratives are part of their narratival self-understanding. This is demonstrated in Lina’s story, with her identification of being from a “blacklisted family,” and in Joan’s reflection about her father and her own story.

There are parallels between my parents and me. My dad lost touch with some of his friends, and he said a lot his friends in China changed after the Revolution. They were not that motivated, they didn’t really have any opinions, or they never really wanted to say anything, even though some of them were really smart. It’s like my life in Compton. These people didn’t have the opportunities to get out of their situation, or they felt like they themselves were “bad elements” and became that (Joan).

Reflections such as these on class and race are ever present throughout the offspring narratives. Identification as “Asian” or “Chinese” meant the performance of race, according to certain social roles that might include a model minority perspective. In Ken’s narrative,

Even though the area I lived in was considered rich, there was a lot of disparity in the neighbourhood. There was a mentality that people had to spend money or look rich in order to feel like they belonged there.

Based on Ken’s quote, to be “Asian” meant that one had to appear successful within parameters of success defined by society. These issues with race were also experienced in the form of
racism. The following are quotes shared by participants about race and the complexities of navigating their racial identity:

I would get the usual racial slurs, like “Chinaman,” and insults about Chinese appearances and accents. I understood that as being normal as a kid, but the slurs only went so far. I was excluded, always picked last, and kids wanted to fight me. It was the way that I was treated that made me know that I was different, that I wasn’t the same as them. I was part of the ostracized kids (Ken).

Adjusting to the new school in Van West was hard for me. I remember bringing pork floss one day, and this girl said I was eating fur. They also thought tofu was weird, which is weird now because it’s sold at Whole Foods and considered trendy. Everyone was teasing me so I asked my grandma to make me a sandwich instead, and she made me a peanut butter pork floss sandwich (Joan).

Though there may not be a direct influence from the parents, intergenerational trauma manifests indirectly through the facets of transmitted culture, silence, and resonance with parental traumas. These are integrated into the offspring narratives to make sense of their experiences of dealing with issues of race and class. The participants took control of their own difficulties growing up as Chinese-Canadians, and they utilized transmitted cultural information to claim and reclaim their heritage. Their narratives can be understood as weaving together their understandings of familial past with that of present experience. This notion is illustrated in all the offspring narratives, as each participant in their own way spoke of reclaiming their heritage by engaging in acts that uniquely honoured their lived experience and family background.

Lina shares how the injustices dealt to her father shaped her own identity and contributed to her sense-making through dialog with feminism, as portrayed in the following quote:

...I was also predisposed to seeing injustices earlier on, because of my family history as told by my father. I knew of all of these horrendously unjust events that happened to members of my own family, and even though they were a world away, it planted the seed of resistance in me. ... Feminism helps put these issues into words and see potential avenues for change.
Yet, as she explores her identity, she recognizes how challenging it is to navigate the values she had been instilled with and the model minority myth.

I feel that pressure to keep up appearances and to save face... I am part of the model minority myth. I don’t completely want to be; I reap the benefits of it, yet I am still restrained by it. I recognize that I may be alright with it, but that may not be the case for other Asian people, and I celebrate people who do not fit within this myth.

Below, Ryan provides a declaration in the final section of his narrative that reflects his understanding his own identity. This declaration illustrates his experiences of race and class and his understanding of his family’s traumas.

I think it's time we stop thinking of ourselves (Chinese-Canadians) as always merely the oppressed, the downtrodden—even if those things are undeniably in our history and present. But weakness is only the case if you only know how to look West and not East. I actually think we inhabit a very ambiguous place in the global power matrix now: Canada and the Western capitalist system is in its sunset years, while Chinese Capitalism is the thing everyone has been prophesizing to replace it. But we need neither of those. Not a Western capitalism in its postwar imperialist mode, nor a Chinese capitalism in all its mixture of ancientness and futurity. My goal is to hold up a Left space for hybrid identities like my own.

In Joan’s narrative, below, she integrates the impact she received from her grandmother, the cultural values her family instilled in her, and the challenges she experienced in her life, linking this back to her family value of helping people by working with Chinese seniors. This is the way Joan reclaims her culture:

Like my parents, I too am helping other people. Now I find myself helping Chinese seniors. I can do this work because I speak both Chinese and English, which wouldn’t be the case if it weren’t for my parents. Working with seniors makes me realize how resilient and charming they are. I see myself in them, because they would say things like, “I’m not good enough”, which is untrue: they have so much knowledge and there is so much we can learn from them... This work connects me with my heritage and the desire to use my privilege to help others, which comes from my time in Compton. It connects me with the values my parents and grandmother have instilled in me.
Ken illustrates how he connects to his heritage through a jade necklace that he wears. For him this jade necklace brings him back to his history and to place—that is, Chinatown—where he is reminded of his grandma. It represents a weaving of different aspects of his story—his history, his grandmother, and growing up dealing with issues of race and class.

I wear [my jade necklace] everyday because I think it keeps me grounded in who I am. It reminds me of my 奶奶 (nǎi nai) and my history and my parents’ history and where I came from. Maybe that is how my experiences of growing up and family experiences live in me. When I look at this jade necklace, I am reminded of that.

Lastly, Stacy offers a reflection about her family through a photograph she posted on Facebook. It is her way of connecting to her family heritage, despite present difficulties and on-going disconnection with her parents.

To me, putting that photo on Facebook was my way of accessing family history. I didn’t just look at the photo; instead, I did something with it. I didn’t ask for permission; I took the picture, and I didn’t care what my family thought. [My parents] would never know. I wanted their history to matter in the context of my history and my personal stories and conversations on Facebook. I wanted the photo to be part of my story... I am using the photo to think about the past in relation to the present, but that has to do with how I want that past to matter in the context of the present. In a way, creating my own stories helps me feel like I have agency over all the forces that shape who I am today.

Summary

The across-narrative analysis illustrates the commonality and interconnectivity of the experiences represented in the participant narratives. The themes are not meant to reduce the complexity of IGT within the narrative lives of the participants. Rather, the themes put a spotlight on common facets of experience. They help make sense of the complex weaving of narratives and the pathways of trauma that together connect the stories. Overall, the stories and the themes from the across-narrative analysis illustrate the broad-ranging connections between cultural and social processes, trauma, history, politics, race, and identity. These broader
dimensions are dispersed into the multilingual and pluralistic family lives of the participants through various forms of communication including the everyday interactions that are understood from the framework of IGT and resilience.

The next section connects the study’s narratives and thematic analysis to the broader literature and offers an integrative perspective to understanding the narrative lives of participants. As this study is a deeply reflexive process, I offer my final reflections to connect the beginning of the story of this study to its end. As with all narratives, what is captured in this study is a segment of a broader story bounded by time and place. The broader story of IGT among Chinese-Canadians will continue to unfold beyond this study in the lives of the participants and others who are connected to this discourse.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This last chapter is an invitation to continue the discussion on intergenerational trauma (IGT) in Chinese-Canadian families. Like the narrative interviews, this chapter consists of a co-constructive conversation. However, instead of limiting conversation partners to myself (the principal investigator) and participants, this discussion weaves participants’ narratives, my reflections, and the broader literature together with the research question and its sub-questions:

*What are the narratives of intergenerational trauma (IGT) and resiliency among Chinese-Canadian families?*  
*How has the experience of pre- and/or post-migratory trauma impacted first generation immigrants and their interactions with family?*  
*How has trauma in the first generation influenced growing up as a second-generation Chinese-Canadian?*  
*And, how does psychological trauma transmit intergenerationally in Chinese-Canadian families?*  

In this chapter, I consolidate the multifaceted research study and integrate theory into a framework for understanding its results; I postulate implications for counselling psychology and future research, stipulate limitations, and provide final reflections on the study.

**Chinese-Canadian Intergenerational Trauma and the Literature**

This study offers an in-depth narrative understanding of IGT among eight participants within the Chinese-Canadian diaspora. The participants included parents whose stories held trauma, as well as offspring constructing their self-narratives by incorporating parental experiences of trauma and resilience. To my knowledge, this is the first study to examine IGT in both parental and offspring participants and the second dissertation to examine this topic for a Chinese-Canadian population.

The unique dimensions incorporated into this study were many, including a multilingual transposition of data and a joint dialogical approach to interviewing family members. The
thematic analysis across the narratives elicited ten themes. The first five themes were specific to traumatic/resilient experiences illustrated in the parental narratives: (a) Decimation of Social Structures; (b) Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse; (c) Desperation for Survival; (d) Personal Losses and the Denial of Education and Opportunities; and (e) Maintenance of Values and Emphasis on the Future. The next five consisted of transmission themes and their impact, based on the offspring narratives: (a) Silence, Shame, and Disconnection; (b) Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of Interdependence; (c) Fear and Discipline; (d) Education as Survival and Identity; and (e) Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage.

These respective themes resonate with the literature on IGT. For instance, narrative studies on IGT among different ethnic groups shared similar themes consisting of resilience and identity exploration (Bar-On, 1995), emotional episodes of guilt and shame among the offspring generation (Wiseman, Metzl, & Barber, 2006), and survivors’ emphasis on future well-being for subsequent generations (Lev-Wiesel, 2007). The represented parental narratives correspond with historical traumatic events endured by Chinese people in the Twentieth century, such as the Great Chinese Famine and the Cultural Revolution (Dikötter, 2010, 2016). Furthermore, the narratives demonstrated both positive resilience and negative psychosocial consequences, akin to the personal impacts of the Holocaust (see Barel, Van IJzendoorn, Sagi-Schwartz, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2010).

Regarding this study’s treatment of the trauma transmission process, the themes derived shared similarities with other studies’ findings, such as the experience of connection and disconnection with parents observed in the offspring generation (Bar-On et al., 1998), the influence of societal and collective memories (Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014; Field, Muong, & Sochanvimean, 2013), and the importance of communication patterns seen between
generations (Wiseman, 2006; Nagata & Cheng, 2003). With respect to consequential impacts on the offspring generation, the emerging themes of this study corresponded with IGT studies’ observations on the development of mental health concerns in the form of depression and anxiety (Field et al., 2013), difficulty with coherence of identity (Han, 2006), and the emergence of mental health symptomology in the presence of stressors (van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Sagi-Schwartz, 2003). Taken together, the dimensions of IGT (parental trauma, transmission, consequential impact on offspring) and the associated themes from this study find counterparts within the broader IGT literature.

The theme of silence echoes throughout this study and in IGT literature. Kleinman and Kleinman’s (1995) proposition that silence about sociopolitical events has negative consequences (e.g., somatic symptomology) among Chinese people, provides a window into the unique character of silence in the participant narratives. For instance, throughout Ms. Leung’s story are somatic expressions of emotional pain, such as difficulties in breathing, that illustrate silence itself is not only part of trauma transmission but also a consequence of trauma (Danieli, 1998). Silence is also socially situated. If society does not accept the reality of traumatic events, silence can be perpetuated (Danieli, 1998; Kleinman & Kleinman, 1995). Henry’s story conveys this concept when he identifies his peers’ fear regarding sharing their experiences of the Cultural Revolution.

The analysis from this study resembles two other available studies on IGT among Chinese populations, previously described in the literature review. Plänkers’ (2014) research on IGT incipient in the Cultural Revolution incorporated an analysis from different theoretical perspectives, including psychoanalytical (Plänkers, 2014b), sinological (Gentz, 2014), and socio-
psychological frameworks (Haubl, 2014). Subsequent was To’s (2014) critical autoethnographical dissertation on Chinese-Canadian IGT.

Plänkers’ (2014b) analysis found the central traumatic experiences of the parental generation included sheer violence, extreme poverty, disruption of self-identity, shame, and suffering in private and public spheres. These episodes reflect the same types of trauma endorsed by the parental narratives in this study. As for transmission processes, Plänkers emphasizes relational and emotional disconnection due to the emotional numbness and authoritarianism within parental practices, akin to themes of *Silence, Shame, and Disconnection* and *Fear and Discipline* developed in my study.

Haubl’s (2014) analysis illustrates social structures’ disruption during the Cultural Revolution through class conflict, thematically resonating with the theme *Decimation of Social Structure* developed here. Haubl further elaborates that acts of public humiliation and torture were particularly disruptive to self-identity; these acts could be understood as torturous. His position reflects the unique culturally-laden experience of trauma illustrated in these narratives. Meanwhile, Gentz (2014) finds in his sinological analysis, the Cultural Revolution was only one facet of broader traumas endured by Chinese individuals, while official terminologies and political narratives shaped how individuals understood their own narratives. Stories in Gentz analysis were contextualized with broader historical events as reference points. Similarly, parental narratives in my study appeared to be constructed around the broader political events that the participants experienced in China.

Within To’s (2014) autoethnography, To identifies a burden and expectation for success in offspring generations, in close relation to their family traumas. These facets of their identity continued to persist through cultural memory inclusive of Confucian traditions. These traditions
distilled values and instilled affective hauntings in the form of filial piety, shame, and entrepreneurial success. Analysis from To’s study connects thematically with *Education as Survival and Identity* and *Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage*. It highlights the broader sociocultural and historical dimensions of experience that permeate the psychosocial functioning of subsequent generations.

The above summary illustrates that analysis from my study aligns with broader IGT literature and with Chinese IGT research. The summarized literature contributes to this study, further consolidating similar findings on IGT. Nonetheless, there remain unique narratival meanings and cultural dimensions in the construction and analysis of the narratives that can be further explicated. To do so, an integrative narrative model for IGT among Chinese-Canadians is presented in the next section.

**Narrative Model for Intergenerational Trauma: An Integrative Framework**

The themes from the thematic analysis and their correspondence with the literature can be situated within a broader integrative framework. I refer to such as a *Narrative Model for Intergenerational Trauma*. This framework is based on other models of IGT (see Danieli, 1998; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses, 2014) and narrative ecology (see McLean, 2015) that include ecological systems, transmission pathways, and vulnerability and resilience. It draws from social-ecological theory, which has been applied both to understand the “intergenerational self” (see Merrill & Fivush, 2016) and the intersection between trauma, resilience, and culture (see Ungar, 2013). The layered dimensions of this integrative model include: (a) remembered traumas and the social construction of Chinese-Canadian IGT, (b) intergenerational narrative pathways, and (c) intergenerational narrative identity and resilience (see Figure 1).
Remembered Traumas: The Social Construction of Intergenerational Trauma

The social construction of Chinese-Canadian IGT is unique and can be understood from a broad sociocultural perspective. Sociocultural processes contribute to which incidents are collectively remembered—becoming traumas rehearsed in constructed narratives that are passed down or pieced together in offspring narratives—and which are forgotten or silenced (Alexander, 2012). In other words, traumatic experiences can be both individualized and shaped by the broader meta-narrative of Chinese-Canadian trauma that influences what is remembered by
individuals and families and in the larger social milieu. IGT, working from a social constructionist standpoint, illustrates how social processes contribute to what is considered traumatic, how traumatic events can be identified within individual narratival construction, and how trauma and traumatic narratives can be transmitted intergenerationally.

Alexander’s (2012) social theory of trauma demonstrates how traumas are remembered within the cultural and social sphere. Social processes surrounding cultural trauma and collective trauma contribute to their status as “traumatic”. Alexander proposes that, for traumas to emerge into collectivity, “social crises must become cultural crises” (p. 15). Cultural trauma determines not what causes trauma, but rather its after-effects, including why certain traumas are remembered and situated in the realm of legitimacy. Social processes include the following: carrier groups, collective agents consisting of individuals, institutions, or even nations that represent interests and perspectives regarding trauma processes; collective representation, the competing narrative identifications of victim/perpetrator and the attribution of responsibility; proposals for trauma resolution, how collective traumas are resolved within the public sphere; and identity revision, memory, and routinization, the efforts taken to remember, institutionalize and commemorate trauma. For Alexander (2012), these processes can be understood as social structures that interact with, and participate in, the social construction and deconstruction of traumatic events, thereby contributing to the cultural and individual remembrance of events.

Alexander and Gao (2012) use these processes to elaborate on how “The Rape of Nanjing” (during the second Sino-Japanese War) was effectively silenced and forgotten. Their analysis demonstrates both the Kuomintan’s and Chinese Communist Party’s construction of a trauma-drama resolution de-emphasized this event; after all, the historic event held no value for the respective parties’ broader narratives or political agendas. The tragedy was largely forgotten.
in the cultural narrative, illustrating how events—despite their scale and social significance—could be silenced in collective consciousness. These events can be lost in the interplay between history and memory, through representation (or lack of thereof) in media, art, and literary work (Wang, 2016). Certain events are memorialized, or else intentionally forgotten and silenced, as part of the political agendas of nations (To, 2014). Consequently, limited access to social events and/or their cultural representation contributes to the lack of social material available for remembrance within individual narratives (McAdams, 1993).

Broad social events can be understood as public narratives or meta-narratives. Influenced by social processes, they in turn influence and shape individual narratives (Bamberg, 2004). For instance, Mohatt et al. (2014) contends that historical trauma can be understood as a public narrative relevant to mental well-being as it provides an interpretive framework for the psychosocial, political-economic, and social-ecological context by which life events are experienced. From a social constructionist standpoint, studies such as Alexander and Gao’s (2012) illustrate how depictions of large-scale events in China can be co-opted by sociopolitical processes, brought into broader meta-narratives that situate and shape how events are experienced and embedded within individual narratives. This concept is demonstrated in Gentz’ (2014) analysis that depicts how sociopolitical agendas in China served as a structure for narrative construction among the survivors of the Cultural Revolution.

The decision of what is considered as “legitimate” trauma is shaped by a society predisposed by social processes. Consequently, the social de-legitimization of events’ propriety can contribute to silencing and disowning the facets of one’s narrative (Danieli, 1998). For example, events constructed as traumatic by the offspring generation were not necessarily conceptualized as traumatic in the parental generation. Part of the difference owes to the period
and sociocultural settings in which participant narratives were constructed. One theme, *Decimation of Social Structures*, portrays parents’ conflict as to how social events should be interpreted, given these events’ reception histories were influenced by propaganda and social discord proliferated by Mao’s regime. Whereas, for the offspring generation, acculturation to Western contexts contributes a different worldview for determining events as “traumatic.” What is remembered as trauma in the researched narratives can be contested between carrier groups (parental and offspring participants), according to their social reference point, apparent legitimacy in the broader social sphere, and process of incorporation into each person’s narrative.

**Trauma? What trauma?** On-going contention regarding whether experienced events were “traumatic” was present throughout the study (e.g., Ken’s narrative) and even present prior, during consultations with stakeholders. This fact is important to consider, given the acknowledgement of events as “traumatic” can have sociopolitical implications regarding victimhood and oppression (Alexander, 2012; Kidron, 2012). This contention can be attributed to various factors, some mentioned above, including the social discourse of trauma, definitional issues with “trauma,” and the debatable interpretation of events as traumatic or as resilience.

Mohatt et al. (2014) explain that dominant cultures can silence or even disqualify the recognition of individual trauma narratives. The remembrance of events as traumatic may be denied or diminished by broader cultural and social processes (Alexander, 2012; Mohatt et al., 2014). For instance, both Wang (2004) and To (2014) argue collective memories and public narratives in China are shaped by political agendas that dictate their representation. Therefore, certain memories can conflict with official party statements within Chinese political discourse. Such conflict results in discord between what is represented socially and what is experienced
individually, especially for politically laden events such as the Cultural Revolution (To, 2014; Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2012).

The uniqueness of studying IGT in the Chinese-Canadian diaspora and studying the sociocultural dimensions of collective trauma among Chinese nationals consists in the contested status of the very events that predisposed trauma, that is, the status of these events as “traumatic.” (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 2006, 2012). It starkly contrasts with other literatures on IGT, such as Holocaust for the Jewish population or Indian Residential Schools for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. In the latter two, events are broadly recognized, both socially and academically, as “traumatic events” (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009; Danieli, 1998). Yet, despite worldwide acknowledgement of the fiftieth anniversary of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Chinese media was silent on the day (see Phillips, 2016). This disqualification of social events can invalidate lived experience (Mohatt et al., 2014) and/or makes it unsafe to share these experiences, as the social processes that silenced these events are still present. The experienced consequences of historical traumatic experiences may be perceived as being present with actual sociopolitical realities that may support its perception.

I believe the broader sociopolitical conflicts of interpretation around Chinese traumatic events may have contributed, in turn, to conflict among the participants regarding whether their experiences were traumatic. After all, parental participants narrative lives were shaped by a sociocultural context both tumultuous and oppressive (see themes: Decimation of Social Structures; Oppression, Chaos, and Abuse; and Desperation for Survival). Several stories presented by parental participants portrayed a normalization of experiences related to significant cultural and historical events. For example, Ms. Leung’s selling feces as a child could be interpreted as stressful. It might have been indicative of the impoverished circumstances she
faced, as when constructed in her son’s narrative, or a normal circumstance everyone necessarily endured, when narrated by Ms. Leung. These events’ interpretations partly owe themselves to their differing representational time periods containing different cultural lenses. The differing socioeconomic and political realities of subsequent generations contribute to alternatively individualized narrativizations of historical events.

This conflict in interpretation touches upon Kidron’s (2012) challenge of the notion of IGT with respect to trauma’s cultural perception. Kidron (2012) argues that notions of trauma reflect Euro-Western worldviews which can be reductionistic and diminish cultural understandings of suffering. She posits there are limits to the universalizing of “trauma” as a vernacular and also a definition of suffering among different cultures—into what she refers to as “semiotics of suffering.” Kidron challenges universalizing trauma as a semiotic of suffering by examining the gaps in trauma theory between the genocidal legacies of Cambodian-Canadians and Jewish-Israeli trauma descendants. The deep structure of cultures (i.e., cultures’ cosmology and praxis), as well as socio political realities, ultimately shapes how suffering is experienced and constructed within individual narratives (Kidron, 2012).

Similar to Kidron’s study, the participant narratives demonstrated alternative understandings of suffering that reflected the cultural dimensions to which participants subscribed. Aspects of lay trauma theory applied to the understanding of parental suffering were endorsed in offspring (e.g., Lina’s narrative), in those who live in the multicultural mosaic of Canada. The parents, meanwhile, presented with a different viewpoint, coming from very dissimilar socioeconomic and political realities than their children. For the parents, silence in association with suffering could be understood as normal. These conflicting viewpoints perhaps
further contributed to the dynamic cultural tension in regarding what can feasibly be considered “trauma” within this study.

Lastly, the potential for resilience further blurs the lines between pronouncing experiences as traumatic, resilient, or normative. Trauma and resilience can be understood dialectically, two poles in co-existence with one another, as narratives of IGT can provide pathways to both wounding and resilience (Mohatt et al., 2014). As Bonanno (2005) describes, the most common response to potentially traumatic events is resilience and a stable pattern of healthy functioning. The question of whether events were traumatic may also lead to the identification of resilient dimensions of experience. In my study, aspects of resilience are at times emphasized in participant narratives, as opposed to merely the traumatic characteristics associated with difficult events. This is illustrated when both Hua and Henry convey stories of overcoming challenging circumstances. An explicit focus on facets of resilience does not deny that experiences may still be traumatic given components of suffering.

For the participants, remembered traumas are situated within cultural perspective, influenced by social processes that determine and maintain collective trauma. Representations in individual narratives are situated within broader sociocultural dimensions, whereby what is chosen to be shared can exhibit aspects of resilience. For example, though the survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime presented traumatic symptomology, they rejected notions that their experience was considered trauma, instead framing suffering within their Buddhist belief system (Kidron, 2012; Wilson, 2007). While trauma can be acknowledged through told narratives and interactions within families, it is the interplay between social processes, cultural interpretations as in Khmer Rouge survivors’ religious understanding, and narrative identification that contributes to the contentions about trauma in this study. This contention parallels the disputed
nature of IGT in the broader literature (see Danieli, 1998; Kidron, 2012; van IJzendoorn et al., 2003).

The social construction of intergenerational trauma narratives. A social constructionist framework for historical trauma highlights that events can be remembered as a public narrative and have narrative salience for individuals (Mohatt et al., 2014). Narrative identification and experiences are shaped generationally and can impact the functioning and identity of subsequent generations. This is illustrated in Atkinson’s (2002) six-generation traumagram that traced a family line across six generations. Atkinson links the known memories and unacknowledged traumas of previous generations to psychosocial dysfunction in future generations. Family narratives and the remembrance of trauma contributes to what is known or unknown to the subsequent generations, thereby shaping individual self-narratives. Memory and identity construction can therefore be conceptualized as social processes (Meacham, 1995).

The narrative construction of trauma within the study highlights the continued remembrance of traumatic events particularly within families. Trauma in this sense has an enduring presence, whether explicitly acknowledged or “communicated” through everyday normative interactions within families (Kidron, 2012). The incorporation of trauma with each passing generation is assumed as reality within individual/family narratives. The “passing down” of trauma in families can then contribute to the historical identity of the individual in the form of the intergenerational self (Merrill & Fivush, 2016).

The IGT construct fits with a social constructionist epistemology. Symbolic representations of traumatic experiences, both explicit and tacit forms, are transmitted and contribute to the construction of personal and family identity. Identity is formed relationally, mediated by broader social structures (Meacham, 1995). These representations are remembered
through public or private reminders of narrative salience; they may be reminisced as part of a family narrative passed down from generation to generation through narrative pathways (Atkinson, 2002; Mohatt et al., 2014). In the same sense, taken-for-granted knowledge from a social constructionist standpoint becomes reproduced and sustained by social processes between generations (Burr, 2015).

Though contentions persist regarding the existence of IGT due to the lack of significant correlation found with psychopathology in subsequent generations (see IJzendoorn et al., 2003), these outcome studies do not capture the nuances of IGT’s contextualization in social representations. Likewise, research in epigenetics (see Yehuda et al., 2014) position IGT as a latent process that needs not manifest as psychopathology unless a stress threshold is met. Yehuda et al.’s (2014) position is that trauma is transmitted generationally, in the form of increased genetic susceptibility to stress. Trauma in this sense “exists” per se, whether through epigenetic pathways or in everyday reminders forming part of the social realities of participants’ lives. In alignment with Yehuda’s work, IGT is described here as fundamentally part of descendants’ lives, whether known or unknown. Such trauma can be remembered when circumstances (e.g., stress thresholds, incoherence of identity, silence) surfaces its existence into awareness.

**Intergenerational Narrative Pathways**

The notion of pathways, those connections of past with present identity and mental well-being, is discussed in the literature on historical trauma and IGT (Danieli, Norris, & Engdahl, 2017; Kirmayer et al., 2014). “Narrative pathways” denotes identity construction based on life experiences and life course development (Pals, 2006). Therefore, an intergenerational narrative pathway draws from a notion of connection and transmission between generations to
continuously shape the narrative understanding of self. This pathway can be understood as a social pathway, by which individual narratives are influenced by larger, familial narratives and by broad sociocultural dimensions. This section describes how the parental-offspring narratives can be connected through an intergenerational narrative pathway.

Danieli et al. (2017) propose that the trauma transmission pathway among Holocaust survivors can be understood as a sequence involving the following: family history/milieu (Holocaust/post-Holocaust) → parents’ posttraumatic adaptational styles → child’s reparative adaptational impacts → psychological disorder (p. 104). The posttraumatic adaptational style refers to the adaptive response to trauma enduringly influencing a survivor’s family life and their children’s upbringing; subsequently, the reparative adaptational impact results from the core motivation of the second generation to undo or repair traumas (Danieli et al., 2017). Danieli’s pathway illustrates a multidirectional, interactional, and iterative process when it comes to trauma transmission. Accordingly, an intergenerational narrative pathway based on this model is conceived as interactional, dialogical, and iterative, participating in broader social ecological systems that shape understandings of self and family.

The intergenerational narrative pathway (see Figure 2) involves the general structure of the narratives between the parental and offspring generation. It incorporates numerous intersecting sociocultural and historical dimensions, appropriated into narrative representations. The participant narratives demonstrate the interdependence between generations acting on the influence of trauma. This interdependence emphasizes relationality and interconnectedness between the transgenerational narratives.
In examining the narrative structures of both parental and offspring stories to discern their respective themes, the intergenerational narrative pathway can be partitioned thematically to demonstrate trauma’s contribution to subsequent generations. The pathway, presented sequentially, incorporates the following:

- **Parental trauma/loss**: The parental generation experienced some form of trauma and loss relevant to their cultural and historical context.

- **Education and survival**: Parents’ trauma/losses corresponded to their emphasis on education and other strategies to ensure survival and stability. This emphasis is culturally and circumstantially unique.

- **Silence**: Trauma and loss can contribute to silence, conditioned by both the experience itself and cultural dimensions. Culturally, it can be shameful to share traumatic experiences, where the maintenance of silence can be understood as a way to preserve

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Figure 2. The intergenerational narrative pathway is situated within the broader Narrative Model for Chinese-Canadian Intergenerational Trauma. It involves transmission processes centered on narrative construction and connection between generations.
face. Success is shared, but failures or personal difficulties are often suppressed. Another cultural interpretation is that silence is an act of benevolence, to protect the future generation from traumatic histories. Meanwhile, from a trauma theory standpoint, the characteristics of trauma/loss may themselves be silencing. The parental generation may feel unsafe to share these types of experiences, because of type of suffering they endured. Regardless of reasoning for the silence, silence contributes to feelings of disconnection for the offspring generation.

- **Pressure placed on offspring:** Parental trauma can contribute to expectations placed on offspring through direct and indirect means. Certain behaviours and communications may be understood by offspring to be linked to the unique cultural manifestation of trauma experienced by the parents.

- **Offspring vulnerability to parental pressures:** Vulnerability owes itself to a number of factors, such as child maturation within bicultural settings, with language barriers, and without rootedness in familial heritage due to silence. The offspring narratives illustrated challenges regarding the construction of their individual and cultural identity, as they negotiated cultural and familial expectations potentially incompatible with their experience living in Canada. Furthermore, Chinese perspectives of filial piety and face may also contribute to descendants’ susceptibility to parental pressures and expectations.

- **Emergence of psychosocial challenges:** The offspring narratives portray the emergence of psychosocial challenges, sometimes in the form of mental illness. Maladaptation usually manifests prior to and during their time in university, due to the accumulation of stress and managing educational expectations.
• **Integration and reclaiming heritage:** The offspring narratives illustrate a construction of self-identity through an integration and reclamation of cultural heritage and, for some, reconciled relationships with their parent(s). Each participant formulated unique ways to reclaim their heritage, incorporating facets of inherited value systems and subsequently shaping these by their own lived experience as Chinese-Canadians.

The intergenerational narrative pathway assumes the explicit understanding of self through narrative. It is iterative, as grandparent, parent, and offspring narratives repeatedly shape one another through such interactional processes as intergenerational exchange and conflict (see Figure 2). These processes are inherently relational and dialogical in nature and contribute to narrative understandings of self and other. Furthermore, sociocultural, ecological, and historiographical dimensions influence individual and family narratives, as described in the previous section. Trauma, from this perspective, can be preserved within families through generational narratives disseminated alike by communication and non-communication. Trauma could therefore shape subsequent generation understandings of self and is rooted in and connected back to narrative understandings of family.

**Silence: The intersection between communication, trauma and culture.** As silence permeates the study (see *Silence, Shame, and Disconnection* theme), it is important to examine those facets of communicative silence that participate in the intergenerational narrative pathway. “Communicative silence” refers to the indirect, omitted, or fragmented communication that pervade throughout the narratives across the generations. It traverses conceptual terrain such as Danieli’s (1998) “conspiracy of silence,” whereby silence contributes to the unknowingness between offspring and parental generations regarding traumas experienced by the parents.
Silence in this study is nuanced by cultural perspective. Such a view challenges reductionistic notions of silence that identify it as a problematic characteristic of suffering, notions often endorsed in trauma theory discourse (see Kidron, 2012). This nuanced position is supported by Denham (2008), who argues the cross-cultural validity of the conspiracy of silence is problematic in that it presupposes the value of talking about trauma, a value counterintuitive to some non-western models (p. 398). Denham further describes how the silent accompaniment of another understanding person can itself be healing or valuable. Silence is not universally problematic. Respectfulness may consist in silence, as described in one participant’s, Ken’s, listening to his mother’s narrative. Furthermore, understanding need not be expressed through verbal means. Understanding can be communicated indirectly, just as Lina’s narrative describes her nagging of her father as a way to express care.

The understanding of silence in this study parallels Kidron’s (2012) exploration of the narratives of silence. Though trauma may not be stated explicitly, the past is woven into everyday lives, albeit tacitly, through the banal interactions within families (Kidron, 2012). Kidron further contends silence should not be pathologized, for silence can be perceived as connection, interaction and a form of communication: “Consider silence as a ‘container’ facilitating movement into the past” (p. 729). Likewise, parent-child interactions in offspring narratives were interpreted as being indicative of past trauma, whereupon silence was understood to have cultural significance. Kidron notably promotes cultural determinism in response to trauma theory’s indictment on silence. However, drawing from a cultural position need not deny the realities of oppression present in the narratives (Alexander, 2012). Conceivably, common ground may be found in affirming the dynamic and dialectical tension between both positions—
the cultural nuanced perspective of silence and trauma theory—when considering the role of silence in the narratives.

From a trauma theory perspective, silence is a secondary aspect of trauma and oppression, contributing to the disruption of communication patterns and narrative coherence (Danieli, 1998; Fivush, 2004; Lister, 1982). Based on the parental narratives, traumatic content (e.g., social disruption and the lack of safety) also likely insinuated the embodied reasons that silence around traumatic events was maintained—silence was both a result of trauma and reflective of a sociopolitical period of mistrust and social instability (see Decimation of Social Structures). This conclusion reached a consensus by offspring participants, namely, the nature of the historical trauma that contributed to the parental silence.

To provide sociohistorical context, most of the parental participants experienced the Cultural Revolution, a chaotic period of insecurity when information about citizens was kept on file, and citizens were encouraged to betray one another for the betterment of the Communist agenda (Dikötter, 2016; Yang, 2011). The filed information was known as personal dossiers or dang’an, as Yang (2011) explains:

Dang'an, the compiling of the minutiae of one’s work and personal information in an envelope that follows one around, was introduced in Mao's era. As a defining feature of Maoist socialism, the dang’an reveals the inner, hidden bureaucratic workings of the state on the individual. It documents information about each employee’s education (including reports from teachers), job history (including reports from employers), family background, political activities, achievements, mistakes, self-criticism, and so on, scrutinizing and textualizing the attitudes, performances, and everyday existence of urban Chinese citizens (p. 508).

The dang’an system formed part of a social strategy of the communist party to control its own citizens (Yang, 2011). The adaptation of silence and its continued persistence among the parental generation is a reasonable consequence when taking into consideration the dang’an
system, coupled with the confusion and mistrust created by the class conflict (see Henry and Hua’s narratives). It would be unsafe to share personal experiences, especially if doing so could lead to negative social consequences, importantly elucidated by the significance of losing face in Chinese cultures (see Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of Interdependence). Silence in that context may continue to be embodied within the parental generation as an adaptive response. Though parents may no longer dwell in these social circumstances, the enduring effects of traumas manifest as behaviours (e.g., silence) adapted to these past events, as endorsed by trauma theory (see Shalev, 1996).

Yet, silence can be reflective of the cultural dimensions of communication (Denham, 2008; Kidron, 2012). Situational culture contributes to what is expressed and transmitted from one generation to the next. For instance, Miller, Sandel, Liang, and Fung (2001) found it was more socially acceptable for parents to describe past transgressions in American cultures than in Taiwanese cultures. Narrative transmission and silencing of selective aspects of narrative remains influenced by culture. Pragmatically, silence in communication also represents the multilingual realities of Chinese-Canadian families, where limitations in language competencies can serve as barriers to communication (see Ken’s narrative).

Chinese culture’s collectivistic identity and influence by Confucian role-relations contributes to communication, and particularly, how emotions are conveyed (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Hwang, 2011). The expression of emotions is interdependently formed and, not merely reflective of individual experience (De Leersnyder, Boiger, & Mesquita, 2013). Given that Chinese culture is high context, the communication of emotions is shared or kept silent in order to maintain social structure (Heine, 2012). To further complicate matters, families’ automatic inclusion of social hierarchies and implicit, listening-based communication may place
the onus on offspring to understand the underlying messages conveyed by their parents. This difference in understanding of silence is reflective of differing cultural upbringing. Westernized perspectives tend to value explicit communication and expression of emotions, where that may not be the case for people with more Eastern worldviews (Lim, 2016). Furthermore, from a Confucian standpoint, parental silence regarding traumatic events can be understood as an act of “benevolence”—a decision to protect offspring from the horrific past (see Yang, 1995).

Cultural factors imbue patterns of communication, contributing to silence. For individuals indigenous to Chinese communication patterns, classic texts as Gao and Ting-Tommey (1998) and Bond (1993) demonstrate how Chinese people employ a different communication pattern reflective of their values, impacting emotions’ communication. For instance, Gao and Ting-Tommey (1998) specify there are five distinct characteristics to Chinese communication: Implicit (含蓄, hánxù), indirect communication where non-verbal and verbal communication is contained, reserved, and implicit, leaving the unspoken meaning to listeners (p. 37); listening-centred (听话, tīnghuà), listening as the predominant mode of communication, where to have speaking authority is often associated with seniority, age, experience, and expertise; polite (客气, kèqì), the embodiment of modesty and humility in Chinese culture and communication; insider (自己人, zìjǐ rén), being an in-group or out-group determines what and how information is communicated; and face-directed (面子, miànzi), emphasizes the relational orientation of Chinese communication, in which consideration of face impacts every facet. These rules, though not explicit in the narratives, may constitute the unwritten rules that dictate how story and trauma are transmitted. Thus, concepts such as face play into the intentional silencing of facets of traumatic experience; in fact, sharing of traumas may be perceived as a loss
of face and contribute to negative feelings of shame (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Yang & Kleinman, 2008).

Lastly, a third dimension of silence in this study is contained in its communication and interpretation in the subsequent generation—leading to the notion of “loud silence.” The offspring narratives illustrate an appreciation of parental trauma through their piecing together of history, silence on traumatic events, and indirect communication. Even where trauma was not directly explained, enough was seen in the indirect ways it was communicated. This understanding is akin to Kidron’s (2012) analysis, which found trauma to be communicated intergenerationally through fragmentary speech and daily interactions. These two constituted knowledge of the enduring presence of trauma within the family. Indirect presence also reflects To’s (2014) postulation that traumas live on through “diasporic entities,” where fragmented narratives are represented through “transgenerational hauntings.” These include contemporary reminders of past traumas within public and personal spheres. The public sphere consists of structural inequalities, dominant cultural narratives, and public symbols. The personal consists of perceived discrimination and loss, microaggressions and personal trauma (Mohatt et al., 2014; To, 2014).

Silence in these narratives can be understood to intersect dimensions of trauma, culture, and communication. Silence cannot be reduced simply to a by-product of trauma. Rather, sociohistorical and cultural contexts need to be understood to appreciate the silence in these narratives. From a cultural standpoint, silence intersects with cultural notions of emotional communication, benevolence, and face. From trauma discourse, silence is a response to the unique type of trauma that perpetuates continued silence. Lastly, from a communication standpoint, there are pragmatic factors that contribute to silence, such as linguistic barriers, and
valuation of silence itself as communication. Though silence may not be inherently problematic, perhaps a more nuanced therapeutic perspective addresses the conditions—cultural, pragmatic, and oppressive—that perpetuate silence. Such a perspective appreciates silence in the “culturally particular life-worlds” that it inhabits (Kidron, 2012, p. 742).

**Intergenerational Narrative Identity Construction and Resilience**

From the integrative narrative model of IGT, the intergenerational narrative pathways that emerge, I argue, contribute to the formation of narrative identity within offspring generations. “Narrative identity” refers to the notion that self-understandings are constructed based on past experiences. The latter are used to develop a sense of self through the stories we tell ourselves (McLean, 2015). “Intergenerational self” then consists of the idea that narrative identity is framed within cultural and intergenerational family narratives. It encompasses “the self that is created both as a unique individual within a larger socio-historical timeline, and as part of the larger family group that shares a worldview” (Merrill & Fivush, 2016, p. 75).

Familial and intergenerational narratives therefore provide a framework for understanding one’s self-identity as part of one’s narrative ecology (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Intergenerational narrative self can be used interchangeably with intergenerational narrative identity (Merrill & Fivush, 2016).

McLean (2015) offers an understanding of narrative identity within a narrative ecology framework. McLean elaborates that narrative identity is dialogical—shaped by different “I positions,” that is, the various inclusion of people within self-identity. Narrative ecology is comprised of the stories—personal, other, and cultural—available to a person to shapes his or her narrative landscape. Family stories and intergenerational narratives effectively situate an individual’s narrative identity. Applying the narrative ecology model to IGT discourse implies
that collective traumas and cultural narratives that shape parental identities subsequently influence the construction of narrative identity in the offspring generation also. The impact of trauma shapes both cultural and intergenerational narratives and acts continuously across generations to shape narrative identities.

Traumatic narratives and their associated silence are connected to difficulties with narrative coherence, fragmentation of self-identity, and emergence of psychosocial complications (Chandler & Proulx, 2008; Fivush, 2004). Among the narratives, the fragmentation of social identity is illustrated in the parental theme, Decimation of Social Structures, and in transmission themes involving the confluence of identity and negotiating heritage (e.g., Education as Survival and Identity and Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage). Meanwhile, the silencing of traumatic narrative histories—specifically within the offspring narratives—contributes to disconnection with family narratives (see Silence, Shame, and Disconnection), thus disrupting narrative identity construction and leading to psychosocial issues (see mental health challenges in two themes: Fear and Discipline and Education as Survival and Identity). This mechanism is supported in the literature. The less families reminisced and shared of family narratives, the more there was decline in autobiographical memory development and emotional regulation in children (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Perhaps, fragmentation of narrative identity and disconnection with family history contributed to an overidentification with other facets of identity such as the attainment of material and educational success (see Education as Survival and Identity).

**Interdependent self and identity.** Identity in Asian cultures can be understood to be interdependent and intergenerationally shaped (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Merrill & Fivush, 2016). One identified transmission theme is Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of
*Interdependence*, being that parents, alongside their familial expectations, took part in the offspring narrative construction of self. Reese, Fivush, Merrill, Wang, and McAnally (2017) propose that intergenerational narratives function differently across cultures but are particularly important for interdependently orientated cultures, wherein self is understood in relation to the other. Thus, the suffering parents experience from traumatic events, and the sacrifices made to support their children, influence their children and vice-versa in a relationship of interdependence. This notion echoes the mantra—*my pain is their pain, their pain is my pain* (Asian Canadian Asian Migration, 2018).

The offspring narratives often portray authors’ adolescence and emerging adulthood as periods attempting to understand ethnic heritage, reconcile disconnection with parents, and construct identity. The importance of these stages is demonstrated in the literature, in which adolescence and emerging adulthood served as core development periods for autobiographical memory and intergenerational narrative identity formation (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Value transmission, interdependent expectation exchange, and ethnic identification may have been more salient during these developmental periods for the participants. Furthermore, as illustrated in the offspring narratives, disruptions caused by parental trauma—whether by silencing or strict disciplinary efforts—were very significant during these developmental periods, as offspring participants tried to make sense of their narrative identity, ethnicity, and family history.

Parental expectations held a significant role in shaping the narratives of participants, specifically with regard to education and the cultural notion of *face*. Parents’ *face* had been disrupted through trauma (see *Decimation of Social Structures*), their educational opportunities denied (*Personal Losses and the Denial of Education and Opportunities*). As such, face preserving efforts (*Saving Face and the Cultural Framework of Interdependence*) and emphasis
on education (*Education as Survival and Identity*) could be understood as intimately tied to recuperating these respective losses. For the offspring participants, their parents’ suffering and losses were incorporated into their own narratives, seeming to influence offspring decisions regarding education, cultural preservation, and face-saving efforts—again, the notion of *my pain is their pain; their pain is my pain*. This parallels Danieli et al.’s (2017) research that proposes reparative adaptational impacts upon offspring occurs in response to the post-trauma impact and adaptational style of their parents. The reparative adaptational impacts are core motivations to undo and repair the past, to heal their parents and themselves (Danieli et al., 2017).

Consequently, for the offspring participants in my study, their responses to their family and parental traumas, along with their interdependent integration of parental narratives and expectations, can be understood through their actions of saving face, educational attainment, and preserving and reclaiming heritage.

**Education, interdependent expectations, and identity.** “*Education was a social ladder for people to rise up, because China was still a class-based society; education was one of the ways for peasants to get out of the countryside*” (Hua). Hua’s quotation encompasses the cultural significance of education and its pragmatic value for survival at the time. It provides sociohistorical context as to its importance for the parental generation. Education’s value permeates through all the narratives in the study. The emphasis on education in the offspring narratives can be conceptualized as resulting from the interdependent exchange of expectations, given the larger culture’s identification of education as a necessary part of family stability. Chinese expats respond to the loss of educational opportunities by referring to the contextual vitality of education as a medium for survival. This is similar to To’s (2014) analysis, in
proposing that family traumas of the past contribute to present-day emphasis on educational achievement and career stability among second-generation Chinese-Canadians.

There has been a plethora of research exploring the relationship between parental, educational expectations and consequent nurturance of high achievement orientations among Asian-American and Chinese-Canadian students (See Nagata, Wu, & Kim, 2017; Costigan, Hua, & Su, 2010). Generally, Chinese-Canadian students demonstrate high levels of achievement as associated with ethnic identity, not unrelated to a strong emphasis in immigrant Chinese parents on supporting their children’s educational achievement (Costigan et al., 2010). The parental focus on educational achievement helps mobilize their offspring to be in positions with stable, high-income careers (Li, 2001). As Li (2001) postulates, parental educational expectations of their children are grounded in Chinese tradition, expectations, and personal life experiences. Likewise, in Young, Valach, Ball, Turkel and Wong’s (2003) study examining education and career-development as a joint project between Chinese-Canadian parents and their offspring, researchers found career-development was embedded within other goals, such as relationship, culture, parenting, and identity projects.

These studies illustrate that educational expectations are deeply rooted in relational and cultural dimensions. They are influenced by parental experiences that consequently impact the identity construction of their offspring. With regards to the intergenerational self, education and its associated parental expectations become incorporated into narrative identity for the offspring generation. The valuation of education can be determined as a cultural response to trauma and the need for stability. As a result, the disconnection with family history, paired with expectations formed in interdependence with parental emphases on educational success, lends itself to the
pursuit of educational achievement and economic stability in the offspring generation as part of their narrative identity (see also Plänkers, 2014).

**Intergenerational resilience and preserving and reclaiming heritage.** The attempts to understand parental traumas, ethnic heritage, and narrative identity, detailed in the offspring’s narratives, demonstrate a sense of pride towards family, as well as a desire to preserve and reclaim their heritage through educational, vocational, and other large decisions. This idea corresponds with the literature in following areas: the benefits of intergenerational narratives, ethnic identity, and resilience.

Sharing intergenerational narratives can be beneficial for subsequent generations (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Knowing family history is a positive indicator for positive psychological functioning for both children and emerging adults (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Family stories particularly contribute toward emerging adults’ positive psychosocial development. Those participants bestowed with a coherent narrativized understanding of their parents’ stories demonstrated higher scores in positive psychosocial development, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). By understanding family stories, one can better understand family members in addition to relations between family members and self (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). The benefits of sharing intergenerational narratives were demonstrated in this study’s joint dialogue process, as participants reflected that learning about parental stories was valuable for understanding themselves and the other. Moreover, the offspring narratives convey a desire to understand their parents and their narratives, further illustrating that, despite aspects of relational disconnection in some of the narratives, there is still a yearning for connection and to know their parents (see *Silence, Shame, and Disconnection*).
Ethnic identity in the narratives manifested through parental efforts to preserve culture (see *Maintenance of Values and Emphasis on the Future*), along with unique ways that offspring participants integrated their heritage with their own worldview and their life stories (see *Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage*). Ethnic identity refers to the ethnic components of an individual’s social identity, involving feelings of belongingness to a social group, cultural characteristics (e.g., language, behaviour, values), self-identification, attitudes towards one’s ethnic group, and ethnic involvement; ethnic identity is associated with acculturation and self-esteem (Phinney, 1990). For Asian-American youth, ethnic identity serves as a protective factor when it comes to economic stress, while research on Chinese-Canadians indicates that ethnic identity was positively correlated with psychological adjustment and self-esteem (Costigan et al., 2009; Costigan, Koryzma, Hua, & Chance, 2010; Stein, Kiang, Supple, & Gonzalez, 2014). Parents and acculturation processes contributed to the development of ethnic identity and the cultural transmission of values among Chinese-Canadians (Costigan et al., 2009).

Ethnic identity is elucidated in the offspring narratives through their described interactions with peers, connection with their parents and grandparents, and identification of cultural heritage in structuring their stories. The narratives portray parents’ and grandparents’ contributing to the development of offspring’s ethnic identity and understanding. Yet, the latter party did not completely accept the version of heritage that was transmitted to them. this study is uniquely situated to perceive the reclamation of ethnic heritage that amalgamated parental culture with offspring’s understanding of their family history, all further informed by maturation and acculturation in a multicultural Canadian setting. This navigation of culture parallels the literature on acculturation and ethnic identity, connecting this study with a bilinear model of assimilation that incorporates enculturation and acculturation (Kim, 2007). Negotiating ethnic
identity can also be framed as adaptive biculturalism, whereby the identification with both indigenous and host cultures is beneficial for the adjustment for people of bicultural identities (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). However, the theme Preservation and Reclamation of Heritage arguably expands beyond adaptive acculturation, enculturation, and biculturalism. It integrates a unique appreciation of heritage, resultantly honouring relationships with parents and/or grandparents and valuing their respective lived experience. Thus, the offspring narratives illustrate a coalescing of identities—ethnic, personal, and familial. The efforts for reclamation are both a response to disconnection from family due to silencing from trauma and return to connection with heritage and ethnic identity. All this occurs while navigating identity construction within the multicultural landscape of Canada.

Lastly, aspirations of reclaiming culture (maintaining, transmitting, and affirming values derived from experiences of endurance) allude to the concept of resilience. In the literature on IGT, both vulnerability and resilience emerge in the face of trauma (Cassel & Suefeld, 2006; Danieli, 1998). However, resilience can extend beyond individual psychology. Narrow definitions of resilience tend to emphasize individualized capacities to move through past or current adversity (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Broader definitions expand resilience to include “the capacity of both individuals and their environments to interact in ways that optimize developmental processes” (Ungar, 2013, p. 256). The concept of resilience, when discerned within both parental and offspring narratives, expand beyond individual psychology. The authors demonstrated resourcefulness in meaning-making and capacities for overcoming difficulties, through the preservation and maintenance of culture. These parties also demonstrate an expansive tendency toward resilience through relational, connective understanding and consideration of familial well-being. The witnessing of resilience in family members impacts
one’s own sense of resilience (see Lina and Henry’s narrative). Just as interdependently elicited hurts of trauma abound, so too do interdependently elicited facets of resilience.

Emerging literature is expanding “resilience” beyond individual psychology by highlighting its relational dimensions. Resultant concepts include “vicarious resilience” (Hernandez, Gangsei, & Engstrom, 2007), “intergenerational resilience” (Kazlaukas, Gailiene, Vaskeliene, & Skeryte-Kazlauskiene, 2017), and “family resilience” (Atallah, 2017). Vicarious resilience refers to the “unique and positive effect that transforms therapists in response to client trauma survivors’ own resiliency” (Hernandez et al., 2007, p. 237); the witnessing of the other—the client’s resilience—brings about change in self-perception of the world, shifting the personal lives of therapists (Edelkott, Engstrom, Hernandez-Wolfe, & Gangsei, 2016). Intergenerational resilience was referred to in Kazlaukas et al.’s (2017) study, which found that parental resilience was associated with offspring resilience for Lithuanian survivors of political violence. Parental resilience was linked with a quality of coherence—the capacity for comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of difficult life events. The concept of family resilience was established in Atallah’s (2017) study on Palestinian refugees. Atallah (2017) defined “family resilience” based on cultural constructs of resistance, return, and perseverance cultivated through verbal communication and storytelling. From a narrative standpoint, these relational definitions of resilience can be understood through the notion that sharing and witnessing the narrative of others can profoundly shape one’s own identity (Merrill & Fivush, 2016; Thornton, 2008). These aspects of sharing and witnessing can be found in the family dialogue component of this study.

Overall, IGT and resilience in the presented Chinese-Canadian narratives is multifaceted. Its cultural and narratival nuances can be framed within an integrative narrative model that
incorporates sociocultural and ecological dimensions for the sake of understanding the function of the intergenerational narrative pathway and the process of narrative identity construction. The narratives and corresponding themes connect to the broader literature by implicitly employing constructs such as the intergenerational self, acculturation, enculturation, resilience, face, and silence. Dialogue with these respective theories illustrates the broad mosaic of literature this study is bonded to and intersects with.

**Implications for Counselling Psychology and Future Research**

Presented here are the contributions and implications of this study specific to counselling psychology, counselling interventions, and future research directions. There are four broad areas within counselling psychology to which this study contributes: narrative theory, multicultural research, family therapy, and trauma therapy.

**Narrative and Multicultural Research**

In the counselling psychology literature has dwelled a history of research on the Asian North American population (see Leong, 1986; Leong, Chang, & Lee, 2007; Sue, Cheng, Saad, & Chu, 2012). This study lends itself to the various forms of research in the Asian-North American literature, including discourse on acculturation and biculturalism (Yoon et al., 2013), intergenerational relations and conflict (Lui, 2015), stress and coping (Inman & Yeh, 2007), ethnic identity (Costigan et al., 2010), and culturally appropriate mental health support (Sue et al., 2012). As IGT can be understood as a distal determinant of health and well-being (Bombay et al., 2009), this study in its broadest form intersects with other literatures pertaining to model minority stress, racism and discrimination, and education and career decision-making (see Costigan et al., 2010; Tao, Zhang, Lou, & Lalonde, 2018).
In the counselling psychology literature, a similar construct to IGT can be found in the intergenerational conflict or intergenerational stress literature discussing the Asian North American population. Intergenerational conflict refers to disagreements over adherence to family values, expectations and traditions (Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005). Intergenerational stress, while associated with intergenerational conflict, refers to offspring’s difficulties in adapting to family expectations and values (Inman & Yeh, 2007). IGT in this study can indeed be observed through the lens of intergenerational conflict given the latter’s thematic overlap with this study, particularly with respect to the role of emotions in communication, cultural conflict, acculturation, ethnic identity, and emergence of internalizing and externalizing psychosocial concerns in the offspring generation (Chung, 2006; Lui, 2015; Yoon et al., 2013). However, the difference between IGT and intergenerational conflict lies in IGT’s emphasis on traumatic experiences among the parental generation as a predecessor to conflict, expectations, subsequent difficulties, and resilience in the offspring generation. Opposingly, IGT is not limited to focusing on the impact of differing values and expectations. Thus, IGT provides a broader scope for understanding intergenerational conflict, though the two constructs can mutually be informative. Nonetheless, more research will be needed to delineate and understand how IGT and intergenerational conflict are associated and influence one another.

This study contributes to the emerging narrative research on Asian North Americans, scarce in volume compared to other qualitative methodologies applied to this population (Nagata et al., 2017). Studies that have utilized narrative research to understand Chinese-Canadian experiences and identities include He’s (2002, 2002a, 2002b) narrative inquiry of cross-cultural identity and Chan’s (2010) exploration of cultural experiences of Chinese-Canadian students. This study adds support to the on-going endorsement of story-telling for ethnic minorities.
(Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), the call for action for Chinese-Canadian stories to examine history and the neglected past (University of British Columbia, n.d.), and need for intergenerational stories about historically oppressed people’s (Bar-On, 1995; Denham, 2008). The study builds upon the existing literature on narrative research, uniquely expanding on the analysis of Chinese-Canadian storytelling and intergenerational narratives, which has found limited publication in the field of counselling psychology.

Another unique dimension of the study, from a narrative standpoint, can be seen in the praxis of shared story-telling, specifically incorporating multiple generations’ story-telling as part of the methodology. This dimension overlaps with other areas of existing research, including the exploration of intergenerational relations (Laaroussi, 2017), family reminiscing (Fivush, 2007), and guided autobiography (Thornton, 2008). The unique method of conjoining multiple perspectives on a matter into a variegated construction can seemingly be found in other methodologies within counselling psychology, such as Young, Valach, and Domene’s (2005) Action-Project Method, which encompasses both joint dialogue and the analysis of joint actions on a phenomenon. However, in the case of my study, the family dialogue is uniquely influenced by Guided Autobiography, focusing on narrative reflexivity and emphasizing the joint co-construction of narrative understanding. Family dialogue, from this co-constructive perspective, draws from the approaches and methodologies of “reflecting teams” (Andersen, 1987), drawing into usage the collaborative elements of Avay’s (1998) “Collaborative Narrative Method” and, elsewhere, “Guided Autobiography” (Thornton, 2008). Methodologically, this study provides an introductory framework for implementing intergenerational family dialogues within a research context; the framework can be expanded upon in future research.
Lastly, my study explicitly incorporates cultural, multicultural, and multilingualic considerations for narrative research through the implementation of a multilingual research protocol (see Appendix B). Specifically, it acknowledges the plural valences of multilingual family settings—even positing realities that occur in everyday life and in family communication. The resulting multilingual praxis is often not captured in qualitative research and provides new angles of insight into the autobiographies of multilingual people and communities (McDonald, August 30, 2018, Personal Communication). Multilingual research approaches have been limited in descriptions of research methodologies, despite their value when it comes to working with vulnerable groups (Ganassin & Holmes, 2013). They have been explored in other disciplines such as anthropology, social psychology, and sociology (Comanaru & Dewaele, 2015; Holmes, Andrews, & Attia, 2013). Within counselling psychology, there are discussions of multilingual issues in counselling settings (Costa & Dewaela, 2013), but studies that have explicitly integrated multilingual strategies in research methodologies are limited to as few as this study and Chau’s (2008) thesis. Linguistic methodological considerations are discussed in qualitative literature (see Temple, 2008) and in narrative research (see Reissman, 2008), but have not been central foci in counselling psychology, nor have explicit multilingual strategies been outlined within narrative research.

Multilingual strategies are worth considering, especially in narrative research, given the primacy of language in constructing narrative identity and given the role of culture in narrative (Bruner, 1991, 1993; Fivush, 2004; Taylor, 2016). There are unique considerations inherent in multilingual research, such as the politics of language representation, institutional policies and practices, and practical limitations when it comes to interviews and data analysis (Gannassin & Holmes, 2013; Holmes et al., 2013). However, unique opportunities also abound, for richer
insight and for de-naturalizing power imbalances in research (Holmes et al., 2013). Multilingual strategies should be endorsed in counselling psychology given the discipline’s commitments to valuing diversity, social justice, and the multiplicity of cultural identities, especially in Canadian contexts (see Arthur & Collins, 2016).

Family and Trauma Therapy and Research

The study contributes and provides additional insight into interventions and research for family and trauma therapy. Specifically, these insights can be located in the areas of IGT interventions (Goodman, 2014; Danieli et al., 2017), therapy for traumatized families (Figley & Kiser, 2013), trauma and narrative witnessing (Kiser, Baumgardner, & Dorado, 2010; Westwood & Wilensky, 2005), and cultural considerations when working with trauma and families (Chung, 2006; Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez, 2008).

In this study, the exploration of participant narratives provided insight into the value of understanding trauma through narrative means. Concurrently, the family dialogue portion offered an appreciation of the process of narrative sharing and witnessing. These insights are valuable for working with trauma, as a key part of trauma counselling pertains to working towards fostering narrative coherence (Robjant & Fazel, 2010). For instance, Narrative Exposure Therapy involves working with clients to help organize traumatic narratives in a coherent and meaningful manner (Robjant & Fazel, 2010), while the importance of storytelling and narrative processes are acknowledged in treatment approaches such as Emotion-Focused Therapy for trauma (Paivio & Angus, 2017).

With the collective sharing and witnessing of narratives, there is support in the literature regarding the value of witnessing the narratives of others in group settings. For example, Westwood, McLean, Cave, Borgen and Slakov (2010) evaluated a group-based program for
veterans that involved storytelling processes, a program utilizing Life Review and enacting their experiences of trauma (Therapeutic Enactment). Researchers found that the eighteen participants that took part in the study exhibited evidence for decreased traumatic stress symptoms, depression and increased self-esteem. Another model is found in the storytelling groups referred to as the “To Reflect and Trust” groups developed by Dan Bar-On in 1992 to work with second-generation Holocaust survivors and perpetrators to address intergenerational trauma (Bar-On, 2006). Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On (2002) propose that through personal storytelling and witnessing of the other, otherwise intractable past conflicts and traumas can be worked through collectively.

From a family standpoint, Miller and Fivush (2006) demonstrate that understanding narratives of family members provides more insight into family relationships and self-identity. This value of sharing and witnessing story is also illustrated in my study through participants’ reflections after the family dialogue (see Lina and Henry’s story, and Ms. Leung and Ryan’s story). Therefore, value is found not only in the construction and telling of coherent narratives about trauma, but also in the witnessing of it. My study adds to the therapeutic literature by outlining possible steps for storytelling and family dialogue regarding traumatic experiences, particularly within intergenerational and multilingual family contexts. Nevertheless, additional research is needed to further understand the therapeutic process and benefits of sharing trauma narratives within family contexts. Research is also needed with regards to developmental considerations while learning about traumatic family narratives in the offspring generation to determine developmental impact on their narrative identity construction (Merrill & Fivush, 2016).
The sharing of traumatic narratives forms part of Figley and Kiser’s (2010) model for helping traumatized families. In their approach, they outline five phases for the therapist: (a) joining the family, (b) understanding and framing the family’s trauma response, (c) building helping skills, (d) sharing and healing, and (e) moving forward. As described, the sharing and healing component consists of narrative therapy, which involves bringing members of a family together to share their trauma story. Members weave their stories and insights to develop a healing theory for their own circumstances (Kiser, Baumgardner, & Dorado, 2010). This step in Figley and Kiser’s model parallels the family dialogue process in my study, as both consider steps for narrative sharing, clarifying narratives, and the formation of new interpretations. These processes are inherently valuable in offering a joint process of understanding, an opportunity for emergent reflections that can shape narrative understanding and identity. Furthermore, witnessing trauma may not necessarily lead to vicarious trauma; certain aspects could instead contribute to vicarious resilience. Accordingly, there can profitably be mounted further exploration on the value of narrative sharing and witnessing between family members, and the vicarious resilience that can emerge through these processes.

Research insights into specific models for working with IGT or historical trauma draw heavily from liberation psychology and social justice perspectives (see Duran et al., 2008; Goodman, 2014). They acknowledge that there are oppressive and systemic dimensions that sustain trauma (Duran et al., 2008). Goodman (2014) provides a Transgenerational Trauma and Resilience Genogram as (TTRG) a way to understand trauma across generations. TTRG is ecosystemic, strengths-based, culturally-responsive, and adheres to social justice considerations for addressing IGT. The model equips the counsellor with a more expansive view of trauma. By creating visual representations of trauma through a genogram, TTRG can provide insight into
factors impacting a client’s identity and promote their strengths (Goodman, 2014). As part of the TTRG’s methodology, Goodman (2014) highlights the importance of understanding sociopolitical histories and systemic forms of oppression that shape client’s lives. My study and its respective themes add support to Goodman’s (2014) approach by endorsing an ecological view that acknowledges the sociopolitical histories and realities shaping narrative and intergenerational narratives when working with IGT.

Cultural understandings of trauma provide credence to the importance of reading culture as a part of healing (Duran et al., 2008). Duran et al. (2008) promotes the notion of honouring cultural practices and acknowledging alternative worldviews for healing practices. This acknowledgement of trauma and culture is invaluable as it affirms culturally-specific strategies and unique ways in which trauma is bounded by culture (Drozdek, 2012; Wilson, 2007). The cultural considerations in IGT work with Chinese families involve appreciating aspects of face, emotions, and interdependent selves (Chung, 2006). In addition to these perspectives, my study highlights the multicultural and multi-linguistic therapeutic considerations with regards to silence when working with trauma. Furthermore, the participant narratives and themes illustrate how culture shapes understandings of traumatic events and their unique significance, contributing the notion of social death and face (see Decimation of Social Structures). Lastly, a culturally-imbued approach can also work towards exploring ways to navigate cultural identity; it can affirm the ways in which heritage is claimed or reclaimed in subsequent generations.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Inquiry**

No project stands on its own merit. The purpose of this project is to connect with previous studies on IGT and to scaffold the next steps of inquiry. The project itself contributes to an emerging program of study on IGT and Chinese-Canadian families. Nonetheless, there are
limitations in this study that need to be taken into consideration, before extension into future opportunities. In particular, it remains important to recognize issues of representation in narrative research and associated principles of relevance and resonance. Interpretation of the results and its implications should therefore take into consideration that this study is exploratory and bounded by a context of meaning circumscribed by the research question, participant narrative construction, sociocultural dimensionality, temporality, and place.

The narratives transcribed here represent a small subset of Chinese-Canadians of relative affluence—all the offspring participants were in undergraduate university or have already graduated. These participants shared similar sociopolitical worldviews, given their interests in social justice and critical and mental health discourses. They also adhered to bicultural understandings as they were raised in a multicultural Canadian context. Recruitment through snowball sampling may also have attracted participants with shared perspectives, perhaps inclusive of valuing of the trauma discourse for understanding their experience and their family. Therefore, a subset of second-generation Chinese-Canadians narratives are being represented, one that may not necessarily resonate with the narrative understandings of other Chinese-Canadians. This Chinese-Canadian experience is within Canadian contexts and may be limited in its translatability to other Chinese diasporic settings.

Given the nature of the topic and the possible culturally-relevant factors, such as face and shame, it was also difficult to recruit parental participants. There was greater willingness in second-generation participants to take part in this study comparatively. Through recruitment efforts, only two families agreed to take part as a dyad. This difficulty in recruitment may be reflective of the silence on this topic and the fact that the construct of IGT was not broadly understood, accepted, or resonant with the broader Chinese-Canadian community. For instance,
there were reservations among the stakeholders with labelling difficult experiences “trauma,” because it was generally understood that this construct would not be accepted by the older Chinese-Canadian community, notably reflecting the broader theoretical debate of universalizing trauma as a semiotic of suffering (Kidron, 2012). Of the parental generation that did take part in the study, they too, like the offspring participants, may consist of a subset of individuals who share similar worldviews and maintain an openness to psychological concepts such as trauma for understanding experience.

These stories are constructed from a group of Chinese-Canadians and may not resonate with the diasporic experiences of all Chinese-Canadians. Instead, each comprises a narrative representation that touches upon some commonality in narrative understandings among the Chinese-Canadian community, even if these experiences are appropriated differently by different individuals. Regardless, the purpose of narrative research is not generalizability, a principle of post-positivist/positivist paradigms, but rather the appreciation of personal meanings of life events and activities of these participants (Polkinghorne, 2007). I am interested in how meanings were storied and constructed based on available social discourses, culture, and lived experience (Bruner, 1991). Therefore, the study is to be evaluated based on its narrative coherence, soundness, trustworthiness, rigour, and its encapsulation of lived experience (Bruner, 1991; Mishler, 1990; Polkinghorne, 2007; Reissman, 2008). What is presented is not a paradigmatic account of Chinese-Canadians, but an account of lived experience that has narrative truth and has been analyzed utilizing narrative and hermeneutical strategies. These accounts and analyses can therefore maintain relevance and resonance among others in Chinese-Canadian communities, or in other communities that have undergone multigenerational traumas.
The presented issues of representation and over-specification to the participants may not actually limit the final fidelity of the constructed narratives and themes. The comparative willingness of the second generation to participate in the study owes itself not only to barriers to research. Conversely, the silence of potential participants can be considered as possible responses of resilience, respect, and care, beyond the issue of interest in partaking in a study or not. These differential responses are still reflected in the thematic formulations in this study (i.e., preserving face, maintaining and reclaiming heritage, and dimensions of resilience) and have narrative relevance. In light of these themes’ drawing from value-based perspectives of critical theory, on-going research on this topic can be guided by these thematic constructions. From this perspective, the resulting narrative and thematic formulations not only pertain to these participants but can find resonance and relevance with multiple modes of narrative appropriation, including those who honour difference through silence.

The study, like much of Narrative Inquiry, is limited by the nature of textual forms of narrative research. A *told* story does not capture the tacit or implicit dimensions of narrative, or the non-verbal/para-verbal nuances of the story. These can never fully be apprehended by text-based narrative research (Riessman, 2008), despite the fact written text does invite readers to enter into life worlds beyond their own. Furthermore, writings present aspects of narrative that participants have chosen to represent. Yet, even if chosen features of their narrative are selective, selectivity does not mean the narrative holds not true to the personal and narrative identity construction of that individual (McAdams, 1993). Selective versions can still maintain robust fidelity to the larger narratives as lived by individuals, families, and communities (McDonald, November 18, 2018, Personal Communication).
Despite the efforts to incorporate multilingual considerations into the methodology, there are still limitations in its implementation. The study privileges Anglo-based perspectives in its representative form and analysis. In addition, due to time constraints and financial limitations, the themes could not be translated into Chinese for the Chinese-speaking participants to review. The result was that two of the participants were unable to complete the member verification of the themes. There were also translation limitations in narrative representation and translation for the Chinese-speaking participants. As illustrated in the comments provided by Henry and Ms. Leung, there were some aspects of the translated narrative that were not precisely their intended meanings. The translation was likely sufficient, but not at the level of nuance that unique to the Chinese native. Furthermore, only the Chinese version of their stories were participant-verified and, despite efforts to ensure translation efforts were rigorous, it remains a presumption that the final English draft is a sufficiently accurate representation of these participant’s narratives. These limitations highlight the pragmatic difficulties in engaging with multilingual research. Nonetheless, is important to note that these limitations must be understood in light of the relational processes that guided the study. Even with aforementioned linguistic limitations, the relational aspects of research were privileged, thereby enabling the project to be conducted in a rigorous, engaged, and trustworthy manner. The relational elements of the study arguably provided a depth to narratives and communal understandings that superseded issues with translation.

Taking these limitations into consideration, there are multiple directions that the program of study of IGT for Chinese-Canadians can be extended. The textual limitation of narrative research can offer opportunities for alternative models of representation, including dialogical/performance analysis and visual analysis (Riessman, 2008). Meanwhile, the emphasis
on power structures and sociopolitical dimensions in this study lends itself well to discourse analysis. Multilingual facets can be improved to ensure the nuances in Chinese language are captured in the translated English forms and vice-versa. Regardless of the above limitations, a key implication of the study is that it demonstrates intergenerational vitality through the data gathering and analysis process. It testifies to the resilience of heritage in the Chinese-Canadian community. Generational differences are inherently honoured, as illustrated in the narratives and themes. For instance, the meaning-seeking of the second generation at times yields answers and stories and, at other times, respectful silences, indirect acknowledgements, and partial accounts of larger family experiences. Thus, a critical-theoretical adoption of such heritage can supply research in solidarity with these resiliencies; this adoptive work can provide broader understandings of silence in future studies and may be a gift for ongoing research.

**Ending Reflections**

Last year, I remember my father telling me, “Don’t look into Chinese politics and history; don’t get involved in anyway.” I forgot what events had transpired that led him to share this warning, or perhaps, statement of wisdom. He was not aware of my project, and he was fiercely supportive of the Chinese political party. Yet, there was earnestness in his statement—a desire to preserve and protect me from the sociopolitical reality that shaped his life, his narrative truth. Part of my fieldwork or cultural reflection involved learning about my own family history. I had learned components of my father’s story through an interpreter, my wife, as she had linguistic and cultural competencies I lacked. In doing so, I learned enough to know that I could not let him comprehend my project, whose contents would, in a way, go against my filial commitments towards him. I knew enough to be silent.
Again, there was truth in his statement. It reminds me now of the themes and narrative realities shared within the parental narratives, both explicitly and interpretively, through the lenses of offspring. Here the temporal lines between the past traumatic realities become blurred with the present interactions. Perhaps my father’s lived experience makes his warning that much more poignant, even if it may not fit the sociocultural context that I reside in. I am reminded that to do a project like this is a privilege. This privilege of living in a democratic, multicultural society affords me freedoms to explore the past, even where the exploration of the past may be unsafe for those who lived through it. I realize that, in doing so, I am living through the same themes constructed in the study itself. My exploration of Intergenerational Trauma is my way of reclaiming and connecting with my heritage, with my grandfather. Even if it may seem to go against my filial commitments, this is my way of honoring my father and my family: to give voice to experiences once unspeakable.

It has been an honour to explore the stories that these participants have gifted and entrusted me with. A testament to courage can be found in their giving voice to difficult life experiences and permitting representation in a cultural milieu where stories of Chinese-Canadians are often misrepresented or neglected. To do so is counter-cultural. This project has been, in its very essence, an interweaving of my story and participants’ stories in order to present and make sense of something complex, complicated, and often unspoken.

My last reflection comes through a quote from Elie Wiesel’s acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. I think it only fitting and reflective of my own personal and professional commitments. Elie Wiesel was a Holocaust survivor. As such, through his work and the work of other Holocaust researchers emerged the concept of IGT in the empirical literature, creating space for stories and silenced experiences to be acknowledged. Through his
and many other voices, trauma and the silenced histories of ancestors were known. He states, and I echo,

. . . that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe. (Wiesel, 1986)
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Appendices

Appendix A Individual Narratives

The individual narratives will be presented with the following structure: (a) a brief introduction with the endorsed Life Events Checklist-5 (LEC-5) items to provide an overview of the life story and intergenerational traumas (IGT), and (b) their co-authored narrative of their life and the impact of IGT on their constructed story. It will be presented in the following manner, first with the parental narrative (Hua) and afterwards the offspring narratives (Joan, Ken and Stacy).
A.1 Hua’s Story: On Becoming an Educator

**Introduction.** Hua is a female 65-year-old professor who lived in China and immigrated to Canada in 2013. She spent most of her life in China and had lived in United States for a period. Her son is 37-years-old and currently resides in China. Though Hua did not fill out the LEC-5 during the interview, the traumas she experienced is presented below based on her narrative (see Table 14). The theme of education permeates throughout her narrative—from early on, with the discrepant education she received in China and re-education efforts in the countryside, to later, with the desire to educate her son and her journey of becoming a professor. Her educational journey serves as markers for understanding the unpredictable life circumstances created by the collective traumas endured in her time in China. Fittingly, as an educator herself, she provides the contextual backdrop to help appreciate the unique circumstances she and many others endured. This is her story.

**Table 14. LEC-5 Endorsed by Hua**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
<th>Learned about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat or exposure to war zone</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe human suffering</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden violent death</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Before the Cultural Revolution**

We used to have pretty good life. After the liberation in 1949, everyone was looking forward to a better future. My parents told me they were the first group of people who
welcomed the liberation army into the city. They were so sick of all the wars—the Sino-Japanese war, the civil wars—they just wanted peace. During the war with Japan, my parents had to escape the city and run to the mountains because the Japanese were bombing cities. The mountains were the only safe place, many schools ended up moving to the remote and mountainous areas. It was a very scary time for them. My parents faced many traumas, so when the Communists came with their message of peace and liberation, they welcomed it.

Mao’s army was very strong and there was a lot of propaganda. The Communists had already taken control of most of the country and my parent’s city was one of the last. There was no need to push back because people believed in the Communist message of “equality, no oppression, and no exploitation.” The principles of Communism sounded very good; they were utopian, beautiful, and idealistic.

My parents believed in the Communist message. Even though their families and their parents were attacked as landlords and rich peasants, they believed it was necessary to create an equal society. Their families had money and land, so theoretically it made sense that it should be divided. My grandparents were forced to move out of their big houses into some very shabby houses. Their property was then divided among the villagers and the poor peasants; their land was distributed to other people. My parents were not directly affected because they were already working in the big city. They still believed that the equal distribution of wealth was a right thing to do.

**False hope and family traumas.** It wasn’t long after the Communists took over that the personal attacks against my family started. My parents became aware that it was not just equal distribution of wealth, but the Communists were also dividing people and categorizing them as good or bad. If you have money, you’re bad; if you are educated, you’re bad. It was that simple.
My family had so many tragedies. My uncle, my mother’s brother, who graduated from the highest military academy and used to serve in Chiang Kai Shek’s army, didn’t flee with Chiang Kai Shek to Taiwan.\(^5\) Instead, he came back because he had a wife in his hometown. In theory, he should have been welcomed back to the village because he served in the wars and didn’t leave, but that was not the case. He was home for two months and then there was a riot near the village because of some religious situation. The government was looking for the source of the riot and then they accused him: “Here is someone coming back from the 国民党 (Guόmíndǎng / Kuomintang of China), \(^5\) he must have something to do with the riot.” They arrested him and put him into prison for more than ten years without trial. He was falsely accused just because he was associated with the previous political party.

My father’s brother was accused and attacked as a rightist in 1958. He was a veterinarian for the 国民党 (Guόmíndǎng / Kuomintang of China) army, but after the Communist Revolution, he worked in the agriculture department for the province. In 1957, Mao Zedong encouraged all the intellectuals to criticize the government during the Hundred Flower Campaign, “let one hundred flowers bloom.” Though the campaign seemed to allow people to express their opinions openly, it was a trap to identify the people who were against the government. My uncle didn’t know that. When he was encouraged to say something, he criticized the government for not protecting the animals in the countryside. He was then classified as a rightist, and he was put under house arrest. He was forced to self-criticize and acknowledge that he was wrong. It was

\(^5\) After losing the civil war, Chiang Kai Shek’s and his government fled to Taiwan to establish the Republic of China in 1949 (Dillon, 2017).

\(^5\) 国民党 (Guόmíndǎng / Kuomintang of China) – The Nationalist Party of China that was under the leadership of Chiang Kai Shek. It was the main political party in China before Mao Zedong took over with the Communist Revolution.
too much for him to bear; he ended up jumping off his office building and killing himself. Afterwards, the government classified him as an enemy. They said that he used suicide to fight against the party.

I was only seven years old when he died. My aunt, his wife, was left with four children and no financial support. The government wouldn’t support her because her husband was a rightist and, after his suicide, an anti-revolutionary which was worse.\(^{52}\) She became a seamstress and made clothes for other people so that she could get by, raising her children. I still remember it. They were in a very small room with five people living in it, and in the room was her sewing machine, a stove, and all the beds, all in just one small room.

My father tried to appeal my uncle’s case, but because he tried to appeal for a “criminal,” he was then labelled an anti-revolutionary. His actions led to his being sent to the labour camp in 1964 during the “Four Purifications Movement.”\(^{53}\) That moment was still very vivid to me. My family was living in a one-bedroom apartment in my mother’s school. That day when I got home all the furniture was gone, all that was left was one small bed. I asked my mom where the furniture was, but she couldn’t respond—she was just crying. One of my uncles called me outside and told me that my father was being sent to the labour camp and the working unit took away the furniture; it no longer belonged to us. Our furniture was provided by my father’s working unit, so when he was sent to the labour camp, the furniture was also taken away. He was there for three years. After my dad was sent away, my family became even worse. My

\(^{52}\) To be an anti-revolutionary means that you were the complete enemy, while being a rightest meant that you could possibly be reformed (according to participant).

\(^{53}\) The “Four Purifications Movement” (四清运动/\(\text{Sìqīng Yùndòng}\)) or the “Four Cleanups” (1963-1966), was a political movement that focused on cleansing four areas that were deemed as being corrupted—politics, economy, organization, and ideology (Dillon, 2017).
mother felt vulnerable, she was hardly able to protect herself, me, and my sister. After that, I was classified as a person with a bad family background.

**The famine.** Before the famine, The Great Leap Forward had impacted how people lived. People had to form 人民公社 (rénmín gōngshè / Peoples’ Communes), essentially communes in the countryside within villages and even in the cities. Mao Zedong wanted to surpass England and America, so they wanted to make steel. As a result, communes were formed where everything was shared and anything with metal was given up to the state. All of knives, pots, and pans were melted down to produce steel. No one could cook at home because all their utensils were taken away, so commune canteens were formed where you had to go to receive your food.

I remember the famine very clearly, I was eight years old, and my sister was just born that year. The famine started in 1959 and went ’til 1962. Those three years were horrible. It was so hard for people to get by, and everything was rationed. Even if you had money, you couldn’t get food. Everyone was suffering. It was even worse for people in the countryside, because they couldn’t even get state support, unlike the cities. There was so little food available. Even when you visited other people’s homes, you had to bring your own ration of rice because the other people didn’t have anything extra to feed you.55

My family was in a relatively better position because my parents had decent, higher paying jobs, but even my dad got sick. During the famine, he got 水肿病 (shuǐzhōng bìng /

54 **人民公社 (rénmín gōngshè / Peoples’ Communes)** - The Peoples’ Communes were developed during the Great Leap Forward. In a commune, everything was shared, and private cooking became illegal, being replaced with communal dining (Dikötter, 2010).

55 From a cultural standpoint, this action can be understood as a sign of how desperate the situation was at the time. The act of bringing your own food to a guest’s house goes against Chinese customs and principles of hospitality as it is the responsibility of the host to ensure that their guest is taken care of.
famine dropsy) and his body was all swollen; he had to be sent to a different canteen to receive more nutritious food to cure his disease. When he came back, he would save us some food from the canteen, like a little bun, to feed me and my mom because we had to eat such terrible food.

I was the one in my family who had to go to the communal canteen in our neighbourhood to fetch our daily rations. During the famine, we were given 12 兩 (liàng / tael) of rice, which was about 370 grams of rice, per person per day. Sometimes, if they didn’t have rice, then we were given sweet potatoes or even husks of rice, which was problematic because people cannot digest rice husks. I remember one time I was holding a pot with three little balls of cooked rice, one for each person in my family. As I walked back from the canteen, a homeless person lunged at me and grabbed two of the rice balls. His fingers were all dirty and black; he was so hungry that he stuffed the steaming rice into his mouth. I was so shocked. Some people shouted, "Hey give the kid that rice back," while others said, "Oh no, its dirty already, don’t even bother.” I cried because that was our family’s whole meal. When I got home, we barely had any food, so we just divided the little rice cake among the three of us. I remember, another time, I ate all of my family’s portions because I was so hungry. I had gotten home, and no one was there, so I ended up eating all the food. My parents were shocked and I got a huge lesson. I could understand that homeless person. He was just too desperate; everyone was desperate.

**The Cultural Revolution**

The Cultural Revolution started May 16th, 1966. I was fifteen and in junior high. Mao had just published his first big character poster (大字报/dàzìbào), and the schools suddenly

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56 兩 (liàng / tael) – an old Chinese weight measure, there were 16 兩 in one 斤 (Jīn / 500 grams).
57 大字報 (dàzìbào / big character posters) – these political posters were large, hand-written, and wall-mounted, using Chinese characters to promote class struggle and attack targets. These tools of the Cultural Revolution were used to attack people and their personal character. These written attacks could be done in the form of false
stopped teaching. We were told by the central committee that the Cultural Revolution was happening.\textsuperscript{58} At first, we were pretty happy: we did not have to attend classes, but we were urged to participate in the “Great Cultural Revolution.” It was encouraged by the schools, though the teachers didn’t realize that they would end up being the targets. Everywhere, from factories to government offices, people started to attack each other by publicly humiliating one another.\textsuperscript{59} Big character posters were posted at government buildings, with people accusing their leaders of shameful things they had done in the past.\textsuperscript{60} My friends and I would go and read the posters. We were so curious; we never imagined that our party leaders had such dirty histories and, in the beginning, we believed what was being stated on the posters.

Schools were still opened despite classes being stopped, so we took part in revolutionary activities at school. The students imitated the political style supported by the big character posters. We were encouraged to think about any anti-revolutionary comments our teachers said so that we could attack them. For instance, we had a biology teacher who taught us anatomy, and we felt it was inappropriate for him to teach us about organs and their functions. A group of students then wrote a big character poster denouncing the teacher stating that he was poisoning our young and innocent minds. The teachers still had to show up to school even though they were not teaching, otherwise the Red Guards would go to their home, drag them to school, and attack and humiliate them on the stage. The students’ attacks were short-lived because school ended in July and we went on summer vacation.

\textsuperscript{58} The central committee was the most important political body within the Chinese Communist Party (Dillon, 2017).

\textsuperscript{59} This type of attack was referred to as “civil attack”, that is, not using physical force to attack one another. However, over time, these attacks did eventually lead to physical violence (according to the participant).

\textsuperscript{60} Such as the mayor being a traitor to the Communist Party in the 40s (according to the participant)
In August, our city became violent. I still remember it. It was August 18th, 1966 when Mao Zedong received the first group of Red Guards in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. It was the first time he appeared on Tiananmen Square during the Cultural Revolution, and Red Guards from all over the country went to see him. To see him was to see god. He encouraged them to rebel.

A famous article came out, detailing his conversation with one of the Red Guards, Song Bin Bin, who got to meet Mao Zedong at the gate of Tiananmen Square. Her name meant polite and elegant - Bin Bin being polite, and she was Song Ren Qiong’s daughter. In the article, Mao Zedong said to her, “Don’t be polite, don’t be gentle, you should want violence.” In response, she changed her name from Song Bin Bin to Song Yao Wu, which means “Song Want Violence.” She said, “I want violence, I don’t want to be elegant, I don’t want to be gentle.” Mao Zedong encouraged all the young people to do violent things and this conversation helped propel his message.

The strangest thing happened in society. Different Cultural Revolution organizations were formed. They named themselves based on Mao Zedong’s ideas and all of them claimed to be Mao’s fighters. These were political factions, all followers of Mao Zedong’s ideology, but they fought each other for power. Class distinctions were formed. There were the “good

61 According to participant, during that time Mao gave permission for all the Red Guards to travel anywhere in China to learn revolutionary activities. Beijing was the centre of the revolution and, specifically, Red Guards wanted to see Mao. Receptions were scheduled (about twice a month) for Mao to receive the Red Guards at the Tiananmen Square. Mao would be at a huge platform with other government officials to receive the Red Guards from all over the country.

62 Song Renqiong was one of the first generals of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army and was one of China’s founding leaders known as the Eight Immortals, which included leaders such as Deng Xiaopeng and Bo Yibo (South China Morning Post, 2005).

63 Direct translation; can also be interpreted as “be violent”. Lorenz (2007) writes a piece about this particular event and notes that Song Yao Wu/Song Bin Bin took part in the first killing of a teacher during the Cultural Revolution.
families” — parents who were poor peasants, workers, communist soldiers, and communist leaders, who were referred to as the 红五类 (hóng wǔ lèi / five good red families)\(^\text{64}\). These were families that Mao Zedong felt were the best, families that should be privileged.\(^\text{65}\) Then there were the 黑五类 (hēi wǔ lèi / five black families) — landlords, capitalists, intellectuals, rightists, and anti-revolutionary elements — families that were treated as enemies. My family was targeted because we were a “black family.” My parents were intellectuals: my father was a civil engineer, while my mother was a principal in elementary school, and my grandparents were landlords and rich peasants, all considered “bad” classes.

The struggle for power among the factions led to gunfighting within the city and streets. The fights were between Red Guards and Red Guards from different factions. They would show their weapons and power by shooting towards the sky. Sometimes, they would randomly shoot at bystanders. They ended up killing my neighbour who was just washing vegetables. No one would take responsibility for the murder, they just drove away because they were too powerful. It was scary to witness the violence, but as I was not actively involved in the faction fights; I was relatively safe. The only case in which you could get harmed was if the Red Guards randomly shot at you.

The Cultural Revolution caused the most social division in the country. It was the class struggle of Marxism and the society was split into classes. People from the so-called “good

\(^{64}\) 红五类 (hóng wǔ lèi / the five red categories) — the social classes favoured by the Communist Party of China, which include poor and lower-middle class, peasants, workers, revolutionary soldiers, revolutionary cadres, and revolutionary martyrs (Sullivan, 2007).

\(^{65}\) According to the participant, in order to be a Red Guard, you had to be from a good (e.g., a “red”) family and then apply.

\(^{66}\) 黑五类 (hēi wǔ lèi / the five black categories) — families considered enemies of the Revolution, which include landlords, rich farmers, counter-revolutionaries, bad-influencers (or bad elements), and rightists (Sullivan, 2007).
families” had liberty to do whatever they wanted. They could drag anyone (from “bad families”) out and attack them because there was no law. As an educator, my mother was attacked, but fortunately her school was an elementary school, so the younger children’s actions weren’t as extreme. However, they still did bad things to the teachers. The students in grade five or six berated their teacher and sealed the teacher’s door with paper seals leaving only a small opening. The teacher couldn’t break through the seals and had to crawl into her room everyday—in and out. It was so humiliating, and that was just elementary students.

The Red Guards could 抄家 (chāo jiā / raid homes) whenever they wanted it, which meant that they could search your home for criminal (anti-revolutionary) evidence and for valuables. Anyone could come to your house to search it, especially if you were from a “bad family”. My mother was afraid that the Red Guards would come and break into our homes and search for our “crimes.” The Cultural Revolution was about getting rid of the “four olds,”67 and my mom had a collection of old calligraphy, paintings, and books she inherited from my grandfather. She was afraid the Red Guards would come and accuse her of being an anti-revolutionary for saving these items. So, my mom did a very drastic thing and she burned all the paintings, calligraphy, and books, even my father’s academic books. These were precious heirlooms and she had to destroy them all. In the end, nobody came because my father had already been sent to a labour camp. Her concern was for our safety, but she always regretted doing that and cries when she talks about it. You never know when you will be attacked. One day you could be the attacker, and then the next day you would be the victim. Life was so unpredictable and chaotic.

67 The four olds (四旧/ sì jiù) – Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas (Dillon, 2017).
Education during the Cultural Revolution. The school I attended was an all-girls school and I was in a class of sixty-four students. When the Cultural Revolution began, the students in the school split themselves up into the different social classes. The students from the “five red families”, the Red Guards, began to treat us (those who did not belong in red families) like enemies. Suddenly, my best friends wouldn’t speak to me, and it was not that long ago that we took part in class parties and organized class activities together. Now they excluded me, they excluded us, the 黑五类 (hēi wǔ lèi / black five categories).

It was surreal. In grade seven we were in the same class for two years, and we did everything together—we had performances, travelled, and took classes everyday for the past two years. My classmates were some of my best friends. And then, overnight, people got divided and became enemies to each other. I had no power or any way to protect myself. We had to do whatever the Red Guards ordered us to do. If we went against them, we would be attacked in public. We saw them attack the teachers; they dragged them onto the stage and ordered them to kneel down. The Red Guards put cones on the teachers’ heads and heavy sign boards over their necks, signs that said “rightist,” “anti-revolutionary,” and other humiliating things. Then they would spit on them and beat them. If they could do that towards the teachers, what more could they do to us? At that moment, I felt that the basic human essence was gone with this generation.

As part of our “participation in the revolution,” we did physical work in the factories or farms, because Mao Zedong said that students should learn from workers and peasants (学工学农/xué gōngxué nóng). Our school had a farm in the countryside maybe forty kilometers away from the city, and as we had to also learn from soldiers, we carried all of our own quilts and walked to the farm. At the farm, we had a big dorm which was converted from a grain storage house and
we all slept in this room. All the students were required to go to the farm to work for about two weeks a term, sometimes longer.

We had worked in the farm prior to the Cultural Revolution because Mao had advocated it be part of our curriculum in the early Sixties. The Summer of 1966 was the last time we went to the farm. The previous times were physically challenging, but this time it was also political torture, the students from the 红五类 (hóng wǔ lèi / the red five categories) began to order us around. We had to do all the dirty and heavy work, while the 红五类 (hóng wǔ lèi / the red five categories) stood around and supervised us. It was essentially a labour camp. The Red Guards thought that, because we were from bad families, we should reform ourselves by working hard. They didn’t need to work because they were from good families; they had “better genes.”

We had to go to a nearby town to get rice for everyone. We carried the rice on our shoulders with two bamboo baskets attached to a pole. The rice weighed about 40 kilograms. One of my classmates who came from a landlord family was specifically picked for this task. She was a bit slow and a little bit chubby, but the Red Guards picked her because they wanted to torture her. She never did any heavy work in her life, so it would have been difficult for her to carry that heavy load. Two Red Guards accompanied her, to supervise her, to watch her. The day passed, and it became dark, they didn’t come back yet and people were concerned. It was only two kilometres away and they should have gotten back by now. The Red Guards then started saying that the girl must have killed the other two Red Guards for revenge, for class revenge. It really hurt me to hear them make such an accusation, and it made me realize how

68 Reform is based on the idea that those from bad families were born as bad people because they had bad genes. To reform was to become a “better person” (according to the participant).
class struggle idea was so deeply ingrained in people’s minds. It was so ridiculous and inhume.

Eventually, we all took flashlights to try to find them along the path towards the town. Halfway there we saw them; they couldn’t come home because the girl couldn’t walk anymore, the load was too much for her. The Red Guards who accompanied her refused to help. They just waited for her, bashed her along the way, and continued to ridicule her when she stopped. They could have helped her, but they said that it was not their job. After we found her we helped to get the rice back. We were so young, we were only fifteen. How could my peers do such a thing? I had such a vivid memory of that time because it was so devastating to me. It left a deep impression on me. It was a trauma, the first time I realized people's hatred could be so deep, that people could be so mean, and that they had the capacity to treat each other with such cruelty.

I could share many more stories of what happened then, but one particular story stands out for me. Back then, I was good at singing and dancing and I was usually the most active member in the class. Whenever we needed to do a talent show or a party, I would always be the organizer or director because I loved getting people together to sing and dance. I remember one performance, I organized the girls to sing a folk song and dance for the peasants. This was to show our appreciation because Mao Zedong told us that we had to learn from the poor peasants; after all, that was the purpose of our going to the countryside. At that time, only “politically correct” songs could be sung. This song’s title was “I am a good descendent of the poor peasants.” I remember I was on the stage performing and then some Red Guards started shouting, “You should not be on the stage! You are not a good descendant of the poor peasants, you’re from a bad family!” I was dragged off in front of all the audience; they publicly
humiliated me. I was only fifteen and I realized that human nature could be so cruel—there was no respect for humanity, for life, or for people. How could they do such mean things?

The “pure” revolution. From May 1966 to December 1968, there was no school and people didn’t have to work, it was pure revolution and everything was in chaos. For three years, students were all free to take part in the Revolution. Mao Zedong called for 大串联 (dà chuàn lián)⁶⁹, meaning that young people could travel all over the country for free to exchange experiences during their revolutionary activities. That was how a lot of Red Guards could go to Beijing to see Mao Zedong.

During that time, I managed to go to Beijing with a few friends from other schools. They didn’t know I was from a “bad family” and nobody knew me in Beijing. We also realized that it was a random whether you were considered from a “good family” or “bad family”, so it didn’t matter; we all just wanted to be revolutionaries and we all wanted to see Chairman Mao. My friends, those who were older and also students, invited me to go to Beijing because we thought it a great chance to travel for free with a student card. We secretly planned our trip to go to Beijing. My mother didn’t know and was so scared when she found out that I had left. At fifteen, with no money, I went on to the train with my friends. There were so many people taking trains at the time. It was extremely crowded, and it was so hot because it was the middle of August! We had to squeeze into the trains and there were people sleeping under the seats and on the luggage racks. If you could lock yourself in the bathroom that would be the best place to be.

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⁶⁹ A special privilege for Red Guards to take public transportation for free across the country to exchange revolutionary ideas (according to participant).
We were part of the second group of Red Guards to be received by Mao Zedong. We waited at Tiananmen Square for an entire day with five hundred thousand Red Guards, baking in the sun, just waiting for the moment Mao Zedong appeared on the stage. When he appeared, I couldn’t actually see him because he was so far away. The whole square sang “Long live Chairman Mao.” It was like we were there to worship him. Everyone wanted to see Chairman Mao. We still loved Mao even though we were attacked and our families were being attacked. We were heavily brainwashed by Mao Zedong. It was crazy—every time he said something, it would be published and everyone would go out and celebrate and shout, “Wow! Chairman Mao said something new and we must follow him!” He was like a god. Everyday, we had to read his little red book; every morning, we had to dance and sing to him; and every night, we had to report to him to show our loyalty. It was like a religion, “Oh, Chairman Mao, we love you so much, you are like the sun, you are like our father.”

Even though we were from “bad families,” we wanted to prove that we were real revolutionaries and that we were eligible, capable, and educatable. We were taught that everyone should be a fighter for the revolutionary cause, later we were labeled as 可以教育好的黑五类子女 (kěyǐ jiàoyù hǎo de hēi wǔ lèi zǐnǚ / the educatable individuals from the five black families). We wanted to become revolutionaries, because if you were not, then you were the enemy or you would be killed. There was no choice. You had to prove you were a revolutionary; that is why many people betrayed their families and their parents. If their parents said something that was politically incorrect according to the political situation at the time—even

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70 In the tune of “Row, Row, Row your Boat” taught by the Beijing University choir. Revolutionaries didn’t realize it was a foreign tune and, at that time, anything foreign was not allowed (according to the participant).
71 A song lyric. Songs generally had these types of imagery that symbolized Mao as the sun, as a father figure, and as a saviour (according to participant).
if it was true—their children or spouses might betray them. So, in your own household you were encouraged to betray your family, to set a clear dividing line between yourself and your family if they were considered “bad,” and to show that you were one of the right people—the revolutionaries.

I never reported my parents, but I was tempted. My parents might have said something earlier that was not “politically correct,” and I was tempted to disclose one of them to prove that I was a revolutionary. However, this was temporary. I think there were some basic principles that were instilled in me before the Cultural Revolution that prevented me from betraying them. I am thankful for the way that my parents educated me from childhood. They are people with great integrity who received both traditional and modern education. My mom, especially, stressed morality and integrity in being a human being in the world. My parents paid great attention to my education and it was their principles and lessons that protected my integrity as a person.

My mom was scared of all the violence that was happening. On one hand, she did not want me to be attacked and wanted me to involve myself in the revolutionary acts that were more “civil.” On the other hand, she did not want us to do anything that was violent or against our conscience. Towards the end of the “pure” revolution, I took part in the “propaganda team” formed by students. This involved singing and dancing to encourage other people to take part in the Revolution and to show our faith to the Party and Chairman Mao. Whenever Mao announced anything, there would be parades to spread his new instructions, and we would sing
and dance for these parades. I saw it as an opportunity to practice these art forms, while my mom was relieved that I could do those things without having to be more involved in politics.\(^{72}\)

I still remember it, in December 1968, Mao Zedong issued a speech over the radio, just several sentences, “It is necessary to let intellectual youth go to the countryside and receive poor peasants’ re-education… they will have a great future in the countryside.” The country had become so chaotic, and he and the central committee might have lost control. There were so many students in junior and senior high who had gone three years without school. So, Mao Zedong decided to just send everyone to the countryside, as if he was saying, “We don’t have to create jobs for them; isn’t this option easy?” When Mao made this announcement, we gathered all our tools and instruments and went to the streets to celebrate the new instructions. We didn’t realize we were the ones being sent to the countryside. We were celebrating our doom. That was when we knew that we were being used. Millions of us were then sent to the countryside within the following weeks.

I cannot forgive Mao Zedong, because I think he brought out the worst of human nature. He divided innocent people with his class struggle theory and made them hate each other. I think he is the worst criminal in history. I just don’t understand how some people in China still worship him. Some people think he is a great person, and yes, he made things happen, but he also did so many cruel things just for power, for himself, and for the party.

“Re-education”: The Countryside

\(^{72}\) The participant’s involvement in singing and dancing was during the period before she was sent to the countryside. Schools were still opened, though teachers were not teaching, and students gathered there to take part in revolution activities.
I was seventeen when I went to the countryside. My father was already sent to a different village in a remote countryside, while my mother and nine-year old sister stayed in the city. I carried my own quilt and a basin, a few pieces of clothing and took the bus to a village I had never seen. Before I left, I remember my classmates and I gathered together. We were not as badly divided anymore: everybody knew we were being used by Mao. We felt that for three years we supported the Revolution, and what we got in return was to be stripped of everything. It felt like we were being controlled by someone, something invisible but very powerful. We couldn’t do anything to change our lives. I became more aware of how powerless we were with our own lives. I encountered the fragile vulnerability of human life. We tried to encourage each other, but in actuality, we were all scared. We didn’t want to be peasants for the rest of our lives. It was a hopeless feeling. We could not see our future. In front of me was an ocean of unknowingness.

Being in the countryside was like being in a third-world country: there was no support from the government, and one’s livelihood was based on what one produced. Peasants were regarded as sub-citizens or third-class citizens, because they could not get out of the villages and were doomed to work in the fields. As a peasant, you had no privileges, and you were a peasant for your whole life. The Hukou (户口) policy, the resident’s registration, meant that, if you were registered to live in the countryside, you could not live anywhere else. To be sent to the countryside meant that we became peasants and were stripped of our city registration (hukou / 户口); all our city-resident privileges (although limited) were taken away. 73 We would continue to

73 Hukou (户口 / hùkǒu) – refers to household registration that determines where a person is allowed to reside. The hukou system regulates internal movements of its citizens. It is a household registration required by law that determines where citizens are allowed to live (Chan, 2009).
be a peasant, unless we got into university or were hired by the government to be a state-owned worker or teacher.

We tried to encourage each other, so our classmates and I took a so-called “graduation” class picture and predicted what people would do in the future. People predicted that I would become a university student, a 大学生 (dà xué shèng). Even then, my classmates believed in my academic accomplishments. Being a university student didn’t just mean getting an academic degree; it was an identity, a status, and it meant that you would be well educated and well respected. Even with all the Cultural Revolution’s ideas, being educated was still looked highly upon. However, for me there was no foreseeable future of getting an education.

I was in the countryside for six years, from 1968 to 1974. It was very difficult living there. Growing rice required a lot of work. You had to spread the seeds to grow into seedlings in the rice nursery, then pull the seedlings out to wrap them, and then divide the seedlings and plant them into bigger sections in the rice paddy. In the Spring, you would be planting all the rice seedlings in the field. In Summer, it was known as the “double rush” season: you had to rush to harvest the first planted rice crop and then rush over to plant the second crop, because in southern China you would grow two crops of rice each year. You would start to work before the sun rises and would be outside all day trying to transplant or harvest the plants. Even after dinner, you were out in the fields in moonlight to prepare for the next day’s work. The work required us to be constantly bending over in the field, with the sun baking us, covered in mud and sweat. As the rice fields were all 水田 (shuǐtián / paddy fields), it would be all mud and water. There would be lots of mosquitoes and leeches would climb up your legs. It was terrible, but it made me realize the amazing coping capacity of human beings.
In 1971, I became a village school teacher known as 民办教师 (mínbàn jiàoshī). At that time, the government couldn’t provide enough teaching positions, so we 民办教师 (mínbàn jiàoshī) were paid by the village. I remember I was digging sweet potatoes on the hillside, and the schoolmaster came to look for me. One of the teachers in his school was away on maternity leave. When the village schools needed someone to teach, they would often look for us, the so-called “intellectual youth.” So, by chance, they found me. I was offered the position and I taught for the next four or five years. However, as a village teacher, I was still a peasant. The difference between a 民办教师 (mínbàn jiàoshī) and a 公办教师 (gōngbàn jiàoshī) was that 公办教师 (gōngbàn jiàoshī) were state funded, meaning they received cash as salary for a permanent job. The 民办教师 (mínbàn jiàoshī), on the other hand, were paid by the villages with rice and were expected to work in the fields during the three busiest seasons: the spring planting, the double-rush in the summer and the autumn harvesting. I was still stuck in the countryside.

Dashed dreams. By the third year that I was in the countryside, universities began to enroll students called 工农兵学员 (gōngnóng bīng xuéyuán), which meant students were enrolled from workers, peasants, or soldiers, or else from their families. Acceptance was not by academic merit, but by recommendations based on political background. The village could recommend one person, but they would never recommend me because I was from a “bad family.”

I remember at first there was an exam to ascertain our academic grades for enrolment. I went to the examination in our town, along with other intellectual youth. I thought I had a chance: I fared well on the exam and had a good academic history, however, I was never chosen; in fact, millions of potential students had their grades nullified. A famous event happened that resulted in our grades being disregarded. Zhang Tiesheng (张铁生), who was also an intellectual youth from the northeast, went to write the exam, and he ended up handing in an empty answer.
sheet (交白卷 / jiāobáijuàn). He then wrote to the newspaper stating that he was so busy with his work as a production team leader and that he couldn’t study because he was a true revolutionary worker. So, why would the universities still enroll students by their grades? This article was published in the People’s Daily and resulted in the nullification of exam marks.74 I even knew a girl from a “good family” or a worker family who received zero in the exam. At first, people laughed at her and said she “ate a duck egg” (吃鸭蛋 / chī yādàn). But in the end, she was actually enrolled into medical school because they disregarded her exam marks. I was so pissed! I worked so hard to get into school and here she could just get into medical school without any academic credentials. Even the peasants joked that they would not want to go to her hospital! The system was so unfair. Millions of students lost their opportunity to go to university because of their family background, not because of their academic capabilities.

Becoming a student had social implications. If you could become a university student you could change your hukou (户口) and would no longer be a peasant. There is a Chinese saying—跳龙门 (tiào lóngmén) —which means “to jump over the dragon’s gate.” This saying is in reference to a Chinese myth that if a carp can jump (跳 / tiào) high enough to soar over the dragon’s gate (龙门 / lóngmén), then it could become a dragon. Historically, this saying was a metaphor for intellectuals; if they could pass the imperial court exams, then they could become civil servants. This saying was also used in reference to people who received education to escape the countryside; dragon (龙 / lóng), sounds like agriculture or farmland (农 / nónɡ) and it was a play on words. Education was a social ladder upon which people could rise up, because

74 Prior to the grades being nullified, academic achievement did have a factor into decision making for enrollment into universities, along with your background and file history. After the Zhang Tieshang incident, grades no longer factored into university enrollment for a period of time (according to the participant).

75 吃鸭蛋 (chī yādàn / eat an egg) – a colloquial term for getting a zero on an exam (according to the participant).
China was still a class-based society. Education was one of the ways for peasants to get out of the countryside.

I tried every effort to become a student again, and every time, because of my family background, I was turned down even though I was capable. That was the worst thing about being in the countryside. You could not see your future and you couldn’t do anything about it. Sure, it was physically difficult, but when we were sent to the countryside to be “re-educated,” we didn’t know how long it would last. When were we coming back? Where would we go? It was mental torture. I didn’t think I would have a future. I didn’t know what I would become. Even if I tried to help myself or worked hard, I was the child of a “bad family,” so there were policies that prevented me from any promotions or future jobs. That was the darkest part about being in the countryside: there was no hope.

After the Revolution: On Becoming an Educator

I always wanted to be educated. It wasn’t for class or wealth. I didn’t care if I got into a technical college or a normal school, and it didn’t matter what I studied—I just wanted to study. I was resigned to the fact that, because of my family background, I didn’t have much choice anyways, so it didn’t matter what program I got into. I was just desperate to receive education.

My desire to be educated came at a very early age. Back then, there were little book stands on the streets called 图书摊 (túshū tān), which were privately owned book stands that rented out picture books to kids. The books would be hanging on lines and you could pick out the books you wanted to read. For each penny, you could rent two picture books, so my mom

76 “Normal” schools are considered to be lower ranked schools (according to participant).
would give me two cents a day to go and read books. Eventually, I moved on to storybooks, because in third grade my classmates told me that if I read story books I could rent a book for two cents day and read like twenty stories in one book! It was such a good deal! So, I started reading story books without pictures, such as the 中国民间故事 (zhōngguó mínjiān gùshì / Chinese folk tales).

When I went to the countryside, I wanted to continue learning. I remember there were two professors who lived in our village for a short time. They were considered rightists and had to do hard labour as well. The woman professor once shared a room with me, sleeping in little bunk beds. We were usually exhausted after the hard day’s work, but we would still chat at night. I still remember her asking me, “What’s your favourite book?” I said to her, 红楼梦 (Hónɡlóumèng / The Dream of Red Chamber). She responded, “Oh, that’s a very good book.” I then asked her what her favorite was, and she said it was Spartacus. She inspired me to continue to explore my passion for literature, and I spent many years looking for that book afterwards. Though we only had a few interactions, our interactions meant a lot to me. I admired her because she was a professor and was well-educated. I felt validated because she showed great interest in what I was doing and reading. I never had this heart-to-heart conversation with someone who was above me and more knowledgeable; she talked to me as a peer and affirmed my interest in literature. I could never forget our conversations. She valued me and my opinions and, as someone who was well-educated, she was someone I aspired to become.

I had some friends who, like me, had a deep desire to learn. At that time, we were only allowed to read Chairman Mao’s work, but we wanted more. Before we went to the countryside, my friends and I tried to find any books we could. I must confess, we even stole books from the school library. The library had been closed for years during the Cultural Revolution, so we
thought it would be a big waste to have all those books locked in the library without being read by people. One night, we decided to take some books out to read. I was sent to climb into the window in the library to get good books for us before we had to go to the countryside. I was chosen because my friends believed I was a good reader, so I should know what books to pick. I remember grabbing books from French and Russian authors—Pushkin, Hugo, and Dostoevsky—books that were translated into Chinese prior to the Cultural Revolution. I passed all these books to my friends, even biology books because they had such beautiful pictures in them.

In the countryside, we sometimes had political study meetings with other intellectual youth from different villages or communes. We would whisper to each other, “So what book do you have?” When it rained and we didn’t have to work in the field, we would visit each other with our books in our bags and exchange them. I read so many books in the countryside because we would borrow and lend them to each other. I remember reading Jane Eyre in one night, I had to burn three oil lamps, because I had to return it the next day. Another time, a friend sent me a letter with only one line: “I’ve got 1793 (by Hugo),” so I dropped everything and went to the city by bus just to read that book. Our group was like an underground movement. We were longing, thirsty, and hungry for knowledge, for education. Reading Western literature nourished our minds in a time when knowledge had become barren. These were crucial moments in my life; they opened my eyes to seeing the world differently, taught me concepts of freedom, democracy, justice, and humanity, and influenced me to pursue a path of being an educator.

**Education from the countryside.** I suffered a lot in the early years after the Revolution, but the suffering also contributed to my ability to persevere and my desire and motivation to become educated. I consider myself lucky, because many of my friends who were hardworking and had high aspirations were destroyed by the times. It was like a whole generation of people
was put to waste. I know if my friends were given opportunities they would have been able to excel.

Despite the hardships I suffered in the countryside, the experience helped me grow stronger, to be tougher in my later years. Those years in the countryside were not just torture; they were a learning experience. I used to be so naïve, ignorant, and conceited. I thought I knew everything as a city girl. I read lots of books and I thought people in the countryside, 乡下人 (xiāngxià rèn), were stupid and didn’t know anything. It was not until I got to the countryside and worked with them that I learned to respect them more and more. They were so smart and resourceful in their own ways, and really, we (the so called intellectual youth) were the ones that were stupid. Being in the countryside taught me that I couldn’t treat people by prejudice and stereotypes. At first, we were laughing at the peasants, then the peasants were laughing at us, and eventually we learned to respect them. They taught me how to live life more productively and meaningfully. After all those years in the countryside, I think I can live anywhere in the world without a problem.

In 1974, I got a state-owned teaching job as a 公办教師 (gōngbàn jiàoshī). I was able to transfer my hukou (户口) out of the countryside and was no longer a peasant. I was paid 34.5 Chinese Yuan (元) per month and received this salary for the next ten years in this position. I was the last of the intellectual youths in my production brigade to get out of the countryside. I was no longer a peasant, but I had to remain in the countryside till 1976, as I was assigned to a political working team that organized the peasants for political studies. My role was to help

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77 At that time, 1 US Dollar was around 8 元, meaning she was paid about $4.30 / month (according to participant).
peasants criticize Confucianism and Lin Biao. It was in this county job that I met my husband. We got married in 1976. I could still remember my wedding, it was such a joke. Mao Zedong died that month and because of that no one was allowed to celebrate. So, we had a very quiet wedding and most of the gifts we received were the “Selected Works of Mao Zedong” (毛泽东选集 / Máozédōng xuǎnjí).

The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976. When Mao Zedong died, it meant the Cultural Revolution ended, and it ended my time in the countryside. As soon as I heard of his death, I was so happy, but the whole country was ordered to mourn his death. I was called to attend a memorial gathering for Mao outside the commune headquarters with all the peasants. It was a hot sunny day. All the peasants were wailing and crying as if their parents died. I remember thinking to myself, “finally this moment has come, Mao can no longer exercise his power over millions of people.” I had suffered too much because of him; I could not pretend to be sad. I refused to bow my head. When I got back home, my colleague said to me, “Hua, your nose is burnt.”

Education from Parents

After the Cultural Revolution, my mother remained very careful, while my dad became quite cynical. My mom was still pretty brainwashed. To this day, she believes that the communists saved the country even though her family had so many misfortunes. As she was a school teacher, she had to teach the children whatever the government wanted her to teach. She got used to saying what the government wanted her to say. Even now, she sometimes speaks

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78 Mao Zedong wanted to eliminate the political influence of Lin Biao by linking him with Confucianism. It was part of an anti-Lin and anti-Confucian movement (according to the participant).
like the newspaper because she had to be careful her whole life. I remember when I was in the
countryside, I shared to my mom that one of my roommates was almost raped by the village
leader. She told me not to say anything and said, “Poor peasants would never do that kind of
thing.” So, for her whole life she had to be very cautious and politically correct. She would
never say anything that was different than the newspaper. My dad was a bit different. He is
more well read and is very politically clear minded, so he is a more independent thinker. That is
why he got himself into trouble in the first place.

However, my mother really believed in education. She was the principal of the school,
and despite being very petite, she was very strong willed. She was always very authoritative
towards the students. It was the “old teacher” kind of model, but she was also very kind. I
remember she convinced several parents to let their girls go to school. Back then, their parents
thought that there was no point in education for girls, because they would just become
housewives. But, she persuaded them to keep their girls in school and even helped pay for their
tuition. Some of these students ended up becoming teachers and government officials, and after
many years, they would come back and visit my mother. They would tell my mother that
without her they wouldn’t know where they would have ended up.

My mother also had a profound sense of justice and integrity. She really believed in the
original Communist principles. She would always give money to the poor and to the beggars.
She treated everyone with integrity. Even the sewage cleaning workers who cleaned the waste
from the toilet rooms of our school, everyone avoided because they smelled, but my mother
always made tea for them and thanked them for their work. She would tell them that, without
them, the school would not be running. When she saw people arguing or fighting in the street,
she would walk up and insert herself between the fighters to stop them, and then give them a big lecture on the importance of reasoning.

I was deeply influenced by my parents. They taught me integrity and the importance of fighting for justice. I still remember in 1989, during the Tiananmen Square incident, I protected my students who protested at Tiananmen. I was required by the university to report my students and I refused to do so. We also had political discussion meetings,\textsuperscript{79} where everyone had to state their opinion regarding whether the actions of the government during Tiananmen Square were right or wrong. Everyone had to say something, so I said, “the lesson I learned from this movement was that only what the communist party says is right.” My department head was shocked, but I could not be attacked because it was technically correct. Yet, I was still able to express my true opinion by subversively criticizing the government.

My mother always told me that sometimes doing the right thing meant sacrifice, and it was important to see the bigger vision. Even during the famine years when there wasn’t enough food for everyone to eat, at the school canteen, she would always choose the smallest portion of food and leave the better choices for the other teachers so that their families would have a little more food. She always told me not to go first and taught me the importance of being selfless. If my parents didn’t teach me these principles, I might have done something terrible during the Cultural Revolution; after all, everyone else was doing it. Education, integrity, and justice—these were the principles my parents instilled in me.

**Education as a family tradition.** After the Cultural Revolution, my strongest desire was still to be educated. I felt that I had wasted ten years and I tried every means to pursue my

\textsuperscript{79} Meetings in educational institutes in China, mandated by the government (according to the participant).
education. In 1977, China re-established the university enrollment system, but that year I gave birth to my son. I was not able to take the exam to go to university, and I also had to work. My husband was often away on business trips, while I was working full-time. So, we gave our son to my mother-in-law to take care of when he was one-year old. This was very common in China; in fact, most working couples asked their parents to take care of their children. For three years, he was at his grandmother’s, and when he came back to me, I still couldn’t spend my full time taking care of him. So, he was sent to boarding kindergarten. That meant he was at the school for six days a week and was home only on Sundays, when my husband and I didn’t have to work.

When my son was six-years old, I passed a very competitive provincial exam to go to university back in my city. I knew I wouldn’t have another chance because I was denied so many opportunities. I had to succeed, so I focused on my education and gave up a lot of life in order to study. When I got into undergraduate and later a graduate program, my son came with me but stayed with my parents back in the big city. For several years, we were in the same city, but I couldn’t take care of him much. I could only go to my parent’s place on weekends to help with household chores. Only after I graduated and became a university lecturer did my son come to live with us. By that time, he was already in fifth grade. After three or four years of teaching, I went abroad to do my PhD. My son couldn’t come. His father asked for a divorce, because I was abroad for several years, and we had been separated for too long.

80 This episode constituted the first time since the Cultural Revolution that academic grades were essential for acceptance into post-secondary, though family background still had a significant role. The exams were available for everyone to take (according to participant).
I don’t know what sort of impact I had on my son. Before I left China, we had a close relationship, but I was a very strict mother just like my mom. His father didn’t have time to take care of him and was often in other cities, so it was just my son and I, and I was his tutor. At that time, he was doing very well in his studies. He was in the Olympic math program and was the English vocabulary contest champion. I never told him about the Cultural Revolution or other traumas. He wouldn’t understand, and he was never interested. Even now that he is in his thirties, when I bring up these experiences, he would say something to the extent of, “Oh that was the past; you guys just want to talk about old stuff.” He would not want to talk or hear about these things.

I always emphasized the importance of education to him. However, after I left China, he did not do as well in school. Maybe he missed me? Maybe he thought I left him? His father never really spent much time with him. Instead, he brought his mother to the city to take care of him. Unfortunately, my son’s grandmother was illiterate. She didn’t even know whether or not he did his homework, which was very different than when I was tutoring him. I placed a lot of value in his education, because to me, education was our family tradition: My maternal grandfather was the first lawyer in the city, my husband is a lawyer, and my parents were educated. So, my family had this really old tradition of valuing education and I wanted my son to do well. As I was an English professor in China, it was my job to help him become the champion in his English vocabulary contest and to help him excel.

After I left, people told me that when my son was asked if he missed me, he would say, “No, I’m free!” I wonder if I might have given him too much pressure. He might have thought he was free and nobody was supervising him. His grades went from the top of his class to mediocre afterwards. Still, he managed to get into university and finished a finance degree. He
even came to Canada for a year and half to pursue an MBA, but he ended up doing his MBA in a Chinese university. Now he has a pretty good job in a finance corporation. Sometimes, his father tried to ask him to do law or get a PhD, but he would say that he has had enough schooling. I think he is in a place where he is doing what he likes, and I think that is good.

We probably had given him a lot of pressure, because we were hardworking people and we were both accomplished in our careers. He was never as driven as me or his father. I felt guilty and I still feel guilty that I ignored his education for my own education, to make up for my lost opportunities. I didn’t give him as much attention as a mother should have. I wasn’t with him during his senior high school and college years. I found it very hard to educate my son, because he has a different personality. He was quite rebellious as he grew older, and he didn’t have as many hardships as my husband and me when we were younger. It was not very effective if I tried to tell him how hard it was in the past. I know that I cannot impose my values or experience on him—I can try, but in the end, it is up to him to receive it or not.

On becoming an educator. Education is my passion. Ever since 1971, when I became a village teacher, I never stopped being an educator. If I could change one student’s life, then it was worth it. I worked hard to be educated so that I could educate others. Yet, I am not just an educator, I have been educated by my teachers and continue to be educated by my students. It goes both ways as an educator—to educate and to be educated. I still remember that professor who introduced me to Spartacus. She said, “One sentence, one conversation, could make a change or an impact for some people for the rest of their lives.” As I reflect on all the lessons I have learned—from my family, literature, peasants, and professors—I am reminded of the importance of education, that even in trying times this is a family tradition I have upheld and am able to provide to others. No matter how challenging circumstances are, people inherently have
a will to learn, and education is a means of having a transformative impact on themselves and others.
A.2  Joan’s Story: The Open Window

Introduction. Joan is a 22-year-old woman born and raised in Canada and works as a senior’s organizer. In her interview she mentioned that she wanted to bring a book titled, 海南風窗 (hoi2 naam4 fung1 coeng1 / Open the Window for the Southern Breeze), which was written by her father’s friend. The book detailed that individual’s story of escaping China through Hong Kong and was valued memorabilia of her father’s. For Joan, it captures the contextual reality her father experienced in China—she identifies her father as having gone through numerous forms of psychological traumas on the LEC-5 (see Table 15). Her story intersects with many dimensions of growing up in a Chinese immigrant family in Canada, including: racism, “saving face” for her family, and the isolation of being different than her peers. Her story illustrates how she navigates these circumstances and finds her own way to honor her family through the work that she situates herself in currently. This is her story.

Table 15. LEC-5 Items Endorsed by Joan (of Her Father’s Traumas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
<th>Learned about it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural disaster</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire or explosion</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation accident</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious accident</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to toxic substances</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with a weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat or exposure to a war-zone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Growing up in Canada

I was born and raised in Vancouver, and I lived in the East End early in my childhood. Growing up, I remember that my parents worked a lot, especially my mom, so my paternal grandmother took care of my brother and me when we were younger. As we got older, my mom would tell us how she regretted not spending more time with us. Though I can understand where she was coming from, my brother and I were pretty happy and didn’t think of it that way.

My dad came in 1975, and my mom in 1981. They were introduced to each other through family members (my mom’s great aunt and my dad’s mom) who played Mahjong, and they got married in 85’ or 86’. Both my parents attended a technical college; my mom got a diploma in Engineering and worked as a technologist making parts for paper machines. Meanwhile, my dad studied electronics and worked in IT and trades. Work was stressful for my mom. There were times when she would come home and cry. I think this was because she got a promotion and her co-workers were bitter towards her. Her co-workers were also mostly men and they were disrespectful because they felt she was not qualified. I remember her telling us not to go into Engineering because it was so difficult for her. My dad also worked at the same company at one point and went on lots of business trips, but quit after my brother was born.

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81 Mah-jong (麻将/maa4 zoeng3) – a popular tile-based game developed in China.
Life was challenging when my dad arrived in Canada. My grandma and my aunt lived in Canada before my dad came and they owned a grocery store. When my dad arrived, he lived in the back of the store with them. The back of the store had a small room with a hotplate and a toilet for staff. He told me they would have to shower in a trash can with a hose. When I think about their initial years in Canada, I realize it must have been such a hard adjustment, but I think they saw it as an opportunity, because they felt China was a dead end.

Life was pretty good when I was a child, and I just felt happy back then. I have fond memories of my paternal grandma babysitting me and my brother. Everyday she would pick us up from school and cook for us. I remember so many smells associated with her cooking. In my old house, there was this old wobbly wooden table in the kitchen and my dog would be running around trying to get scraps of food, while we would all be sitting at the table doing homework. My grandma was taking English classes at the time, and sometimes I would help her with her English homework; other times, she would read me the Chinese newspaper.

My childhood is best captured by many small and funny stories. I remember going to Chinatown with my grandma. She would often talk to the shop owners for a long time, and if it was one of those Chinese herbal medicine stores, I would stand outside or try to breathe through my mouth. My grandma would lecture me: “Stop doing that, it’s rude!” And I would tell her, “It’s 好臭 (hou2 cau3/ really stinky)!” We didn’t have a lot of money back then; a lot of times my parents would tell us we could not afford to buy things and, after a while, we got used to it and stopped asking for things. One time we asked my dad if we could get a sled, and my dad said, “Does it look like I’m made of sled money? Go make your own sled!” So, we made our own out of garbage bags and, when that got torn up, we found a little desk in an alley and we used that because you could hold on to its legs. It was good and slippery, and we made it work.
My parents were pretty great back then, and they were good to me and my brother. Though my mom was the stricter one when it came to school, my dad was stricter with punishments, and my grandma was super soft and would tell them that they shouldn’t punish any of us. My parents valued being able to speak Chinese. Because my dad was from the south of China, we had to speak to him in Cantonese, and because my mom was from Shanghai, we had to speak Mandarin to her. We weren’t allowed to speak English at home and, whenever we did, my mom would just ignore us or my dad would get really mad and say something to the extent of, “I’ve been speaking English all day. I don’t want to talk to you. You can speak English at school.” Looking back, I didn’t realize how different it was to speak two different dialects at home until I got to high school. In the end, it was helpful for me because I became pretty good at speaking Chinese.

I lived in that old house until I was seven, so when I finished second grade, we moved. We ended up moving to Van West. Part of the reason why we moved was because my brother just finished grade seven, and my mom was worried because some kid got stabbed at one of the high schools my brother was supposed to attend. She said, “I didn’t come here from China so my babies could get stabbed!” Things began to change when we moved. We got a bigger mortgage and finances became an issue. Though my parents never really blamed us for anything, they got into a lot of arguments over finances because we weren’t doing great financially. I also experienced more racism when I moved to Van West because there weren’t as many Asian kids compared to where I was before. However, the most significant change for me was not being able to see my grandma as much. She lived further away from our new place, whereas in my old house we lived 2 blocks away from her. She was also getting older and was
not as mobile, so it was difficult for her to commute all the way to the West. Being away from her impacted me, because she was the person I saw the most when I was younger.

**Education and Bullies**

Adjusting to the new school in Van West was hard for me. I remember bringing pork floss\(^\text{82}\) one day, and this girl said I was eating fur. They also thought tofu was weird, which is weird now because it's sold at Whole Foods and considered trendy. Everyone was teasing me so I asked my grandma to make me a sandwich instead, and she made me a peanut butter pork floss sandwich. And I was like, “This is ma’ favorite and no one's going to tease me!” But that day I got called a fur eater. It was sad, but I still ate the sandwich anyway.

I was in third grade, and initially it bugged me. I was pretty embarrassed, but I remember my dad telling me, “Why does it worry you? Grandma makes such good food. It doesn’t matter what other people think. You know, in this lifetime you’ll never be white so it doesn’t matter what you do or if you don’t speak Chinese or if you try to act like them. You will still look different and you will still be from a different place than them, so you might as well be proud of who you are.” This was a significant lesson. Up until this point in my life, I had never thought about it in that way and, as I reflected about it more, it made sense. There was no point in fighting it: I am who I am and should be proud of my heritage.

Even though I had that perspective, I still didn’t fit in. I was different and new and a lot smaller than everyone else. I just wanted to draw in the corner or play in the playground. I got into lots of arguments and physical fights with other kids. They would make fun of me and wouldn’t stop, so I ended up hitting them. I remember my mom and dad getting called about

\(^{82}\) Dried meat product that has a similar texture as cotton. In Cantonese it is referred to as 肉松 (yuk6 sung1).
these fights. My mom would be sort of cross, but would understand why I got into these fights. My dad would tell me to tell them off; if they didn’t listen, then I could hit them—but he told me not to tell my mom or grandma. There were a lot of growing pains at that time. I felt like I was on my own, because after second grade my older brother was in grade eight and in high school, so I never really got to see him. I felt alone, and the only times I didn’t feel that way was when I was with my grandma or with a couple of my close friends.

The bullying lessened in grade six because people just stopped caring. I wouldn’t react to them, and I guess because I wasn’t reacting it didn’t really matter to them anymore. I thought by the time I got to high school it would be a fresh start, but there were still bullies. In high school, I got teased and called names and rumors got started about me. They would call me things like “awkward” or a “whore,” even though I never slept with anyone. It was upsetting at first, but then I became really sarcastic and mean. They would diss me and I would roast them and turn it on them. I didn’t care. I attacked back and made some of them cry. It was unnecessary; I should have ignored them, but I didn’t know how to stop them. I was hurting too. I think they attacked me because I was different and didn’t dress that great ‘cuz I didn’t have the best clothes. I was also lanky and awkward and I didn’t really like a lot of things other people liked. I think a lot of them must have also had their own issues at home; they must have had a lot of problems too if they felt the need to put down others.

My school situation got better when I moved to Los Angeles (LA) in the tenth grade. My parents couldn’t pay the mortgage, they missed three mortgage payments and the bank threatened to take our house away. They didn’t want to tell us what was going on because they felt ashamed and they didn’t want to stress my brother and me out, so they shipped me out to the States. My brother ended up living with one of his super baller friends because he was in college.
in his sophomore year, while I lived in Compton, in LA, with my aunt (阿姨/a3 ji4), a family friend I may or may not be related to whom I met once or twice as a toddler. I did ask my dad who she was and all he told me was that she held me as a baby in China. I am not sure what my parents did during that time. They wouldn’t talk about it then; they still don’t talk about what happened that year.

The change was good for me. I didn’t want to be in Vancouver because of my high school and I was getting into more arguments with my mom as we didn’t agree with each other. I thought it was good for me to leave. During this time, things were tense between me and my mom. I learned that, if I got good grades, she really wouldn’t say much. I realize that even now I still need some sort of achievement to define myself.

Compton

I learned a lot in Compton and developed a bit of a funny accent. At first, I thought I was going to get bullied like crazy because I was clearly very different from most people. I was the rare Asian in Compton, where it was mostly Black and Mexican. When I got there, everyone was so accepting and nice. I still have some of my closest friends from then. My aunt was great, she has a huge heart and was a social worker or a counsellor of some sort. There were always people over at our house, the showers were running, and there was always food on the stove. It was just a really great, tightknit community, and being at my aunt’s felt like I was in my grandma’s kitchen. But in the midst of that, there were a lot of teenage pregnancies, suicides, and gang violence and shootings.

83 阿姨 (a3 ji4 / aunty) - a general reference in Chinese cultures for older women around one’s parent’s age that have a relationship with one’s family. The reference of aunty can apply to individuals who are related or unrelated to the family.
Being in Compton made me become tougher. I saw people get shot and stabbed and it made me realize how real racial disparity and poverty were in the States. There was one time I witnessed a situation and I called the ambulance, but no one came. They didn’t care about these neighbourhoods so I called them again and I lied that a white girl got stabbed in Compton. Afterwards, a whole bunch of ambulances came in about 5 minutes and they asked where she was and I said, “Oops, I’m color blind.” They were infuriated, but it was too late for them to leave the situation because it would have been blatantly racist if they did.

Another incident was when my friends and I saw someone get stabbed maybe fifty metres away from us. We saw this guy just crumple to the ground, and our group of friends ran over to help. It was like a switch blade or something. Luckily, a passerby who was studying nursing came to assist us and told us not to take the blade out. Another passerby then gave up their jacket and the nursing student used the jacket to tie up the wound. My gosh we were so lucky. I remember seeing lots blood because he was stabbed in his abdomen. We were told it was gang related and heard that he lived. It’s surreal to think that this was the norm in my neighbourhood.

There was a lot of gang violence there. It is really sad, because a lot of them don’t feel safe or have really bad family situations. I went to the public school there and, even though the message we received was to stay in school, the schools were horrible. The teachers didn’t want to be there and they were low-key pretty racist too. They would straight up tell us how dumb we were and that we would never amount to anything or become thugs. It was really sad. They kids were told this at home and at school. You could clearly see the negative effects it had on these kids, even though a lot of them were really smart, skilled, and talented.

When I was there, I had a friend who got shot because he joined a gang, and another friend committed suicide. The friend who was shot was thrown into the LA river, killed by
another gang member, someone higher up, because he was unwilling to do something. We never found him. I remember seeing his grandma and aunt who raised him age so much during that time; they were never the same. With the friend who committed suicide, he was raised by his grandma, because his parents were in and out of his life or in and out of prison. His mom was addicted to crack and it was really hard on him. His grandma found him dead in his room. It is painful to think that happened to her. I couldn’t make sense of it, we didn’t see it coming, but it also wasn’t a surprise given his situation. We felt that we took him for granted or didn’t support him enough; we should have told him how important he was to us, or we should have hung out with him that day. But I remember talking to his grandma at the funeral. She worded it so well, she said, “Many people die, but it’s okay because sometimes that’s what’s best for them, and even though its upsetting, he couldn’t have had better friends.” For me, it meant that none of us could have fixed it or done anything better. I felt less guilty.

We all had to grow up fast and we became less naïve afterwards. We realized that even though we are all really small, we’re all really significant too. Me and my homies talked about it, and we were saying “it’s weird that we’re all on this little spinning rock, but we can still make such a big impact on someone else’s life.” Though I was there for only a year, it changed me profoundly. I learned a lot about racism and privilege. We lived through poverty, but didn’t know how to talk about it, because we thought it was just normal. Sometimes, I feel like I don’t deserve to be doing so well because everyone else is still there. A friend of mine in psychology told me that it’s survivor’s guilt. Even though some of my friends are doing pretty good and some of them are doing social work or becoming cops or firefighters, I am here in Vancouver, and I get to enjoy privileges that they don’t have access to, because I am not impoverished now.
However, I will always remember that despite my insignificance, I can still have a profound impact on others even if I am in a privileged place.

I was lucky enough that my parents pulled out of their financial difficulties. I think they pulled a bunch of strings and favours and got enough money to get the house back. I don’t know what exactly happened because they don’t talk about it. My parents, especially my mom, always say things like, “Who cares, we’re happy now” or “We’re happy now, we don’t have to worry about that.” They still feel a lot of shame about what happened. They felt that they couldn’t provide for us or they weren’t working hard enough. Even though they worked two or three jobs at once, they felt that they weren’t doing enough and couldn’t provide us with the very best education.

My parents pretended like nothing ever happened. They told us not to tell other people and to never talk about these events. They drilled this message into me, and I became ashamed about my time in Compton and did not talk about it until I got to college. Even though this was such an important period in my life, it had to stay hidden because I knew they were ashamed and upset by it, and I didn’t want to see them like that. So, I started feeling ashamed about it too. I felt that I should be silent so my parents don’t have to fight or feel ashamed.

**Coming back.** When I got back for the eleventh grade I had a very thick accent. People would say to me, “Why do you sound black?” And I’d retort back with, “Why do you sound stupid!” It was a difficult year, I came back to Vancouver and I didn’t really have a community. After my friend’s suicide I wanted to be more careful, but that fell completely on the wayside. I started to get into even more fights—“Don’t fuck with me, don’t be calling me names and starting shit about me!” I was really hurtin’ and alone.
I didn’t know what to do with myself. I tried doing sports and drowning myself with extracurriculars and focusing on my grades so I wouldn’t have to think about my feelings. This was reinforced by others. I was encouraged to be busy by my mom and from other people. They would say things like, “Oh, Joan can do so many things, she does well in school and she achieves this and excels in that.” Even now I make myself really busy and, though it is with things I like to do, I don’t have time to myself to think and reflect and be in touch with how I’m really feeling. I became so caught up in doing well. I didn’t want to take up new things, ’cuz I didn’t want to fail at it, and I eventually ended up doing a bunch of drugs and drinking a lot because I wasn’t feeling great. I started telling myself that “my grades were great and I was doing extra-curricular things, so nothing was wrong with my life; the drugs were just for fun.”

I did some drugs in Compton, mainly weed and sometimes LSD. But back in Vancouver, I was drinking a lot and did a lot of weed and acid. The drug use was different in Compton because I was happy, but in Vancouver I was sad. I used the substances to numb me out and it was good because it didn’t feel like reality. In a way, I was avoiding reality because things were tough at home. If I didn’t have theatre or music or sports, I would just go home by myself. At that time my mom was mainly a stay-at-home mom who did some tutoring on the side, so whenever I got home, we would get into lots of arguments. My grandma didn’t come by anymore, my mom was still really stressed about money, my brother was at college, and there was always fighting at home either between my parents or between my dad and my brother—I didn’t want to be home.

During that time, I had a boyfriend in the eleventh grade and in the summer before twelfth grade. For the first two months, it was really great because someone was finally paying attention to me. I was 16 and I thought he liked me for me and I really liked him. Eventually, he
became violent towards me. He blamed for me everything. He hit me and, one time, he even pushed me down the stairs and I ended up blacking out. I was drawn to him though, I always felt alone and just wanted to belong. When I got his attention, it felt good, like I was being validated, but I also think that he was very much like me. In a way we were both hurtin’ people. His dad was from China, and he had to deal with a lot of trauma as his dad was alcoholic and beat him, while his mom abandoned them. So, neither of us were doing that great back then, we hung out and did drugs together to numb ourselves out.

In the relationship, I kept thinking it was my fault that I could have done something to fix it or maybe there was something wrong with me. He made me feel that I wasn’t good enough for him and he compared me with other people he had gone out with and other girls. Eventually, my friends made me break up with him after they saw me with a black eye. At first, I lied. I said the black eye was because I was clumsy while playing field hockey. Usually, people would buy that, but this time I told them it was because my boyfriend hit me. When they freaked out, I realized that it wasn’t right what had happened and, even though I had this realization, I tried to defend him. They retorted with, “Well if he’s so upset with you then he should just leave you.” About a week after that incident, I broke up with him.

It was hard coming out of that relationship. It was like coming down from a really bad high. It was easier to be in the relationship, even though I knew it was bad for me, than to be out of it. So, I tried to pick up even more hobbies. I did a lot of painting, and all of them were really dark with lots of blacks and purples. It was helpful for me—sometimes I would just break down crying as I painted and I would ask myself, “What is going on?” Up to that point, I never really cried because I thought it was weak and pointless, but I realized it was good for me to get it all out. I learned a lot about myself during that time. I spent more time with my friends and had
deep talks. I even stopped smoking pot and using drugs. I realized that I didn’t need it anymore, when I was happy, I didn’t need it.

University

Freshman year was really challenging and amazing at the same time. I grew a lot. I went to Art School which was what I really wanted to do, even though my mom was pretty against it. She thought I could have done more traditional “Asian” jobs, that I was wasting my potential, and Art School was a dead end. I met so many people who went through similar pains and struggles or they were from small towns and felt like outcasts too. It was like we were all that one weird kid from high school, but it was cool, and being cooped up together made us even weirder! It was so great, we learned so much about being critical, thinking for ourselves, learning how to form our opinions, and disagreeing with people respectfully.

There were only about 1800 people at the college and it was such a tight knit community. During my sophomore year I took a really dense class where we studied Freud, colonialism, racism, and cultural theory. We learned about Foucault and Edward Said’s Orientalism. There was so much to learn from the class, I still feel like I am still taking it in 2 years later. It also helped me realize that I lived out some of those things in Compton and didn’t realize that I was part of these systems that were set in place a long time ago that are still being perpetuated. The class was surreal because it juxtaposed with the institution where we had to learn a lot of European art history and theory created by white male artists. My prof really wanted us to become critical and used this class to challenge the status quo in the larger institution.

My professor had a huge impact on me. She was super understanding, warm, and brilliant. I really valued her opinion and it was important for me not to miss a class because she stated that missing class was not excusable. During that semester, one of my friends committed
suicide. I had talked to him a week ago and it seemed like he was doing okay. We knew he was
depressed, but the suicide blindsided me. I thought it would be easier this time, but I still didn’t
know how to deal with the loss. He was a close friend. I was so messed up because of that, but I
didn’t want to miss my prof’s class and ended up bombing her midterm. I thought I was so
fucked for the class, but I got 80% in the next assignment. My prof and the seminar teacher were
confused by the mark and called me in for a meeting; they thought maybe I plagiarized. They
asked me about the discrepancy between the marks. I told them that my friend committed
suicide a couple of days before the midterm, and I couldn’t even get out of bed or think straight.
They said they were sorry about my situation and they gave me a make up assignment.
Afterwards, my prof actually emailed me saying, “I’m very sorry about your loss, and I’m sorry
that you felt like you couldn’t tell me about this.” After 2 years, I still have that email and I read
it occasionally. It reminds me that there are still people who care and look out for me, even if
they don’t really know me. Sometimes doing little things can mean a lot for people, just as the
email meant for me.

My Family

There are many things that my family does not talk about and I only learned about some
of them accidently. I recently found out that both my grandmothers remarried at some point in
their lives. Two years ago, I went back to visit my paternal grandma’s oldest brother in Taiwan,
and he had this little photo album with pictures of my family that we had mailed to him over the
years. As I looked through the album, I saw a picture of my grandma and another man standing
outside of a house in Vancouver. I asked if that was grandpa, and my dad said, “Oh yeah, your
grandma remarried for a few years,” and then flipped the page and kept talking to my great
uncle. I learned about my maternal grandma’s remarriage earlier this summer when my mom
randomly gave me some jade. I asked where it came from and she casually said, “Oh, your
grandma remarried for a few years.” These were incidents where I thought to myself that I better
not ask anymore questions. It was as if it was meant to be swept under the rug, much like how
my parents pretend that my time in Compton never happened.

My mom has shared that her father, my grandpa, was abusive towards her. This was the
same for my dad as well, but his dad also abandoned the family when he went to America. My
parents don’t really share much detail cause both their fathers have already passed away and they
don’t want to say bad things about them. Maybe it’s also respect for the older generation. My
paternal grandpa left for America and started another family in Los Angeles. Eventually, he
came up through the States to meet up with the rest of my family in Canada. Though I never met
my grandpa, I was told he hated communism and often talked about how great America and
Canada were. A few years ago, my uncle told me that my grandpa was a great person, that he
worked hard and always sent the family money and treats and wrote lots of postcards. Though
my grandpa didn’t say much in the postcards, my uncle said he really loved us.

My paternal grandma, the one who raised me, still lives on her own, she is 82 this year
and she lives close to Chinatown. She was born in Hong Kong during the Japanese occupation
and married my grandpa when she was 19. After the war with Japan, I think she went to China
for a bit and decided to stay there because it was like a new country to her and she thought it was
better than being under British rule. However, the Communist Party took reign, and she

84 Participant referred to a cultural belief that one should not talk poorly about their ancestors.
85 Hong Kong was under British rule from 1841 to 1937 and from 1947 to 1997. Between 1941 to 1946 it was under
Japanese occupation.
couldn’t leave the country afterwards. Its like she was always in the wrong place at the wrong time.

My grandma never really got formal education. My dad said she learned how to read from going to church in Hong Kong. She was really good at math and she could do square roots and calculations on the abacus. Sometimes she would be using the abacus when I would visit her. My dad also remembers that, when he was a kid, my grandma would be working late at night and he could hear the abacus beads clacking. My grandma is a significant person in my life. She is such a loving and caring person, and I learned so much from her. She always told me to be humble and to work hard and to listen to other people, because you don’t really know who they are and where they come from. She also taught me to always be grateful, which was helpful when times were difficult.

My dad has told me some stories about his time in China. As we were growing up, he would just tell us random stories over dinner, and sometimes my mom would get upset at him. I realized that he doesn’t really say how he feels about it, he simply states that Mao was a bad person or that he hates communist China. There were public humiliations, the government forced people to go against each other. People were made to publicly apologize as they were being berated by their own community.

My dad lived in an old flat with multiple households that lived above and below them. He told me that as a kid he saw a firing squad execute his neighbour, the father of the upstairs household. His neighbour was a previous business owner and was considered a capitalist “bad
element” (壞分子 / waai6 fan1 zi2). He told me that the fire squad lined up several people, including a young child, and executed them. The wife of the upstairs household was told that she would be executed as well, but in the end she was spared. My dad said that she lost it afterwards, he could remember her random shrieking because she believed she could hear bullets being shot. Like the public humiliation, these executions were public events to show other people not to be “bad elements.” That same family also had a young servant who killed himself by jumping off the building. So, there were a number of deaths that my dad witnessed as he was growing up.

My dad would tell me about how he would always feel hungry when he was growing up. He said that Mao was really stupid with his agricultural policies, as they ended up failing. They would have these jokes where, whenever he asked if a friend could come over, my grandma would be like, “Ok, I’ll just put another ladle of water in the congee.” Despite the jokes, they were so deprived of food that they would eat anything. For instance, my grandma’s younger sister who lived in Hong Kong and was considered a British subject, would often visit China and bring food such as bread and butter. My dad and his little sister would inhale the loaf of bread they would fight over it because they were so hungry. They would even slice up the butter and eat it as is, which is disgusting, but for them it was the greatest thing ever, which I think shows how desperate they were for food.

My dad’s family was targeted because my grandpa co-owned a pharmacy, and because of that, grandpa was slated to go to the work camps. Before he was sent to the camps, grandpa

86 壞分子 (waai6 fan1 zi2 / bad elements) - According to the participant, “bad elements” is a term applied to people who were counter-revolutionaries
escaped to Macau by hitching a ride. I was told that his visa somehow got approved to leave China. But because back then visa statuses could change randomly, he had to take any opportunity to leave China. His plan was to work several jobs in Macau and eventually bring the rest of the family over.

Dad told me that when he was younger he got into lots of fights in school, because of his family’s status, and because his whole building was considered to be filled with “bad elements.” He told me that in school they learned a really distorted history of the civil war between Kuomintang and the Communists. He said that, during war, the Communists would use civilians or hide behind them or kill them if necessary, and he grew up thinking that was a normal part of war. Sometimes he would randomly hum or sing Communist songs that he learned when he was a child. There was so much propaganda that was happening and everything was censored. He told me that, because China was so poor, they would come up with only eight movies within a span of eight years. He and his friends would watch these movies over and over again and memorize every single line or re-enact it perfectly because there was nothing else to do.

My dad often uses humour to talk about his experiences, which is a good entry point, though he doesn’t talk about how it affects him, which I try to infer on my end. One time, he told me that he was in the forest chopping trees for firewood at a labour camp and he really had to do a number two. Unfortunately, that time he didn’t have any toilet paper, so he yelled to see if anyone was around. Back then they used newsprint if they didn’t have toilet paper, but all he had was Mao’s Red Book which everyone had to carry with them at all times, so he ripped a page from the middle and used it to wipe his ass. When me told me this story, he said that, after

87 Number two is a colloquial saying for bowel movement.
thirty-some years, this was the first time he ever told anyone about this incident. It is crazy to think that this was his darkest secret, but it really shows how paranoid he was about the Chinese government. This fear must have been pretty internalized, that he would be scared for his life for doing something like that.

My dad hates the Chinese Communist Party and always says he hates communism and socialism and thinks Mao was an asshole. It is ironic, because he thinks that people should pay taxes and that taxes should go towards social services. When I tell him that is basically socialism, he would say, “No it isn’t, that’s the government being responsible.” I guess the Chinese Communist Party was more like an authoritarian government or a dictatorship. Even though my dad supports its principles or maybe is misinformed about it, he experienced Mao as more of a fascist, and his particular logic was a way to differentiate Mao from his own personal ideas.

Many people tried to escape back then. My dad and a lot of his friends swam everyday at the park, and if they could swim for two hours straight against the stream, then they knew that they could swim to Hong Kong island. Some people tried and, if it was not the right tide, they would swim all night and die trying; if they survived and didn’t make it across, they were sent to prison. He had a friend who wrote about his experience in a book called 海南風窗 (hoi2 naam4 fung1 coeng1) which literally meant “open the window for the southern breeze.” The title refers to the southward breeze in Hong Kong because it was south of Guangzhou, but it is a

88 海南風窗 (hoi2 naam4 fung1 coeng1 / open the window for the southern breeze) - The title has dual meaning as indicated by the participant. Having double meanings or holding alternative symbolic purposes for certain Chinese phrases is a culturally familiar linguistic practice. The title is kept in traditional Chinese as it is a Hong Kong publication.
metaphor for freedom because you couldn’t leave China legally at that time. My dad considered escaping, but instead he was able to get a temporary visa to Hong Kong. He promised the immigration officer that he would go back to China, but he never had that intention. When he got to Hong Kong, his relatives applied for him to go to Canada, and that was how he was able to leave China.

**My family in me.** There are parallels between my parents and me. My dad lost touch with some of his friends and he said a lot his friends in China changed after the Revolution. They were not that motivated, they didn’t really have any opinions, or they never really wanted to say anything even though some of them were really smart. It’s like my life in Compton. These people didn’t have the opportunities to get out of their situation or they felt like they themselves were “bad elements” and became that. A lot of them are having trouble with retiring now, they don’t have enough money to retire, they live in unsafe buildings, or their buildings have a lot of stairs and no elevators. My dad’s gone back three times in the past three years. A few years ago, I went with my father to China. It was my first time there and was an eye-opening experience. I learned a lot about my family, about myself, and about my heritage as a Chinese person and a Canadian.

Sometimes, I find myself acting like my parents. I have never told them about the abusive relationship because they worry about me a lot and I don’t want them to worry even more, so I act like them, saying, “it’s in the past.” My parents have also taught me to be frugal and to save money, as well as the importance of work ethic. I admire them for their work ethic. They never gave up regardless of how difficult it was for them. They really wanted me and my brother to not just know our culture, but they wanted us to succeed and excel and have stability, something that they did not have. Looking back, that is why I fought with my mom a lot and got
into so many disagreements. I didn’t want to pursue a career that she wanted me to do, like an accountant or something like that. I just thought she was being a hard-ass for no reason, but I realize she was really worried about us and just wanted us to be stable and be able to provide for ourselves. The lack of stability must have been very scary for them. I also think they felt ashamed about the lack of money, because they grew up poor or maybe because they aren’t doing as well as others financially. My dad always says, “我没脸 (ngo5 mut6 lim5 / I have no face), ⁸⁹ don’t tell people we’re poor.” I would tell him, “I think people know we’re poor,” and he would say, “Well, you don’t have to say it explicitly then!” I guess we weren’t as lucky when it came to finances.

Despite the challenges, my parents raised me really well and, even though a lot of shit happened, it wasn’t their fault. They still shaped me and helped me succeed and grow up to be the way that I am now. They instilled in me the importance of helping other people. When I was in China, I learned that my grandpa instilled in my dad this value and, when I think about it, my dad has always helped people even though we didn’t always have resources or a lot of money. He would help people with their internet or their computers or do home renos, and he never complains about driving people home even if it’s out of the way. Even though both my parents weren’t doing the greatest, they were still trying to help other people.

Like my parents, I too am helping other people. Now I find myself helping Chinese seniors. I can do this work because I speak both Chinese and English, which wouldn’t be the case if it weren’t for my parents. Working with seniors makes me realize how resilient and

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⁸⁹ 我没脸 (ngo5 mut6 lim5 / I have no face) – A Chinese expression about not having face. This saying is culturally familiar in reference to the notion of feeling shameful. Face is a Chinese construct regarding one’s social image, reputation, or position within a society.
charming they are. I see myself in them, because they would say things like, “I’m not good enough”, which is untrue: they have so much knowledge and there is so much we can learn from them. Sometimes, I would bring them to doctor’s appointments, and they would give me a tin of cookies, and it reminds me that doing little things can mean a lot for people. This work connects me with my heritage and the desire to use my privilege to help others, which comes from my time in Compton. It connects me with the values my parents and grandmother have instilled in me.
A.3 Ken’s Story: The Jade Necklace

**Introduction.** Ken is 22-year-old male born and raised in Canada and is currently an undergraduate student. For the items endorsed on the LEC-5, he extended it to not only include his parent’s psychological traumas, but his grandparents as well (see Table 16). This extension reflects Ken’s identification as being part of his family in a collective sense. During the interview, he brought out a piece of jade that he wears around his neck and described how it reminds him of his place and connection to his family and past. Throughout his narrative, Ken raises important questions about whether his life experience was normative to growing up in a Chinese immigrant family in Canada or, whether some of the challenges he faced in his family was due to IGT. These questions reflect his process of trying to make sense of the difficulties growing up as a Chinese-Canadian and the silence around his family’s past. This is his story.

*Table 16. LEC-5 Items Endorsed by Ken (of His Parent’s and Grandparent’s Traumas)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with a weapon</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat or exposure to war-zone</td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captivity</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe human suffering</td>
<td>Parents /</td>
<td>Parents /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden violent death</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
<td>Parents /</td>
<td>Parents /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>Grandparents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**My Family**
My parents and my grandparents have gone through a lot, but I can never be sure. Really, I can never know anyone’s full story in my family. What I know about my family is based on tidbits here and there and from my understanding of Chinese historical events they may have faced. In the past few years, I have wondered about my parents and how they grew up. Through my personal growth and curiosity, I've started to think more about my family's past. I have learned more about my family recently, but it’s hard for me to know whether these stories are true because most of it comes from my older brother. It makes me wonder whether these stories have influenced my parents to be the way they are now and how that, in-turn, affects me.

**The Cultural Revolution.** I believe my mom was too young for the Cultural Revolution and was never sent to work in the countryside. She was fifteen at the time, and I think the cut-off age for being sent to the farms was sixteen. When the Revolution happened, my mom stayed in a boarding school of sorts because she was living in the city. She told me that, during the Revolution, her family was flung in every direction possible. Her parents were sent to work in the countryside and her siblings probably stayed behind in the city.

My mom was assigned a job as a teacher when she turned seventeen or eighteen. She said it was really hard; she did not know what she was doing and, in those times, all the teachers were essentially kicked out. So, she got stuck being a teacher. Her students gave her a hard time because they were only a year younger than her. It’s funny—she said they ended up becoming friends and she still visits them when she goes back to China. She ended up going to university after she taught for a few years. I don’t know what university was like for her because she never really talked about those years.

I know the past affected her because she told me about a time that she went to go visit her mother in the countryside. When she brought this story up, she began to cry. I didn’t know how
to react, but I knew that it was a very heartfelt moment that I wanted to experience with her. The details are sketchy, but she told me that when she was younger she visited her mother in the countryside and brought her food. The journey was treacherous, and the weather conditions were bad with rain and thunder. When she reached her mother, the food had already gone bad and was rotten, but my grandma ended up eating it anyways. It really impacted my mom to see how her parents were treated, to see them working in the countryside, and to see that her mom was so impoverished she would even eat the rotten food. I felt her sadness when she shared this story, it affected her, so it affects me.

I don’t know how my maternal grandparents were treated during the Cultural Revolution. I think they were okay because my grandpa was part of the Liberation army\textsuperscript{90} which meant they had a certain amount of prestige. However, my grandma was a teacher and I believe teachers had a bad reputation during that time. What I do know is that they went through the Japanese War and they lived in the Shanghai area; there was no way they wouldn’t have been affected by those events. My grandpa fought against the Japanese as a soldier, but I do not know what his experience was like during the war. They ended up living in China for the rest of their lives. I did meet my grandma once when I was eight and she taught me how to play Big Two.\textsuperscript{91}

Both my paternal grandparents were teachers, so I can only assume that they had their fair share of challenges during the Cultural Revolution. Things are sketch about my paternal grandfather. I know he married twice, and that is why I have half-aunts and half-cousins who are

\textsuperscript{90} Liberation Army – known as the People’s Liberation Army was the military arm of Mao’s Communist Party. They would be part of the “Five Red Categories”, which were social classes favoured by the Communist Part of China during the Cultural Revolution (Sullivan, 2007).

\textsuperscript{91} Big two – card came of Chinese origin that involves poker hands where the goal is to get rid of one’s cards. It is usually a game that involves 2 to 4 players and 13 cards distributed to each person.
all farmers. My grandfather was from the countryside, and he grew up without a dad because his
dad died young. My dad told me my grandfather had a tough childhood. I don’t know much
more about him, but I know that we are from a very rare village in China and that is why my last
name is uncommon. As for my grandmother, I remember she had these scars on her face and
I’m pretty sure they were from torture or from physical assaults. However, what I know about
my grandma comes from my brother, so it’s second-hand knowledge.

As for my dad, all I know about him is through eavesdropping on conversations he’s had
with his friend. Even then, I couldn’t really understand them because they used Chinese
terminology specific to the Cultural Revolution and Communism, which I was unfamiliar with.
My dad came from a poor family, lived in Changsha, and was sent down to the countryside when
he was sixteen. He tried to get out of the countryside, but then got sent back again. He did work
in the railroad for a few years and kind of got stuck in that job. I am not sure how long he stayed
in the labour camps for, but I want to say ten years. He has never described his experience to
me. I don’t have a close connection with my father, but I wish I knew more.

**Immigrating to Canada.** My parents met in university and had my brother in China
when my mom was thirty. She left for Canada when she was in her early thirties in 1985 and my
dad came later in 1987. I think part of the reason why they came was because of my brother’s
disability; they knew they would get better resources and support in Canada than in China. Both
of my parents are from the Hunan province; my mom’s side is ancestrally from the Shanghai
region, while my dad’s side is ancestrally from the border between Hunan and Szechuan. My
parents were educated in China. My mom worked as an English teacher and I am not sure what
my dad did.
My mom came to Canada because she got a Canadian scholarship to go to a Canadian university, which was how she could afford her education. I believe the university sponsored many international students to study in Canada at the time. Initially, she wanted to be an English teacher, but she changed her career path midway, because she felt her English was not good enough. She ended up getting a double Masters: A Master’s in Education and a Master’s in Speech Science. Her education was influenced by my brother's disability and she ended up working in the Speech Sciences field.

Immigration was hard for my mom. She doesn’t really talk about it. English was never an issue for her. She was already fluent in English, however I can tell that immigration was difficult for her in the way she raised me. Whether she was conscious of it or not, she often expressed the extra challenges related to being an immigrant. For example, there’s the expression that you have to work two times as hard to get half of what they (that is, white people) get. Well, she always told me that I have to work ten times as hard in order to get a portion of what they get. It’s like it has been internalized in her, that she was a minority and part of a society that was not easy for immigrants. She just had to work harder than people from dominant backgrounds, even though she was very capable already.

My father also did a master’s degree in Canada. Even with a master’s, he had to do immigrant jobs. He did a whole bunch of random jobs, whatever he could hold down, such as dishwashing, pizza delivery, and unemployment, which is another typical immigrant job. Originally, my parents lived in Quebec, but eventually after a number of moves, they settled in Vancouver. I was born the year before coming to Vancouver.

Growing Up
I grew up in a community in Southeast Vancouver and ended up moving to Surrey. When I was there, I was one of the only kids of colour in the neighbourhood. East Van is very Chinese, except for my particular neighbourhood; it had lots of poor white people who lived in affordable housing units and the Co-ops. No one owns a house there; the neighbourhood was mostly working class and low-income people. My family was doing okay at that time, they weren’t amazingly poor, but I wasn’t one of those kids who ate mac and cheese every night.

My group of friends included me, a Taiwanese kid, and two bi-racial (black and white) kids who were twins. We stuck together ’cause there weren’t many other ethnic kids like us. We had the same hobbies, like video games, sports, and getting into trouble. There was a lot of racism in that neighbourhood, and I became very conscious of race at an early age. I remember being pointed out as being different, and I was picked on when I was growing up. I would get the usual racial slurs, like Chinaman, and insults about Chinese appearances and accents. I understood that as being normal as a kid, but the slurs only went so far. I was excluded, always picked last, and kids wanted to fight me. It was the way that I was treated that made me know that I was different, that I wasn’t the same as them. I was part of the ostracized kids. I was never part of the popular kids who were the white kids, though some of the parents in my complex also thought I was a bad influence on their kids. My group of friends got picked on because of our race. My Taiwanese friend got chased around by the other kids, while my black friends experienced anti-black racism by others who were always trying to get into fights with them. One of my friend even got threatened with a machete by another kid. Though it was difficult, my friends and I had each other. We stuck together.

My 奶奶 (nǎi nái / paternal grandma) raised me and I was very close with her. My 奶奶 lived here in Vancouver, she lived in an affordable housing unit and in the same neighbourhood
as us. Because my parents were working, she would pick me up after school, and my brother and I would just hang out at her place. My 奶奶 was a nice lady. I remember going often to Chinatown with her and, even though she didn’t live in Chinatown, I associated her with Chinatown because we spent so much time there. She even considered moving there before she passed away in 2013. I felt a connection to Chinatown because of her.

My family moved to Surrey and, during high school, that was a big deal. We lived in the nicest part of North Surrey. The North side didn’t have as many Chinese people, but it consisted of working-class people in general. The area I was living in had lots of rich Taiwanese kids, mainland kids, white kids, and Koreans, basically the rich kids. As I grew up in a working-class neighbourhood, I didn’t fit into that group. Initially, I thought that I wanted to hangout with the rich Asian kids, but I always felt excluded because of my different upbringing and because of class. They had money and would spend over twenty dollars on meals and stuff—I didn’t have that kind of money. So my friends in grades seven to nine were those who didn’t fit with the rich kids. It was a diverse group, some lived in trailer park homes and some had parents who were drug dealers.

Even though the area I lived in was considered to be rich, there was a lot of disparity in the neighbourhood. There was a mentality that people had to spend money or look rich in order to feel like they belonged there. Even for those who weren’t rich, like the working-class Taiwanese kids whose parents owned a restaurant, they too would be fooled into believing that mentality. It was not only about looking rich, but because the neighbourhood was so model minority, it was also about appearing successful as a model minority. Despite the fact that most of my high school’s students were Asians or South Asians, it was mostly the white kids who were popular.
Moving to Surrey impacted me a lot. In my old neighbourhood, I felt connected. I was next to the library and the community centre and I would often play soccer with the other kids. In Surrey, I felt isolated. I was far away from grandmother and I didn’t have a lot of friends until grade twelve. I was no longer part of a tight-knit community. In my old neighbourhood, everyone knew each other; everyone lived in the co-ops or the same housing project, so there was less elitism.

The funny thing is that no matter how rich the neighbourhood was, it was still Surrey, which will always have a certain stigma attached to it compared to Vancouver. There was a stigma and ostracization connected with Surrey, even though it was not necessarily worse or more ghetto than other areas in Vancouver. It is more of a media or press thing or a white-flight type of thing. Surrey is usually only dangerous if you were part of a gang, though it was not uncommon to hear shootings. Growing up in Surrey meant that I knew of a number of kids who died either by killing themselves or being caught up in gang stuff. Every year, you would see a few "rest in peace" posts on Facebook being circulated by my classmates.

**Family relationships.** My relationship with my family can be summed up: I’m not close to my father, I am close to my mom, and I try to be close with my brother, but it is hard because of our age gap. My parents had different expectations of me and my brother. These expectations were linked to ableism, discrimination based on one’s abilities. My parents tried to be empathetic towards my brother because of the struggles associated with his disability. At the same time, they assumed that he couldn’t do a lot of things, which is untrue and problematic. In contrast, they saw me as able-bodied. To them it meant I should be perfectly capable and it led to even higher academic, romantic, and physical expectations. It was like the expectations were shifted from my brother towards myself. Not only was I to carry the family name, but I had to be
the best in everything—I had to be the best athlete and excel in academics—and that sucked because it seemed like I didn’t even hit puberty until grade twelve! I didn’t have it worse than my brother, but because of our parents’ ableism, they did place additional expectations on me.

There was a lot of turbulence in the household in the first twelve years of my life. My dad was super strict and was aggressive towards us—all kinds of aggression. It never got too bad, but I don’t know what too bad would look like. He used to beat us with whatever object was available, like a feather duster or a ruler, and he would hit us with his hands. He was verbally threatening and would say things like, “I’ll kill you.” Sometimes, the yelling would get so bad that the neighbours would call the police to check on us. I never disclosed anything because I thought it was normal. One time, my dad got into a conflict with my mom which resulted in a restraining order. I don’t know what exactly happened because I was at school, but I can only assume there may have been physical violence. I came late into the picture so I don’t know if there were other incidents between my mom and dad when they were in their thirties. There might have been a few other police instances. Maybe my brother witnessed it, but I don’t remember the details. I don’t really remember a lot of my dad’s aggression.

It was weird to experience and witness this aggression as a kid. Part of me knew that my experience was different because I grew up around white kids in a Canadian context. I thought they had timeouts, and because I was different, I just got different treatment. It was really shocking when I found out there were other Chinese families that disciplined their children differently than my parents. When I visited my extended family in China and saw that they had good relationships with their parents, I realized that not every Chinese family was like mine. Maybe what was happening in my household was not normal; maybe it wasn’t just cultural.
As I grew up, there was a point where I hated my dad. I hated everything about my background as a Chinese person because I associated my dad with everything Chinese. He was the epitome of being Chinese and in my mind, because he is Chinese, I equated Chinese as being bad. During high school, my dad and I didn’t see eye to eye. I was trying to become more independent, but my parents—specifically my dad—didn’t want that. He was always trying to control everything in my life, especially anything that was education related. I guess he was trying to set me up for success, but I couldn’t understand his logic for making me do certain things. For example, he would make me do very mundane things, like practice writing out letters such as the letter ‘A’ repeatedly. He made me do a whole bunch of things that were weird and not useful or applicable at all.

My dad was always controlling. Even going out would be hard. There were times that I would tell him that I would be going out and he would agree, then in the middle of being out, he would call and yell at me, “What the heck are you doing, come back home, you should be studying!” I remember thinking at the time, “As soon as I finish high school I am out of here—home sucks, my dad is always controlling me—I just gotta leave.” There was a buildup of tension between me and my dad, because I was continually coming home later. I was finishing homework at school and I didn’t want to be at home. One day when I got home, he was violent towards me, he had a sharp object in his hand and was threatening me. So, I thought to myself, “Okay, fuck this. there is no point of me being here,” and I ran away for about a week. I did eventually return home, but after that incident we didn’t talk for about a year. Even though we lived in the same household, we wouldn’t talk to each other.

It’s a weird idea, but I think, when I was growing up and even now, my dad had an eating disorder. I think he was stress eating. He couldn’t find a job, so he ate, it was like binge eating.
He would just eat a lot of unhealthy things like Kentucky Fried Chicken when he was unemployed. I think this was a stressful time in the household because there were a lot of arguments. I caught the tail end of it, but my brother experienced more of this turbulence.

I don’t know why my dad is the way he is. There is so much vagueness and the details about him are sketch. Part of it is because we don’t talk and we don’t get along. It’s hard for me to tell if that was normal. I could never tell if that was because of culture, or if it was because of his own trauma, but it was through my observations and reflections that I came to be more aware of my dad’s issues. He pisses me off, but I worry about him. He is my dad and I still care about him.

It was difficult to deal with the challenges of living in that household, as well as the challenges with racism, and later, being in an isolated community in Surrey. I think because of that I had a weird relationship with video games, especially in grades eight to ten. I would end up playing a lot of video games. I wouldn’t say I was addicted, but I would skip school just to play video games. I wouldn’t want to do homework or talk to people. I think I got so involved in video games because it was a distraction from all the turmoil. There was something about video games that was reinforcing, that would reward you when you did well, and I guess that was different than what it was like for me at home. It was a way to escape home.

**University Years**

The first year of university was tough. In fact, it was one of the toughest years for me because I wasn’t ready for school. I failed the first year. I failed. That year I went to Simon Fraser University and was in a pretty rough relationship with someone. They had their own trauma and I experienced it second hand. This was my first relationship, so I didn’t know how to help her. I tried being there for her all the time, but I think I ended up experiencing the trauma
vicariously. I was also very depressed during that time. My parents had extremely high expectations and I was failing. I failed to meet their expectations.

After that year, I ended up participating in the Explore Program where you go to Quebec to learn French, but even though it was an excellent program and one of the best things that happened to me, I found myself struggling. When I was away, my best friend passed away and then my grandmother passed away. So, this great experience ended up being a time in my life that I dreaded. I lost my best friend and I lost my grandmother, which was like losing a parent. It was a really tough time in my life.

I knew I needed to change my life. When I came back, I moved out and took out a student loan and I was able to receive my parents’ blessing to do so. It was a big shift in my life. I went to a smaller college because I needed a change in environment, but even then, I continued to face hardships. That year, another friend killed himself and another got incarcerated. It was a tough process to go through, it made me think a lot about why these things had happened to them, and how it could have been prevented.

Despite these challenges, being at another college was a significant turning point in my life. I was in a different environment and was no longer part of my old neighbourhood. I met a lot of people at school, and things started looking up from there. I started working in the social services industry and doing workshops in high schools about sexual health. It was a great job to be able to work as a facilitator and to be involved in peer mentorship. The more I got involved in this type of work, the more I realized how much I enjoyed social service related jobs. At that time, the person I was dating applied to get into Social Work at UBC, so because I liked doing this work so much, and because of her influence, I decided in my second or third year that I wanted to be a social worker.
Intergenerational Trauma

I still have trouble figuring out what is a normal Chinese experience. What is a normal Chinese-Canadian immigrant experience and what is normal in the first place? I realize that for me there are certain things that aren’t generally considered normal, such as a tumultuous family home, but I think a lot of my friends have that too, especially for those who grew up with similar backgrounds as me. It’s hard to tell: is it because of race or class that I face these issues? Or is it because of immigration? I don’t have a lot of mainland Chinese friends so I don’t have a comparison group. I thought what I grew up with was normal for Chinese people… like the focus on education was maybe because my parents didn’t have a proper education growing up. Because schools were closed during that time, and because they had to become workers at a young age; maybe that is why they focused so much on my education. But, isn’t that the case for Korean kids and Indian kids as well? Is it because of the Cultural Revolution or is it just an “Asian thing to do?” I suppose, for me, the lines between what is Asian and what is traumatic is blurred.

I don’t know if it was because of the Cultural Revolution that some of my family relations are screwed up. Across generations, there was conflict transferred from my grandparents to me. Maybe there was something about that time that screwed up some of my family’s relationships, and I grew up thinking that was normal, that somehow Chinese families or Asian families were always screwed up. Yet, when I went to China last summer and saw how my cousins and their family interacted with each other, it was weird because they were so normal. They had emotions in their family, there was communication between parents and children, and there weren’t too many taboo subjects, which was so different than my experience. This was the case for both the affluent side of my family and the farmer cousins as well. So
maybe there is something about the immigration process that also plays a huge part in my parents’ experience and how they interacted with us, growing up.

I think things are blurred in how my parents’ experiences have affected me. I am what my experiences are and, in a way, their experiences blur with my experiences. Even though things were tumultuous growing up, it shaped me. My parents shaped me, my culture shaped me, and my community shaped me. I wear a jade necklace now, which I got in Chinatown at some jade store for really cheap. I wear it everyday because I think it keeps me grounded in who I am. It reminds me of my 奶奶 (nǎi nǎi) and my history and my parents’ history and where I came from. Maybe that is how my experience of growing up and family experiences live in me. When I look at this jade necklace, I am reminded of that.

I don’t have the answers for everything. I don’t know if my experience is normal or not normal, or if it is connected to trauma, ethnicity, class, or immigration. Regardless of what it may be, at the end of the day, I know that I respect my heritage and the people who made me who I am today, and this is embodied in this piece of jade that I wear.
A.4 Stacy’s Story: Pebbles in the Room

**Introduction.** Stacy is a 24-year-old female identified student who was born in China and immigrated to Canada at the age of 7. In the LEC-5 she identifies the psychological traumas that her mother and father each respectively experienced (see Table 17). During the interview, Stacy showed a picture of a photograph of her grandparents and her mother from the 1960s on her phone. She had posted the picture on Facebook as way to access her own family history. The picture represents both connection and disconnection to her parents. Connection, her desire to know her parents beyond their existing anxieties and performance as parents; disconnection, the conflicts and the residual trauma transmitted intergenerationally to her. Stacy vividly describes moments of disconnection throughout her narrative and tries to make sense it through her diasporic reality of growing up in Canada. This is her story.

**Table 17. LEC-5 Items Endorsed by Stacy (of Her Parental Traumas)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural disaster</td>
<td>Mother / Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire or explosion</td>
<td>Mother / Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation accident</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious accident at work, home, or during</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreational activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>Mother / Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-threatening illness or injury</td>
<td>Mother / Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden accidental death</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
<td>Mother / Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

I have a photo of my grandparents with my mom when she was one or two years old. This was in the early ’60s, before my uncle was born, before the Cultural Revolution. This photo reminds me of their past, and even though I was never physically part of it, I feel connected to it. It must have been a significant moment in their lives, because photographs were expensive back then and my grandparents decided that it was important to take a photograph with their kid. The photo reminds me that my life is not ahistorical. I am connected to that moment. Much has happened since, and what has happened contributes to how they impact me. In a sense, this photo is a link to my family’s past and offers a moment for understanding my life.

Growing Up

I was born in Nanjing, and we lived there for the first five or six years of my life. Afterwards, we moved to Shanghai for my parents’ work. I remember Nanjing was not as urbanized when I was there. They were still using barrels for toilets, the women were washing their hair on the streets in a bucket, and live chickens and all sorts of pets were being sold on the streets. They still do that a bit, but the city has grown and developed quite a bit since the 2008 Summer Olympics.

As a child, I spent time with family indoors and spent lots of time by myself. Back then, my maternal grandparents were living with me, but my grandpa, mom, and dad were always working, so I spent more time with my grandma. I recall my parents hugging me and giving me pecks, but I remember not liking it as a kid. My dad and I also had our own thing where we went to fly foam airplanes every week. I remember my parents would often just leave me at home alone; maybe my grandma was there, but it was often just me at home listening to audio cassette
tapes. It was funny—I had this tape that recited the multiplication table, which I apparently destroyed, and we were never able to find another one.

One of my earliest memories was a moment when I really wanted my toys and pebbles. I was three or four, and I had been collecting pebbles and had a whole bunch of toys. The toys and pebbles were in a huge box in a separate room, but somehow the door was locked from the inside. My parents had no way of opening the door. I remember they were not empathetic to the fact that I really wanted my toys and pebbles and couldn’t get them. It was like they didn’t really care or understand that it was important to me. This was a significant moment because after that point I remember not wanting things all that much. I learned that, no matter how much I wanted something from my parents, I could not get it from them. I think it explains some of my own tendencies of not wanting things or certain kinds of intimate relationships. I don’t let myself long for things that I cannot attain.

Both my parents were computer programmers and my grandpa did industrial installations for air conditioning. I was not sure why they decided to leave for Canada, but they told me that they were looking for a new life. I later found out that the reason why my dad wanted to leave was because of his participation in the June 4th events as a student protestor. Due to his participation, he was put on a list and was unable to get a job that matched his master’s degree in Engineering. So, at the age of seven, my parents and I moved to Canada. My grandpa and grandma came later and bought an apartment but ended up moving back, because my grandpa’s work was back in China and because my grandma felt isolated in Canada.

92 Student protests in China which are referred to as the June Fourth Incident, also known as the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. This incident occurred during the Chinese Democracy Movement (Zuo & Benford, 1995).
Living in Canada. When we first arrived in Canada, the first two things I noticed were the blue sky and that the dogs were bigger. When we lived in Shanghai, people had small dogs, and I had never seen big dogs in my life. I was confronted with new realities. I thought Canada was going to be like Europe, with a whole bunch of white people and stone pavement. But when we moved to Canada, we lived in Richmond, which was ethnically diverse. We initially stayed at the home of a Cantonese speaking family and later moved into an apartment. I had never heard Cantonese before. Suddenly, I became aware that there were differences among ethnic Chinese people, something I never considered before coming to Canada.

Growing up, I didn’t feel like I experienced racism, or at least I didn’t need to think about racism. Looking back, I did experience racism but didn’t know what it was at the time. I attended a purportedly multicultural elementary school in Richmond, and I remember being asked in the playground if I was a Mainlander, Taiwanese, or from Hong Kong. Again, I was confronted with the reality that there were differences among diasporic Chinese that were relevant and important.

I never had to think about race or power dynamics before; nor did I think about the racialized dynamics that were present in the playground or in the classroom. I never thought about the fact that almost all the teachers were white and that we were learning about Indigenous Peoples as if they were only part of the past and not the present; there was no need to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples because they were part of the past. There was no need to build relationships with people of any other culture for that matter. It was only as I got older that I began to contemplate these dynamics.

I began to feel tensions between myself and people who were Cantonese speaking, mainly people from Hong Kong. There was this one girl I went to school with who lived in a
huge house. She had long hair and apparently practiced piano for six hours a day. I remember feeling de-classed by that family; somehow my family and I were not good enough to interact with them. One time, there was a school recital where this girl played piano and I remember the girl’s mother saying something to the extent of, “Oh we’re only here to see our daughter play.” I was so upset by that comment, it felt so self-centred and elitist—what about all the other kids?!

So, I spoke up and openly commented about how selfish she was. Initially, nothing came out of that incident, but a few days later the mother of the long-haired girl came into my classroom and called me out, “Don’t talk about other people’s mothers!” Needless to say, while I had some sunny moments in elementary, my time was tainted with experiences that were not so nice.

I think incidents like this made me become aware of class distinctions at an early age. Even coming to Canada, it was all about class mobility for my family, or at least there was the pressure for class mobility, even if it was unsaid. We lived in a part of Richmond where there were a lot of big houses, and we were living in apartments. I really felt those class differences in Richmond. Being required to think about class and wealth was part of my experience growing up. Even my closest friend lied to me that she was wealthy. I knew she was not, but I could not understand why it was important for her to be perceived that way. In a way, it was like people who grew up poor had a strong desire to perform their class, whereas I didn’t really care. Even though it was all around me, I didn’t internalize the desire for class mobility.

Though we didn’t have a lot of stuff—no computers, no cars, no table—I at least felt comfortable around my parents. I trusted my parents more back then, and we had our own rituals where we would go outside and play. With my dad, our thing was to play basketball together, but I soon began to feel jealous when my dad started to interact with the boys in the school. He began to act differently, as if he was performing. He acted like a father to his sons
with the other children. I thought it was weird. For some reason, it was more important for him to look fatherly to other children than be a father to me. My mom on the other hand was overprotective. She was afraid of any harm happening to me. I think her anxiety affected me early on, because I remember being afraid of crossing the street even when I was eight years old.

At the end of fifth grade, we ended up moving from the apartment to a townhouse in Richmond. The move was a significant moment for me. I didn’t want to move, but my parents wouldn’t listen to me and ended up moving anyways. I was four years into my elementary, and it meant that I was going to leave my closest friend who lived beside me. It was challenging to be in this new area. The demographics was different, it had more Hong Kong Chinese folks, and it felt more cold and distant. People didn’t talk to each other. It was as if they weren’t even neighbours.

When I moved to the new school I began to experience lots of weirdness and bullying. I felt unwelcomed, like I was surviving elementary, and there were a bunch of cliques formed in my classroom. That time was kind of a blur, but I remember being called ugly by a boy that I liked. And, the year after, I was falsely accused of being a stalker on MSN, by a girl who had received messages by an anonymous email about her boyfriend. It was devastating. Her friends approached me and confronted me with all these things that I never did. I was a suspect perhaps because, at the time, I had a Xanga page where I wrote about my classmates who I perceived to have social capital, as if I was writing a tabloid. I used Xanga to understand my social world and to be part of it in a removed sort of way. By doing so, I was also trying to gain social capital

93 An online instant messenger.
94 Website that hosts weblogs or “blogs.”
myself. Our teacher tried to intervene by putting us in a room to resolve the conflict, but it didn’t seem to be an appropriate strategy. Thirteen-year-olds don’t talk through issues like that, heck, at that age I didn’t even know what it meant to have a boyfriend! I now wonder who sent her those messages or whether, in fact, she made the whole incident up.

**Changes in my relationship with my parents.** After the move, my relationship with my parents began to change. They became more hypocritical and controlling. There was one pivotal incident where I was humiliated by my mother and it led me to losing my closest friend. My friend was a white girl who lived in my previous apartment and would come over every other week. Even after we moved, she consistently came to visit me. One day, we were on the computer and she showed me inappropriate pictures, pornographic material, which I thought was harmless at the time. What ended up traumatizing me was my mother’s reaction to it. She basically told me that my friend was evil and that I could no longer see her anymore. It was a devastating event for me. A few weeks later, I saw my friend at the supermarket. She said hi to me, but I was too embarrassed to respond to her and, instead, I walked away. It felt like a repeat of that on-going theme in my life of not wanting things or relationships because they would just be taken away from me. To make things worse, a few months later, my mom asked, “Oh, where did your friend go? I miss her.” It was unreal. I couldn’t believe that happened to me. My mom took away an important person in my life and she didn’t even remember what she had done.

Another incident happened during my fourteenth birthday. One of my friends gave me an Avenged Sevenfold CD, but this particular album had liner notes that had weird images, like satanic imagery and women with exposed breasts. When my mother saw the CD, she took it

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95 An American heavy metal band formed in the late nineties.
away from me. I remember feeling miserable the next day; I had had my friends over at my house and got a bunch of gifts, but one of those gifts was confiscated. To make matters worse, when my mom heard them on the television, she said that she liked their music! Once again, my mother took away something valuable from me without understanding its impact on me. Once again, her lack of awareness made it worse. After several years, I asked her to give back my CD; I felt I was owed reparations. When I got it back, there was no liner booklet! I was way older, and even then it seemed like my parents did not trust me and felt the need to control my life and what I was exposed to.

Around that time, my dad injured his back and developed diabetes, and his mood was not so great. My parents were also working on a project together. They were making an online tax company, so they were always bickering about programming. The bickering became so normal for me that I didn’t notice it anymore, until a friend came over and pointed it out. They were taking work home, and it seemed like they only cared about work. They didn’t care about me. This was a shifting point in my relationship with my parents. There were a few other incidents with my mother where I didn’t listen to her and she became really controlling of where I could go and what I could do. As that happened, I became more resentful; I wanted to be rebellious and, even then, I wasn’t even that rebellious towards them. In response to my actions, they would say things like, “Even the dog is better than you,” implying that a dog was more loyal than how I acted as a daughter.

I became really depressed. I read a lot of books to avoid my parents, but reading was also something I became very interested in. I was really into the book series, A Series of Unfortunate Events, and authors like José Saramago had a huge influence on me. During that time, I became suicidal. I distinctly remember having intentions, and I even had plans for my suicide. Even
when I was twelve or thirteen, I remember thinking, “I’m going to go when I turn fourteen.” I felt like I had no reasons to live. I had no connections, no strong group of friends I could trust, I was socially ostracized at school, and I felt that my parents didn’t care about me. I began to write a list of reasons to live or not live. I thought I was the only person in the world who felt like this. Incidentally, I put my plans aside because I wanted to watch the *Series of Unfortunate Events* movie. I told myself that I was going to live until I got to see that movie. In the end, the movie wasn’t that good, but I am still alive today.

My relationship with my parents continued to worsen. That was when the physical violence started to happen. In high school, I began to stay up late and they didn’t want me to stay up so late. My dad would angrily come into my room and yell at me to go to sleep and then he would start hitting me. The physical violence involved both my parents. Sometimes my mom would block the door to prevent me from leaving, while my dad beat me. It didn’t happen every night, but I became more fearful that it would. The abuse didn’t motivate me to go to bed earlier. Instead, the more they got upset, the more I stayed up so that I could talk to my friends online to feel safe.

The physical abuse continued to happen a while. It became normal to me, but at one point when I was seventeen, my dad started kicking me. That moment felt like he crossed a line, like he was going to beat me up. Part of me knew that was not normal, so I called the police. When they arrived, I remember telling them about how I feared living at home. They interviewed each of us. During my conversation with the police, they told me that my dad was not going to hit me anymore, and then they mentioned that my mother was concerned about my becoming addicted to the Internet. I told them I was afraid that I was going to fail all my classes and become homeless. I felt guilty about the whole incident. I wanted to tell the police that I
had also done something wrong, some of the violence occurred when I shoved my mom as she was blocking the door. I felt complicit. I wanted to tell the police how I played a role in the situation, but I couldn’t. I don’t recall what happened afterwards. All I could remember was the awkward silence between my parents and me when we went to eat Subway the next day. I didn’t look at them; I didn’t speak. The physical abuse ended, but the verbal and emotional abuse continued.

The physical abuse was a pretty core part of my life even though I don’t like to think about it in that way. I blamed myself for the abuse. As I was growing up, I thought the reason I received physical punishment was that I was always messing up and doing wrong. I didn’t see it as physical abuse, because I was at fault. Only later, did I realize that was not the case, and it was something that I had to unlearn. I’ve talked about it so many times, but it’s still weird to think that this happened to me. Sometimes, I wonder why I have been bitter for such a long time, but as I think about these events, it’s funny because it reminds me why I am so bitter—it is justified.

**University.** Some of my issues in high school continued to follow me to university. In high school, I liked a boy for four years, affection which had no reciprocation. I remember in university, when I first came to campus, I started hooking up with people. The boy I had liked in high school then made a video of me texting a boy that I hooked up with, and he put it on YouTube. I personally didn’t take issue with it, but my mother found out and demanded he remove it. I felt so stressed about the situation and didn’t know how to deal with it. Again, it was this pattern of my mother butting into things that I felt I could deal with on my own. She was interfering with my life and trying to control things. In actuality, her involvement made things more stressful for me.
I lived away from home and lived on campus during my first year of university. Though I was away from my parents, it felt like bad things continued to happen to me. In my first year, the people above my floor were slut-shaming me for hooking up with a guy who already had a partner in Hawaii. Honestly, it was his fault because he was using me. However, everyone else was his friend, and they came after me. They knocked on my door and accused me of stalking him, providing no proof.

In university, I also had a boyfriend for a year and a half. That was extremely pivotal in my life. I introduced him to my parents and it was weird and uncomfortable. It made me decide never to take anyone home to see them again. Part of the issue were cultural and religious differences. He was white and came from a Christian family, and because of that, he kept on shaming me with regards to my reactions to my parents. This was a huge issue in our relationship. He kept bringing up the importance of reconciling with my parents, I think, as a reflection of the Christian values he grew up with. I felt like both his parents and my parents teamed up against me, as if I were a problem to be fixed. We eventually broke up. I am not sure why I stayed in that relationship for that long, but when we broke up he came out to his parents as polyamorous and pansexual and that he lost his faith. I suspect that his parents attributed all that to me because one time my mom angrily expressed to me, “do you know what she (ex-boyfriend’s mother) said to me?!” I never replied, but his mom must have said something horrible to my mother.

Recently, I started to identify with queerness and bisexuality, as well as gender fluidity. I never told my parents about this, they still don’t know and I really don’t care if they do. I think this identification started early in my life. It’s hard for me to separate experiences of trauma with experiences of gender. I don’t think my mother encouraged me actively to be feminine, but I
never related to femininity. I remember growing up wanting to be a boy. It wasn’t a trans thing I think I wanted to be a boy so that I wouldn’t have to face misogyny. My dad treated me differently than boys my age and was verbally abusive towards my mom. It seemed like life would be easier being a boy. Adopting a queer identification was rough at first. A lot of queer politics is very white, so when I came into it, I thought I wasn’t queer enough because I wasn’t white. Later, I realized that was not the case, there are other non-white voices in the queer community that I could identify with.

I began to be more involved in activism, specifically violence against women. I was getting bored of school, and I wanted to contribute to something meaningful. I participated in an “Idle No More”\textsuperscript{96} march and it inspired me to think about what more I could do to contribute to these causes. It’s interesting, because in high school I basically supported girls who had abusive boyfriends, and now I’m advocating against violence from men. In the last couple of years, as I became more outspoken and public about my opinions, people have lashed back against me. I experienced bullying and I was even assaulted, and since then, I have become more afraid to speak out. Nonetheless, this cause is something that is important to me because of my own experience being abused by my father. I don’t want it to be like that for others, and I see this as an avenue where I can use this difficult experience to do something important and meaningful.

I don’t really talk to my parents anymore. I don’t live with them, but I do depend on them financially, though I try to avoid all contact with them. The reason why I am still connected with them is because I don’t want to be cut off from my entire family. However, because my family is all connected, I still need to keep a safe distance. Though I benefit from

\textsuperscript{96} A movement in Canada focused on peaceful protest to honor Indigenous sovereignty (Idle No More, 2017).
them financially, I know that emotionally my relationship with them doesn’t work. I only go home occasionally, like on Christmas, but I won’t even look at them while I’m there. I try not to stay too long, because if I spent too much time interacting with them, I would scream at them or throw things and I don’t like doing that. It ends up making me feel worse about myself.

The events in the past with my parents really hurt my relationship with them. I felt that I could no longer trust them. In my second year of university, my mother even defended my father for hitting me. I felt betrayed by her. Sometimes I feel sorry for her because my dad doesn’t treat her well; he’s verbally abusive and belittles her. Sometimes I feel guilty about that; she doesn’t deserve it, but I remind myself that she made her choice. I am conflicted about my parents. I can empathize with them sometimes, but I know I must set boundaries to protect myself from them because they are the source of a lot of my traumas.

My Family and the Transmission of Trauma

I feel like I do not have access to my family history. What I know about my family comes from my uncle (mom’s younger brother) and aunt, and from speculation based on observations of what my family says and does. I worked for my uncle and aunt when I was in China and, because they were not directly connected with my trauma from my parents, I could have some conversations with them about my family’s past. I feel that I have to create my own means to access my family history, whereas that is not the case for others. It seems like they have more access to their family stories because of the relationship they have with their parents. I am unable to learn more about my family from my parents because of how broken our relationship has become, and that is unfortunate.

My maternal grandparents have, and are, living more urban lives, while my paternal grandparents were from rural China. I am not as familiar with my paternal grandparents, but I
know that during the war they escaped to the mountains, and that is why they don’t have an education. My maternal grandma was a teacher back then, and I have no idea what horrors she might have experienced. When I brought it up to my aunt she told me not to ask my grandma about the Cultural Revolution—all of grandma’s behaviours can be attributed to that time.

My grandma wants to get her way no matter what. We had a good relationship up until a few years ago when she kept breaking boundaries with me. For instance, whenever I came over she would rummage through my suitcase and cut-off the tags from my underwear. She did this even after I told her not to do so. Over time, I found it harder to communicate with her or have a better relationship with her. She doesn’t have a social group, and she is very much in her own head and tries to manage the family. She also does this thing where she will not eat until everyone else has eaten and will only eat a little bit of what was left over. She would make these huge breakfasts for me and insist that I eat everything. I would feel it’s a huge waste, but she would make it anyways and get upset if I didn’t eat everything. I know she has digestive issues, but it felt like she was doing this to make us feel guilty.

My grandma was frequently paranoid. I remember, when I was seven, we were making things with dough and I was making something into the shape of a human, and she said, “Oh let’s not say that (we’re making people out of dough), someone might hear us and think we’re cannibalistic.” I think that speaks to some of the events she may have experienced. There were other oddities as well. When I was about eight or nine, my grandma would give me advice about how to escape if I got kidnapped or raped. She basically told me that if somebody wants my money, I should give it away because my life is more important. It must have been a very dangerous time growing up for her. I inferred that she wanted to pass this wisdom on because she knew that these things were true; they had happened and she wanted to protect me. I think
my grandma’s paranoia was passed on to my mom, because my mom can be quite paranoid as well. I guess in a way that got passed onto me, as I can still be really anxious myself.

**My parents and their traumas.** My mom was born in 1963, and she had a difficult childhood. She used to tell me that her mother, my grandma, would hit her all the time when she was growing up. Even when she was asleep, her mother would cut her hair without her permission. My mom would later justify my father’s physical abuse towards me, because for her abuse was normal. She always talked about her father not being there when she was growing up. He worked all around the world, and his absence was in a sense her own trauma. I think her upbringing is one of the reasons why she became so overprotective of me; her father was never around, so she did the opposite and was overbearing and overprotective.

Growing up, she would tell me about how I should read Mao’s poetry and basically say how great of a man he was. I remember refuting that idea and she would respond with, “Oh, if you questioned him back then, you would get arrested; I saw people getting arrested.” When she said that her voice changed, as if trying to warn me from speaking ill of him today. I don’t know what she experienced during the Cultural Revolution, but it seemed like Mao instilled some sort of cognitive dissonance. They worshiped him, but they also feared him. And, considering how my mom responded to me, that fear must have been significant. For her, it seemed like there was an internalized loyalty towards him even amidst the turmoil.

My mom told me that she was part of the Red Guard, though she never said much about what she actually did. She grew up on an island and moved around a lot as a child, so it is possible that what she experienced might be different than others. Both my mom and my uncle fondly remember their childhood and did not see themselves as being part of a political regime. I don’t know what their experience was like, but my uncle knew some of the propaganda songs
and would sometimes sing them in the car. My aunt would get really mad at him, because she felt very differently about that period of time. He felt he could make light of it, but my aunt never saw it that way. I think my aunt saw the broader implications of those events, like the famine, like their impact on teachers, and like how devastating it was for families to be torn apart.

My dad was the only son in his family. He has four older sisters, and there was another brother who had passed away. He also had his fair share of tragedies in China and in Canada. As I mentioned before, he broke his back when I was about fourteen and, though he was not paralyzed, the injury made it a lot harder for him to do things. When he was in China, he told me that, when he was twenty, he went swimming with his friend and his friend got stuck and drowned. He was unable to save his friend. My dad also took part in the June Fourth student protests in Nanjing. He never spoke of his experience specifically, but I could infer that it was traumatic, based on what I know about the event historically and his negative reactions towards it. More recently, he had to see both his parents die while he was giving care to them. He cared a lot for my grandparents, and he had sent them money consistently throughout the years.

I do not know how my father was involved during the Cultural Revolution. I am not sure if he served in the Red Guard because he’s a bit younger than my mom. He rarely talks about himself, but when he does share, it’s only small details from his perspective, and he tends to frame himself in a positive light, so it’s hard to gauge what actually happened. I wish I knew more about my father, because I think some of his interpersonal patterns are really weird. He is always trying to perform, to be seen a certain way. He would always say things like how he was the top of his class and that he was always a leader. My parents would even bicker about who of
them had better grades. It just seemed like these things mattered so much to them, because they were key to their moving forward in life.

I remember one time when we were at a bed and breakfast in Tofino. We were talking about the June Fourth events and then he got all huffy about it. He went into a whole explanation about why he doesn’t get involved in politics because, when he was a student protester, it didn’t benefit him. I can understand his reasoning, but the problem was it felt like he was performing. It seemed like he had intentions other than the discussion itself, like he was using the conversation to perform in front of our host at the bed and breakfast. I think he wanted our host to see him as someone with an important story, and that he was an open father who shared with his child. Later, we got into this discussion again about his being a student protester, but it was another performance. He justified everything in relation to having a family, which was awkward to hear considering how he had treated me. He said that he was not involved in politics because family was more important. I don’t get his abstract idea of family because, to my dad, his life was always more a commitment towards accruing capital than it was towards family.

I do wonder about the racism he may have experienced in Canada; how that contributes to how he wants to be perceived. My dad doesn’t talk about his experiences in terms of racism, but I know he had some issues with a previous workplace, and I could only surmise that it was racism related. I remember, when I was younger, my dad took me to Toastmasters to work on his English and public speaking. 97 In one of his speeches, he said he was from Nanjing, even though he was not from there. He went to university in Nanjing, but that was not his family

97 A club for developing public speaking skills.
village,\textsuperscript{98} which was in another province. I thought his speech was interesting, because it seemed like he disavowed a part of who he was, as if ashamed of it. I have no idea what he experienced at his workplace, but it seemed like part of his motivation to go to Toastmasters was to be assimilated and to be seen as one of them.

I don’t understand why my father performs. Maybe it is internalized racism, toxic masculinity, or maybe it’s a desire to perceived as successful. Maybe it was because he was the only son in his family, so he was probably treated differently. Not all his siblings were able to go to a big urban centre, and he was the only one who got a master’s degree. Maybe that also contributed to the way he is now.

**The (dis)connected past.** Both my parents have a lot of internalized stuff for sure, but it’s unclear to me what made them internalize those things. I don’t know how much of their experiences contributed to how they have ended up parenting me. It’s a weird feeling to think about how things were like back then for my parents. I know them as they are, and who they became is connected to that past they experienced. Yet I don’t know them. I was never part of their past and I may never know what they have experienced because so much of it is left unspoken.

There is a desire for me to know more, because selfishly, I could feel more connected to the communities that I am a part of—these communities being Asian-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, queer, and more generally, people of colour. In these communities, there is an

\textsuperscript{98} The participant’s father may have faced the rural vs. urban challenges of the \textit{hukou} system. The \textit{hukou} system determines where you live and determines certain privileges for the individual. One’s \textit{hukou} status remains unchanged regardless of where a person moves, unless they go through a formal \textit{hukou} conversion. Those who lived in rural areas were discriminated against and had less privileges than those who lived in urban settings (Chan, 2009; Liu, 2005).
implicit assumption that being able to tell one’s family history is a sign of inner strength and integrity. It shows that you are somehow able to overcome language barriers and the processes of assimilation. I think that’s why stories are celebrated so often and even commodified in these communities, while lacking access to them is a sign of failure, as in my case. As stories are commodified, there’s capital involved in having access to stories too, and that doesn’t often get talked about. Even if it’s an illusion, I desire some of the social capital associated with knowing family stories.

When other people share their family stories and affirm their past, I want to have something to say instead of the story of not having access to my family history. To me, it feels like that story can get old, as I am reminded of how, unlike many of my peers, my lack of access is due to my disrupted relationship with my parents. Without having access to my family stories, I sometimes feel at fault for internalizing racism and being disconnected from family.

I want to know more, because there is also a part of me that empathizes with my family. I don’t think that is a side that I like to draw attention to because it is buried underneath many layers in me. Somewhere beneath the damage that they have done is a part of me that empathizes with them, that wants to know what they have experienced that has some semblance of care. That part of me is not connected with my own selfish reasons for wanting to know more.

The photo I talked about in the beginning connects me with my family history. It evokes that empathic side of me. The photo is tiny and I spotted it in the corner of a photo frame. When I saw it, I found it very evocative, so I took a photo of it and posted it on Facebook. A whole bunch of people started liking it and commenting on it. It is a small photo, but it has a bigger
meaning in the larger context. It was like I needed to put it out publicly to really think about it. The photo was no longer just a photo in the corner, but it became seen.

To me, putting that photo on Facebook was my way of accessing family history. I didn’t just look at the photo; instead, I did something with it. I didn’t ask for permission; I took the picture, and I didn’t care what my family thought. They would never know. I wanted their history to matter in the context of my history and my personal stories and conversations on Facebook. I wanted the photo to be part of my story. I don’t have any contemporary photos of my parents on Facebook, but I felt better putting that photo up, because that was during a time before I was born. I was transporting myself and my audience to another time where, instead of thinking about my present trauma, I am thinking about my parents’ past. I am using the photo to think about the past in relation to the present, but that has to do with how I want that past to matter in the context of the present. In a way, creating my own stories helps me feel like I have agency over all the forces that shape who I am today.

The photo is important to me because my parents do not talk about the past, yet they have this little photo in the corner of their picture frame. It is evidence that the past existed and it predates all the traumas that my parents have gone through. It still matters and the empathic part of me can connect with that past. Even if they can’t fully acknowledge the past, I can acknowledge it in my own way.
Appendix B: Linguistic Ecology Protocol

As the study is a multilingual project, intentional interpretive strategies were taken into consideration for transcription and translation. I followed the steps detailed in McDonald and Chau’s (2008) interpretive strategies for transcription, translation, and adaption found in Chau’s (2008) thesis, Biculturalism and the process of change in core personal values among female Asian adult immigrants. These protocols, hereby referred to as a Linguistic Ecology Protocol (personal communication, McDonald, 2018), incorporates intentional strategies to identify embedded experiences that are bounded by language and culture. It provides a guideline to inform the intentional considerations that align with hermeneutic dimensions of narrative research. For instance, efforts such as backtranslation, though valid in post-positivist monolingual research paradigms, do not necessarily affirm the mutually enriching activities and shared knowledge construction that comes with a multilingual perspective. Further, acknowledging the bounded cultural perspectives in language and the construction of knowledge can address some of translation and interpretation gaps in research and increase fidelity (McDonald & Chau, 2008; cf. Taylor, 2016).

These protocols fit with the direction of the project both from a narrative and critical standpoint. From a narrative sense, construction of stories and meaning are bounded within the cultural domains and are understood hermeneutically. From a critical perspective, the efforts of the study challenge the dominant perspective of knowledge generation that privileges monolingual Anglo-perspectives and accentuates ecological validity of multicultural and cultural viewpoints. These protocols affirm the many dimensions that occur in naturally bilingual or multilingual conversations and the nuances that are formulated when constructed into conversations. The protocol is described in the Tables 20 and 21 under the respective headings—“translation and interpretation process outlines” and “multilingual interviewing and transcription”. Relevant dimensions of these protocol are further elaborated in those sections. For a full description and rationale for protocol guidelines, please refer to McDonad and Chau’s (2008) overview found in Appendix F of Chau’s (2008) thesis.

These protocols were mainly applied to interviews conducted in source-languages of Mandarin and Cantonese. Parts of this protocol were also utilized for interviews conducted in English that involved the occasional use of Chinese, when participants used Chinese to explain parts of their narrative. Before outlining the protocol, it is helpful to indicate who is involved in the research team, as their roles are referred to throughout this protocol, and an overview of the general interpretation/transcription/translation process employed for this study. The members of the research team included:

- **Fred Chou** – Principal Investigator
- **C. Huang** – Interpreter and transcriptionist
  - C. Huang was involved directly in all the interviews that involved source-language as an interpreter
Her role as a transcriptionist involved transcribing Chinese interviews directly into English.

- **V. Ng** – Translator and cultural consultant
  - Translation work involved the translation from Chinese to English and English to Chinese of textual information, including recruitment brochures and narratives.
  - His role as a cultural consultant was to provide contextual information for understanding the narratives.

- **Dr. Marla Buchanan / Dr. Marvin Westwood / Dr. Marvin McDonald** – provided supervision and consultation regarding the protocol and the academic dimensions of the project. Specifically, Dr. McDonald, developer of the *Linguistic Ecology Protocol*, provided feedback on the adaptation of the protocol to the study and engaged in continuous supervision for its implementation.

The general steps pertinent to interpretation, transcription, and translation processes are indicated below. Please note that principles from the *Linguistic Ecology Protocol* is interspersed throughout these steps. Some of these steps are referred to in the overview and will be expanded upon in the later sections.

1. **Recruitment.** Written recruitment material (pamphlets and posters) were developed by the principal investigator (Fred Chou) and translated into simplified Chinese by the translator (V. Ng). The study involved pre-interviews to provide participants with input regarding what the project involved and to determine appropriateness of the participant according to the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the project. The interpreter (C. Huang) engaged in the pre-interviews with potential participants who spoke Chinese as their primary language. Pre-interviews were debriefed between C. Huang and the Principal Investigator.

2. **Narrative interviews.** Narrative interviews involved the principle investigator (Fred Chou) and the interpreter (C. Huang) who together interviewed each of the participants. These were mainly for interviews that involved source-language Cantonese or Mandarin speaking participants. Interviews were audio recorded.

3. **Transcription.** Audio recorded Chinese interviews were transcribed into English by the interpreter (C. Huang). Culturally important vocabularies and vocabularies that cannot be directly and readily translated into English were highlighted by C. Huang. These vocabularies remained in the transcripts in simplified Chinese and were incorporated into a tentative glossary of the different potential interpretations. The transcriptions and V. Ng glossaries, along with the respective audio recordings, were then reviewed by the translator (V. Ng) to verify translations and to provide input on salient cultural and historical dimensions of the narrative. With the glossaries, V. Ng was invited to provide his interpretation and contextualized understanding of the vocabularies.
4. **Interpretive readings and narrative drafting.** English transcripts were reviewed by the Principal Investigator and were interpreted based on Arvay’s (2003) Collaborative Narrative Approach. English transcripts were drafted into a coherent narrative based on the principal investigator’s readings. Narratives were reviewed by the research team and verification of cultural and historical dimensions were discussed as a research team and based on the cultural consultation of the translator (V. Ng).

5. **Translation of narrative drafts and review.** For native Chinese-speaking participants their English version narratives were translated into simplified Chinese by the translator (V. Ng). The translated version of the narratives, along with the English-drafts, were sent to the respective participants to review and another interview was conducted. Participants were invited to share their feedback on accuracy and intentions of the narrative draft. Any changes to narratives were updated in both the English and Chinese versions of the story. These changes were then reviewed by the participants for a final verification.

6. **Translations for family dialogue and narrative of family dialogue.** For offspring participants that had their respective parent involved in the study, their English narratives were translated by the translator into Chinese for their parent to review during the family dialogue component of the study. During the family dialogue, interpretations were provided by the interpreter (C. Huang) and the discussion was facilitated by the Principal Investigator (Fred Chou). These interviews were video-recorded, and a copy given to the participants. English transcriptions of salient moments during the family dialogue were done by C. Huang, while Fred incorporated transcription into his narrative of the family dialogue.

7. **Review of analysis.** Upon completion of the analysis, a summary of the themes was given to the interpreter and translator to review and provide their input based on their understanding of the narratives and contextual and cultural viewpoints.

**Translation and Interpretation Process Outlines**

The steps taken regarding the translation and interpretation process outlines are outlined below and correspond to Table 18. As indicated in the McDonald and Chau’s (2008) overview, these protocol outlines are meant to be tailored to the research question, community context, and pertinent limitations of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focal translation direction</td>
<td>Source-language(s) to English as target-language, grounded in cyclical-spiral and back-translation sensibilities.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Language proficiency profiles | Linguistic profile of research team members as the differing cultural and linguistic experience contributes to interpretive efforts of the domains under investigation.
---|---
Data gathering | Establishing contextually sensitive protocols for activities of inquiry and research team debriefing of data gathering activities.
English “draft” reviews | As certain words or phrases cannot be translated directly without losing its meaning, development of glossaries can be created to guiding translation with topic-domain-salient vocabulary and context descriptions.
Translation partner(s) | The involvement of interviewers with bilingual language proficiencies to review English draft transcripts.
Version comparisons and transcription reviews | Edited versions of English drafts are reviewed by bilingual and/or English-fluent reviewers.
Revising English Transcripts | Involvement of bilingual and/or target-language editors.
Cultural reviews | Involvement of target-language-fluent research team members and cultural consultants to explore possible gaps in translation and transcription process to clarify meaning structures and historical dimensions.

- **Focal translation direction.** The source-language (Cantonese and Mandarin) was translated to English as the target-language. Cyclical-spiral translation strategies were utilized whereby interviews from the source-language audio files were transcribed into English. English transcripts were reviewed by the translator to determine any translation gaps and for a cultural review. The principle investigator then engaged in interpretive readings of the translations and constructed narratives. The constructed narratives were then translated back into the source language and reviewed by the participants. Multiple interactive steps were made to ensure that representations were appropriate to the perspective of the participants. Requested changes to the source-language narrative were then translated back into English and incorporated into the English translated narrative. This step involved multiple points of engagement with the interpreter/transcriptionist, translator and participants.

- **Language proficiency profile.** The research team (Principal Investigator, interpreter/transcriptionist, and translator) completed a language proficiency profile to determine the language competencies that each member brings. The team engaged in conversations about language backgrounds to also determine cultural and linguistic sensitivity. This step involved filling out the LEAP-Q assessment, a tool for assessing language profiles for bilingual and multilingual individuals (Marian, Blumenfeld, &
A profile of language and cultural proficiency is outlined in the Multilingual Interviewing and Transcription section.

- **Data gathering.** Throughout the data gathering process (the narrative interviews), the principal investigator and the interpreter/transcriptionist (who was part of the interview) engaged in debriefing sessions after each interview. Debriefing involved reflecting on the contextualized meaning and co-constructive process that occurred during the narrative interviews. Both the principal investigator and interpreter engaged in a journaling process to reflect about cultural significance and how each were respectively impacted by the participant’s stories. Additionally, the principal investigator and the interpreter debriefed participant interviews with Dr. Marvin Westwood who facilitated a reflexive process. The whole research team met on several occasions during the translation process to clarify meaning and translation gaps, and to discuss idiographic dimensions that contributed to the participant’s narrative construction.

- **English draft reviews.** During transcription to English, the transcriptionist was instructed to highlight culturally important vocabularies and vocabularies that cannot be directly and readily translatable into English. The transcriptionist then provided a glossary of the different potential interpretation of these vocabularies, which was also reviewed by the translator. These vocabularies were kept in the original language (Chinese) of the participant. When the research team established a joint agreement on the interpretation of these vocabularies, these vocabularies were incorporated into the narratives as glosses (series of brief explanations). Glosses incorporated sociohistorical context provided by the translator to provide a contextualized understanding of the narratives.
  - For the vocabularies where the original source language was also provided, the specific source-language was distinguished based on its romanization of the Chinese character pronunciation. For source-language of Mandarin, pinyin was used, while for source-language Cantonese, jyutping was utilized. Pinyin and Jyutping was provided by the translator, along with aid through Google translate and websites such as www.chineseconverter.com.

- **Translation partner.** The translator and interpreter are both bilingual and the English transcripts were reviewed by the Principal Investigator, translator, and interpreter.

- **Version comparisons, transcription review, and revising English transcripts.** Upon completion of the translation of source-language audio recordings into English, the transcripts were reviewed by the translator to ensure accuracy. If there were conflicts or alternative interpretations, the translator noted these conflicts and a discussion was engaged as a research team to clarify a joint understanding of the interpretation. Revisions were made to the transcripts and another review was conducted by the principal investigator, interpreter/transcriptionist, and translator until a joint agreement of the translations could be reached.
• **Cultural reviews.** Both the interpreter/transcriptionist and the translator served as cultural consultants for the study. Consultation with the community and key stakeholders also provided a sociohistorical frame of reference and shaped the research team’s interpretation. The translator, V. Ng, is a native speaker of Cantonese and proficient in Mandarin and grew up in China and Hong Kong. He has engrained cultural experiences, along with lived experience on the subject matter, and was able to provide sociohistorical input into the possible gaps in the translation.

  o **Reflexive journaling.** As part of the cultural reflexivity of the research project, the Principal Investigator and the interpreter/transcriptionist engaged in journaling to reflect about the narrative interviews and to explore cultural dimensions that shape interpretations. Research team meetings involved discussion about these reflections. These reflections helped inform the research project and provided insight into the participant’s experiences.

  o **Research team dialogues.** Throughout the study, the research team met to discuss interpretations and understanding of sociohistorical meanings described in the participant interviews. These dialogues were reflexive in nature and invited research team members to share their own cultural and personal reflections of the narratives. Meetings were utilized as a cultural review process, but also as an opportunity to debrief aspects of narratives that were impactful. These dialogues also served as an opportunity to personally debrief with one another to prevent vicarious traumatization of research team members.

**Multilingual Interviewing and Transcription**

The Multilingual Interviewing and Transcription aspect of the Linguistic Ecology Protocol are outlined in Table 19. The specific steps and adaptations are detailed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language proficiency profiles</td>
<td>Completion of profiles for interviewers, participants and research team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural familiarity profiles</td>
<td>For all project stakeholders, including resources for sustaining respect and ethical reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Team preparations</td>
<td>Training, multicultural engagement and debriefing, outlining research journal protocols, and team-building efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data gathering protocols</td>
<td>Identification of focal priorities for inquiry, social ecology of the project, establishing recording practices and involvement of bilingual speakers and cultural consultants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation protocols</td>
<td>Specific and practical steps taken for translation processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation strategies</td>
<td>Strategies for establishing socially common meanings within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>source- and target- language communities, along with data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>immersion protocols to thicken description of meanings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Language proficiency profiles.** Presented are the language proficiency profiles of the research team members based on the LEAP-Q assessment. A demographic outline of the participants is highlighted in Chapter 4 and provide a general frame of reference for understanding language proficiency, however the participants did not fill out a LEAP-Q assessment.
  a. Fred Chou (Principal Investigator)
    - Dominant language = English (spoken for over 30 years)
    - Limited proficiency in listening/speaking Cantonese and no proficiency in listening/speaking Mandarin
    - Identifies as Chinese and Canadian
  b. C. Huang (Interpreter and Transcriptionist)
    - Very proficient with Cantonese – speaking and listening (has been fluent for over 20 years)
    - Identifies as being good with Mandarin in speaking and excellent in listening (fluent for over 2 years)
    - Identifies with both Chinese and Canadian
  c. V. Ng (Translator and Cultural Consultant)
    - Ranks Chinese dominant language; specifically, Cantonese (spoken for over 50 years)
    - Identifies as Chinese and Canadian, but dominant cultural identification as Chinese
    - Identifies as being very proficient with Cantonese and proficient with Mandarin
    - Employment capability in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English
    - Received formal education in Cantonese and English

- **Cultural familiarity profiles.** The cultural familiarity of research team members is based on their narrative description of their cultural identity. Throughout the study, research team members engaged in reflection of lived experience that contributes to their interpretation of the participant narratives. A highlight of the relevant cultural dimensions of each research team members are illustrated below:
  a. Fred Chou (Principal Investigator)
    - Born and raised in Canada and parents from Guangdong province in China.
  b. C. Huang (Interpreter and Transcriptionist)
• Born and raised in Canada and parents from Guangdong province in China.
• Employed as an English teacher in the Guangdong province for 2 years

c. V. Ng (Translator and Cultural Consultant)
• Lived in the Guangdong province during childhood and in Hong Kong afterwards
• Has lived experience of the sociopolitical difficulties during his time in China
• Engaged in business relations throughout China for part of his career
• Studied Chinese history during his undergraduate

• Research team preparations. To prepare for the interviews the Principal Investigator provided training on the philosophical and practical dimensions of transcription and translation processes from a qualitative research standpoint. These trainings were done separately with C. Huang and V. Ng. The interview protocols, along with the outline of the project was provided to the research team beforehand and there were discussions about how interviews were to be implemented prior to recruitment.

a. Pre-interview, interpretation, and interview training. Training on the pre-interview protocol, narrative interviewing processes, and what to focus on regarding interpretation during interviews was provided to C. Huang. During the pre-interview phase of recruitment, I debriefed with the C. Huang after each interview she conducted regarding her experience and appropriateness of participant. Debriefing also provided an opportunity to ensure fidelity to the pre-interview protocol. For the narrative interviews, debriefing was done with C. Huang after each respective interview. Dr. Marvin Westwood also provided debriefing to both C. Huang and myself of their overall experience of the interviews.

b. Translation/Transcription – Issues about translation and transcription issues were discussed during training based on Temple and Young (2004) article and Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) articles for both V. Ng and C. Huang. During the translation process, the research team gathered to discuss interpretation. Throughout the rest of the study the research team engaged in discussions and reflections about the impact of the narratives on ourselves as researchers.

c. Team dynamics – Team dynamics were built based on a collective understanding of the goal of the project and emphasizing the co-constructive nature of the project. Research team members were invited to actively contribute to shaping the project and interpretation of the narratives.

• Data gathering protocols. The focal priorities for inquiry are the narratives of intergenerational trauma—the trauma of the parents, the impact on offspring, and the transmission processes. The priorities determine what dimensions are focused on in the
narrative interview and what glosses are relevant to understanding the social ecology of the participants. In this case the social ecology is the historical context of the parental narratives of trauma and the current Chinese-Canadian experience of the offspring. The focal priorities and social ecology are discussed during research team meetings. For instance, cultural frames of reference and sociohistorical viewpoints are areas of focus that are drawn from the cultural consultation of V. Ng and C. Huang. Further, I engaged from a cultural and indigenous psychology lens, thus I prioritized cultural understandings of narratives in the interpretative process.

a. Bilingual speakers and cultural consultants. Cultural consultants involved Chinese-Canadian stakeholders (e.g., SUCCESS and respective academics) who shaped the project broadly. From the research team, V. Ng and C. Huang both served as cultural consultants who have capacities in bilingual capabilities.

b. Recording practices. The recordings for the narrative interviews and verification interviews were audio recorded. These recordings were reviewed by myself and the rest of the research team. Para-verbal dimensions of speech were taken into consideration for interpreting the narratives. These dimensions were incorporated into the transcription and discussed between C. Huang and myself regarding possible implications. The family dialogue was video recorded as the nuances of non-verbal was incorporated into the researcher’s narrative of the family dialogues.

Translation protocols.

a. Transcription. Source-language audio recordings were directly translated and transcribed into an English transcript. During this transcription process C. Huang was instructed to transcribe according to functional equivalents, that being an emphasis on the function and meaning of phraseology as opposed to literal translation, word-for-word translation. Aspects of the narratives involved literal translation when there was both a functional equivalent in both source and target language. For vocabulary that had no functional equivalent, these were identified, and possible interpretations and literal translations were provided for discussion as a research team. These transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy and to ensure that the functional equivalence was the same for both source- and target-language by the translator.

b. Translation. Translation was provided to family dyads, which included the parental narratives (Chinese to English) and offspring narratives (English to Chinese), and wherever Chinese vocabularies were referred to in any of the narratives. These were done by the translator and focused on functional equivalence. The original audio recordings were referred to by the translator to ensure that during translation it matched the original understandings of the participants. These translations were then reviewed by the participants to ensure
that their narratives were accurate. During the translation process, back translation on specific terminologies were utilized when appropriate (e.g., vocabularies that were more difficult to provide a functional equivalent from source-language to target-language and vice-versa).

c. **Culturally bounded terminology.** Culturally bounded terms, such as “Six Four” incident, which can be culturally-loaded, were expanded upon using glosses to provide a cultural-historical understanding of these terms within the narratives. These glosses were incorporated as footnotes for the narratives.

- **Translation strategies.** Glosses were used to help ameliorate the differences from the original language to the target language. For commonly understood cultural concepts, a general cultural understanding was provided. For instance, the term “banana” referred to individuals who are Chinese but ascribe to more North American values. Meanwhile, the literature was referred to for broader sociohistorical terms, such as hukou (户口). These were provided to help bridge the cultural understanding of different meaning structures the source-language to target-language translation.
Appendix C: Recruitment Material

C.1 Recruitment Brochure (English)

Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers who:
- Are of Chinese heritage
- AND
- Experienced psychological trauma and have an adult offspring
- OR
- Have a parent who has experienced psychological trauma

Then please join our study!

To take part in this study, we require the participation of both you and your parent/offspring.

Contact for Inquiries
Fred Choo
778.883.6632
Fred.Choo@alumni.ubc.ca

Benefits of Involvement
- This study may have the benefit of preserving your story, heritage, and family story.
- It may help you gain a greater awareness of your own story and of your family story.
- You will receive a written copy of your story in the language that you prefer.
- You will be compensated $25 for each interview.

Research Involvement

We are looking to interview you about your story and your family story related to intergenerational trauma. Though it is preferred that both you and your parent/offspring take part in this study, it is not a requirement.

This will involve at least 2 two-hour video-taped interviews.

To take part in this study, the participation of both you and your offspring/parent is required.

What is the purpose of the study?

Psychological trauma is considered to be the experience of actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence and impacts family relationships. Intergenerational trauma is the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next.

There has been very little research examining psychological trauma and intergenerational trauma in Chinese-Canadians.

The study aims to interview parents and offspring to understand their stories related to intergenerational trauma. For the parental participants, it explores the stories related to the challenges of migration to Canada. While for the offspring participants, the study examines the experience growing up with a parent who has experienced psychological trauma.

The purpose is to help you tell your story in a manner that is respectful and honest to your own story and your family’s story.
C.2 Recruitment Brochure (Chinese)

招募志願人士

我們常愛念態人士，因他們在尋找以下志願人士：

- 華裔
- 華裔或新華裔家庭
- 華裔或新華裔

如您的父母、祖父母或親屬有華裔背景，我們會歡迎他們參與。

有關更多資訊，請聯繫

Fred Chou
604-822-4625
fredchou@alumni.ubc.ca

參與研究

我們將會邀請您和您的父母，及您的子女一同參與這個研究。

這將涉及與研究單位及您的父母，以及您的子女共同進行的三套研究，並與進行雙方交談。

為了參與這個研究，您和您的父母及子女皆需同意參與。

參與的好處：

- 研究的好處將會讓您收到一份詳細的研究報告。
- 研究的結果將會對您及您的家人的意見有幫助。
- 您將會在研究過程中有機會分享及了解，以協助您及您的父母子女了解研究。
- 您將會收到一份詳細的研究報告，並會有機會與研究單位及您的父母進行雙方交談。
- 研究單位會預備項研究費用及相關費用。

研究的目的何在？

心理治療師認為，華裔家庭經歷家庭暴力、失業、親人死亡及影響家庭關係。華裔家庭的父母及子女需了解華裔家庭的父母及子女的意見。

在加拿大的華裔家庭，華裔家庭經歷家庭暴力、失業、親人死亡及影響家庭關係。華裔家庭的父母及子女需了解華裔家庭的父母及子女的意見。

研究的目的為了解華裔家庭的父母及子女的意見，及華裔家庭的父母及子女的意見。

研究的目的為了解華裔家庭的父母及子女的意見，及華裔家庭的父母及子女的意見。
Stories of Our Ancestors
Intergenerational Trauma and Chinese-Canadian Families

Volunteers Needed for Study on Chinese-Canadian Families

We are looking to understand how intergenerational trauma impacts Chinese-Canadian families. If you are:

- Of Chinese heritage; **AND**
- Your parent has experienced psychological trauma **OR** you have experienced psychological trauma and have an adult offspring

Then **we need your help.** We are looking to interview you about your story and your family’s story related to intergenerational trauma. Taking part in this study will involve at least 2-two-hour video-taped interviews. **It is preferred that both you and your offspring/parent take part in this study, though it is not a requirement.** At the end of the study you will receive a written copy of your story and you will be given $25 for each interview.

For further information and to participate, please contact Fred Chou through email [redacted] and/or phone [redacted] leaving your name, phone number, and a message telling us that you are interested in participating.

Conducted by:

Dr. Maria Buchanan
Educational and Counselling Psych., & Special Ed.
University of British Columbia

Fred Chou, MA
Educational and Counselling Psych., & Special Ed.
University of British Columbia
C.4 Recruitment Poster (Chinese)

我們祖先的故事
世代創傷和華裔加拿大家庭
招募志願者參與研究華裔加拿大家庭

我們正在研究和理解世代創傷如何影響華裔加拿大家庭。

如果您是：
・中國（華）裔；
・您的父母曾經經歷心理創傷 或 您個人曾經經歷心理創傷並且育有已成年的子女

那麼，我們需要您的協助，以了解世代創傷如何影響華裔加拿大家庭。我們將會採訪您和您的父母，以及您的子女們有關世代創傷的故事。這將涉及到研究單位與您，您父母以及子女，你們集體對話等的三套視像採訪。為了參與這項研究，您和您的後代以及父母輩都必需參與。研究單位將預備薄酬以補償提供的時間和成本。

欲了解更多信息，並參與其中，請聯繫共同主持人 Fred Chou 周先生，可通過電子郵件 [EMAIL] 和/或致電 [PHONE] 並留下您的姓名，電話號碼，以及簡訊，以告訴我們您有興趣參與。

Conducted by:
研究計劃主持人
Dr. Maria Buchanan
Educational and Counselling Psych., & Special Ed.
University of British Columbia

共同主持人
Fred Chou, MA
Educational and Counselling Psych., & Special Ed.
University of British Columbia
C.5 Recruitment Script for SUCCESS Staff

Recruitment Script for Snowball Sampling

When approaching prospective participants please remember to inform them about the study in a manner that does not pressure them to take part in the study. It is important for prospective participants to make an informed choice and to have their agency respected. Participants should contact Fred Chou if they are interested in learning more about the research study.

Informing about the study

- The research study explores intergenerational trauma within Chinese-Canadian families by examining the impact of psychological trauma.
- Psychological trauma is considered to be exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence and impacts family relationships.
- The study aims to interview you to understand your story and your family story related to intergenerational trauma.
  - For parental participants, the study explores the stories related to the challenges and trauma you experienced when migrating (pre- and post-migration) to Canada. It will also explore your understanding of how your experience impacted your offspring.
  - For offspring participants, the study explores your experience of growing up in Canada with a parent who has experienced psychological trauma related to migration (pre- and post-migration). It will also explore your understanding of your parent’s experience with psychological trauma.
- (If the prospective participant is receiving services from S.U.C.C.E.S.S.) If you decide not to take part in this study or if you decide to take part in the study, it will have no impact on the services you are currently receiving at S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Risks / Cost

- The study is exploring your experience related to psychological trauma and it may be an emotionally sensitive topic.
- There is also a time commitment for the whole study – at least 2 hours interviews throughout the year. There will be a third interview, which is a joint interview, if your parent/offspring decides to also take part in the study.
- You will remain anonymous and will receive debriefing support throughout the study.

Benefits

- This study may have the benefit of keeping family stories and your heritage and can help researchers better understand the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma in Chinese-Canadian families.
- You will receive a written copy of your story in your preferred language (English and/or Chinese)
- It may help you gain a greater awareness of your own story and of your family story
- You will be part of a research process that will help each of you tell your story to one another.
- You will be compensated $25 for each interview

Additional information about the recruitment process

- If interested, please contact Fred Chou
- Contacting him does not mean that you will be part of the project as the research team determines whether or not you fit the criteria for the study.
- When you contact him, he will ask you to sign a form so that he can ask questions to determine if you fit the study.

If interested

- Provide a copy of the brochure and the contact information for Fred Chou (co-researcher)
  - Email: [redacted]
  - Tel: [redacted]
- Inform them that if they are interested to contact Fred Chou for further questions
Appendix D: Pre-interview consent form and screening

D.1 Pre-Interview Consent Form

Stories of our Ancestors: Intergenerational Trauma and Chinese-Canadian Families

Principal Investigator: Marla Buchanan, Ph.D.
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology
University of British Columbia
Email:

Co-Investigators: Fred Chou, M.A., R.C.C., C.C.C.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology
Email:
Phone:

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in this study, which is designed to explore intergenerational trauma in Chinese-Canadian families through story-telling. This is a consent form to conduct a pre-interview screen in order to gather information related to whether or not you fit the criteria for this study. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to refuse to participate in the pre-interview screen.

To be included in this study you must meet the following:

A. Personal identification of being from a Chinese heritage.
B. Be a parent who has experienced psychological trauma related to migration (pre- or post-migration).
   - Psychological trauma refers to the exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence through direct exposure, witnessing, learning of the traumatic event(s) occurring to a close family member or friend, and/or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s)

OR

C. Be a child of a parent who has experienced psychological trauma related to migration (pre- or post-migration).

During the pre-interview, you will be asked questions related to the criteria for taking part in this study. This includes questions related to immigration experiences, ethnicity, and experiences of
psychological trauma. Information gathered will be destroyed if you do not meet the criteria for this study.
Please note that providing your consent to the pre-interview does not mean that you will be invited to take part in the study. The research team will assess the appropriateness based on the criteria for this research project.

**Potential Risks**
As this study explores your personal subjective experiences related to psychological trauma, there is a possibility that you may experience emotional discomfort during or after the pre-interview. Please know that you have the right to refuse to respond to any questions during the pre-interview. If you experience continued emotional difficulties and are in need immediate psychological relief, please contact the Crisis Center (1-800-784-2433) and/or S.U.C.C.E.S.S.’s help line (604-270-8233 for Cantonese / 604-270-8222 for Mandarin).

**Contact for Information About the Study**
If you have any questions or would like further information about this study, please contact Fred Chou at [redacted] and/or through email at [redacted].
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**
Your signature below indicates that you have had your questions about the pre-interview screen answered to your satisfaction and have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in the pre-interview screen.

___________________________________________  ____________________
Name (Print)                                    Date

___________________________________________
Signature
致：參與者
感謝您對本研究項目的興趣，本研究之目的是探索中國(華)裔加拿大家庭經歷世代創傷的經驗。本研究通過參與者互相訴說的生活故事，捕捉中國(華)裔加拿大家庭經歷世代創傷的經驗，探討當中的創傷。

這是一份面試前的同意書，目的於收集有關您是否適合/不適合這項研究的準則。您的參與純屬自願性質，您可隨時在面試前終止參與是項活動。

本研究準則是：
1. 確認您是中國(華)裔。
2. 上一代曾經經歷過與移民有關（移民前或後）的心理創傷。
   • 心理創傷是指個人接觸到死亡或死亡的威脅、直接遭到人身傷害或性暴力、目擊或得知暴力事件的真相發生在自己的親人和／或朋友身上，或者／及重複經歷創傷事件的反感細節。
3. 被經歷創傷的父母養育成長的下一代。
4. 經歷創傷的父母及他們的下一代，彼此都願意參與這項研究。

前期採訪
在前期採訪中，您會被問及與研究的準則有關的問題。這些問題涉及移民經歷、種族主義、及心理創傷的經驗。若您未能符合研究準則，一切訪談的相關資料將會被銷毀。

請注意您早前同意參與前期採訪，並不表示您會被邀請參與這項研究，研究小組將會評估研究準則的適當性以決定是否邀請您參與。
潛在風險
這項研究會探索您個人在心理創傷的主觀經驗，您可能在採訪過程中或採訪後經歷情緒不安。請注意您有權利在前期採訪中拒絕回應任何問題。若您持續經歷情緒困擾或需要即時的心理輔導，請致電危機中心熱線（1-800-784-2433）及/或 S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s 中僑互助會熱線（粵語或廣東話：604-270-8233/ 漢語或普通話：694-370-8222)。

聯繫資料
若您對這個研究有任何問題或需要進一步的瞭解，請致電 与 Fred Chou 周先生聯絡，及/或電子郵箱: ...
作為研究參與者，在參與過程中您若有任何關注或抱怨，請致電 604-822-8598 與 UBC Office of Research Ethics 本大學的倫理審查委員會辦事處的 Research Participant Complain Line 投訴熱線聯絡，或電子郵件至 RSIL@ors.ubc.ca 或免費長途電話:1-877-822-8598。

同意
您以下的簽名表示您對前期採訪的問題解答感到滿意，並已得到這份同意書另一複本作為個人記錄。您的簽名表示您同意參與前期採訪的篩選。

___________________________________________
姓名（正楷） 日期

___________________________________________
簽名
D.3 Pre-Interview Discussion and Screening

Date of screening call:

Name/Contact information:

Phone:

Email:

Introduce myself and explain that I am returning their call regarding participating in the “Stories of Our Ancestors” study.

➢ Thank you for your interest in this study. Can I ask how you found out about this study? The purpose of this call is to explain what this study is about and to determine whether or not your experience fits with this research project. This phone call may take up to 30 minutes, would it be appropriate to chat right now or should we arrange for another time?
➢ For you to be included into this study, I need to ask you a series of questions about your experience. If you do not meet the criteria for this study, this information will be destroyed. Is that alright with you?

Semi-structured questions for the parent:

1. I will need some information about you:
   a. When did you immigrate to Canada?
   b. What ethnicity do you identify with?
   c. How long have you lived in Canada for?
   d. Have you experienced psychological trauma before or after your migration? (Explain that psychological trauma consists of the exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence through direct exposure, witnessing, learning of the traumatic event(s) occurring to a close family member or friend, and/or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s))
   e. Can you provide some brief information about the nature of your psychological trauma?
   f. Would you be willing to talk more about your experience during our interview?
2. What makes you interested in partaking in this study?
3. Are you aware of how your experiences may have affected your children?
4. Would your child be interested in taking part in this study as well? If so, would it be possible to discuss with them about this study?

Semi-structured questions for offspring:

1. I will need some information about you:
a. How long have you lived in Canada for?

b. Were you born and raised in Canada? If not where else have you lived?

c. What ethnicity do you identify with?

d. Are you familiar with your parent’s experience of immigration?
   i. If so, how in-depth do they speak about their experience?

e. Are you familiar with your parent’s experience of psychological trauma?

f. Have you been impacted by your parent’s psychological trauma, while growing up in Canada? If so can you speak briefly about your experience?

g. Would you be willing to talk more about your experience during our interview?

2. What makes you interested in partaking in this study?

3. Can you describe some of the traumatic experiences that your parents experienced during their migration (pre- and post-migration)?

4. Would your parent be interested in taking part in this study? If so, would it be possible to discuss with them about this study?

To conclude this intake interview I would like to explain to you what is involved in this study and your rights as a participant as well as what the compensation is for this study. There are also unique aspects to this study and I will explain to you the limits of confidentiality as well as how the format of this study may differ from other studies. (Explain how study is about constructing stories and done in a manner where there are multiple meetings to elicit the story and to create a story that reflects your experience.)

If you are chosen to be part of this study, I will contact you to arrange for a time to meet and to have our interview and will also be emailing you a protocol that will help us with preparing for the interview. If you are not chosen, I will be sending you an email to inform you that you have not been chosen to take part in the study. If you have any questions in before then, please feel free to contact me at [Redacted] and/or at [Redacted].
Appendix E: Interview Package

E.1 Interview Package - Parent

Dear Participant

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study. Please know that in telling your story, it will help us understand the topic of intergenerational trauma in Chinese-Canadian families, as it has been scarcely studied. It is meant to explore the research question: How does intergenerational trauma impact Chinese-Canadian families?

This package is meant to help orientate yourself to our discussion about your life story. Completion of this package is not mandatory as it is only meant to help you prepare for this study. The purpose is to explore your experience of psychological trauma, before and/or after immigration, and how that has impacted you and your family. To help orientate you, I would like you to engage in a writing activity known as Guided Autobiography. Guided Autobiography can be a helpful tool for you to help tell your story in the way that you want it to be told and in a way that is respectful of your experience.

Below are two parts of the Guided Autobiography, part 1 focuses on your general life story by looking at branching points, while part 2 focuses on your immigration experience. You are invited to write 1 to 2 pages for each of these parts. When you come for our first discussion you are also invited to bring a cultural artifact (such as a photo, item, souvenir, etc.) that represents your story and your experience of immigration.

Guided Autobiography

Part 1: Major Branching Points in Your Life

Branching points are events or experiences that significantly impact your life. They are turning points – events, experiences, or insights that have shaped the direction of your life. You can think of your life like a river, where there twists and turns and points where the river may split into separate streams. Branching points are these moments and events and experiences that may change the direction of your life or lead you on different directions.

Main question: From your perspective, what were the major branching points in your life? How have these events impacted you and the direction of your life? How did you make sense of it?

Below are some questions that may help you with your reflections and/or writing.

1. What was the earliest branching point or the most significant branching point in your life? How old were you? How made this event so significant?
2. What were other significant branching points in your life? What made these events important and how has that shaped you? How old were you and what happened?
3. Who was involved in these branching points and what role did they have in your life?
4. Who were people that impacted you the most during these moments?
5. What did you learn about yourself in these moments?
6. What was happening in your environment that had an influence on these events?
7. What emotions, thoughts, and sensations did you have during these significant branching points?
Part 2: Your Experience of Psychological Trauma Before and After Immigrating to Canada

The process of immigration is an incredible story that is often left untold. Immigration is a decision that has so many implications and can be filled with much uncertainty. Often individuals may not even have the chance to decide to immigrate because of the circumstances that they are faced with. The purpose of this section is to explore your experience of immigration and psychological trauma that you may have experienced before, during, and after immigrating to Canada. Traumatic experiences before immigration may have forced you into having to decide to immigrate, the immigration process itself may have been a difficult journey, and after immigration it could have been very difficult adjusting to a new country or you may have experienced racism that deeply impacted your transition.

Main question: What was your experience of psychological trauma before/during/after immigrating to Canada?

Below are some questions that may help you with your reflections and/or writing.

1. What was happening in your environment that contributed to these events?
2. How did the experiences of psychological trauma influence your decisions related to immigration?
3. What was it about these particular events that made it difficult and traumatic?
4. What was your experience like prior to leaving your home country? What was happening at that time? Did these events contribute to your decision of leaving the country? What were your thoughts and feelings related to these events?
5. What was the experience of journeying to Canada? What were you thinking and feeling at that time? Can you describe what it was like as you were preparing to be in a new country?
6. What was your experience of being in Canada? Did you experience events that made it particularly difficult?
7. How have these experiences shaped how you understand yourself?
8. How have these experiences impacted and influence how you connected with your family?
9. How have these experiences influenced how you raised your child or children?
10. Have you discussed about these experiences with your offspring? What factors contribute to your decision of telling or not telling your offspring?

Part 3: Cultural Artifact

A cultural artifact is an object or item. It can be a photo, toy, souvenir, or any sort of object that represents your story in relation to this topic.

You are invited to bring a cultural artifact to our upcoming discussion.

Thank you for taking part in this activity. Remember to bring a copy of your write-up and a cultural artifact to our upcoming discussion.

致：參與者

感謝您對本研究的興趣和參與。請注意，當你講述你的故事時，正是有助於我們作為研究一方，了解代際創傷所引發和涵生出來的問題，如何影響著中國裔加拿大家庭，更甚者是這課題鮮有被提及。所以我們更加要發掘和探討它：代際創傷如何影響中國裔加拿大家庭？

這個面談注意事項是為了幫助閣下朝向到我們對您的生活故事的討論。其目的是探索您的心理創傷的經驗，移民前和/或移民後，以及如何影響了你和你的家人。與此同時，我們會詢問您的孩子(們)關於他們在加拿大長大的的經驗;尤其是那些經歷了遷移前/遷移後創傷的父母。為了幫助您的定向，我希望您能開展一個稱為引導自傳的寫作活動。引導自傳可以是一個有用的工具，按著您的意思表達出來，在某種程度上亦是尊重你的經驗。

以下是指導自傳的兩個部分，第一部分側重於您的一般生活故事及其分岔點，而第二部分側重於您的移民經驗。請您在每個部分寫上1至2頁。當您來參與我們的第一次討論，請您帶同一些文化產品(如照片、紀念品、或任何物品等)，來幫助您表達您的故事和您的移民經驗。

引導自傳

第1部分：在您的生活中較大的分岔點
生活中重要的經歷或面對分岔點的事件，往往顯著地影響您的生活。它們是生命的轉捩點－也許是某些事件、經驗、或見解，這些都會塑造整個人的人生方向。您可以把您的生活想像為一條河，那裡有蜿蜒曲折，讓河流分岔成單獨的分流。分岔點就是這樣的時刻和事件、和體驗，它可能會改變您生活的方向，或帶領您走不同的方向。

主要問題：從您的角度來看，什麼是您生命中的重要分岔點？這些事件怎樣影響您和您生活的方向？您又如何理解它？

下面是一些問題，可以幫助您去反思和/或作答。

1. 您人生中，什麼是最早的分岔點或在您的生活中最顯著分岔點在哪？您那時候幾歲？為甚麼這事件如此顯著？

2. 還有其他顯著的分岔點麼？什麼事情讓這些事件顯得重要，它如何塑造您？當時您幾歲，發生了什麼事？

3. 誰參與了這些分岔點？它們在您的生活起了什麼作用？

4. 在這些分岔點出現時，誰給您的影響最深？

5. 在這些分岔點出現時，你是怎麼去認識自己呢？

6. 在您身處的環境中，對這些事件，有甚麼的影響？

7. 在這些顯著的分岔點中，您經歷過怎麼樣的情感，思想和感受？

第2部分：在您移民到加拿大之前或之後，您所經歷過的心理創傷

移民的過程是一個令人難以置信的故事，而這些故事往往沒有留下記錄。移民是一個決定，卻包含有許多的不確定。通常人可能甚至沒有機會去決定是否成為移民，因為他們所面臨的情況是超
出他們的控制範圍。本部分的目的是探討您的移民經驗和心理創傷的經歷，這些經驗也許是已經經歷過，經歷中和移民加拿大之後才經歷到。移民前的痛苦經歷可能會強迫您去決定移民，移民過程本身可能是一個艱難的旅程，以及移民後的經歷也可能已經很難適應新的國家，或者你可能經歷到極端的種族主義，正在深刻的影響您的過渡。

主要問題：您對心理創傷，在您移民前/移民中/移民加拿大後，究竟是怎樣的經歷？

下面是一些問題，可以幫助您去反思和/或作答。
1. 在您的環境，對這些事件促成了一些什麼？
2. 心理創傷的經驗，如何去影響您有关移民的決定？
3. 這些事件的影響，什麼是關於它，使得它變得艱難和創傷？
4. 還有誰參與了這些時刻？
5. 在離開您的原居地時，您的經歷是甚麼？在那個時候發生了什麼事？難道這些事件有助於你離開原居地的決定？對這些事件您有甚麼的想法和感受？
6. 來加拿大的旅程是怎樣的經驗？您在想什麼，在那個時候您的感覺是怎樣的？你正準備要在一個新的國家居住，你能描述是什麼樣子嗎？
7. 身處加拿大又是一個怎樣的經驗？你有沒有經歷過，特別困難的事件？
8. 有甚麼經歷去塑造您怎麼去理解自己呢？
9. 有甚麼經歷讓您被受影響和影響您如何與您的家人聯繫？

第 3 部分: 文化產品

文化產品是一件物件或物品。它可以是一張照片，一件玩具，紀念品，或任何類型的對象，表示你的故事涉及到這個話題。

我們誠邀您帶來屬於您的文化產品，以便我們進行下一次的討論。

感謝您對本次活動參加。記得帶上你寫了的引導自傳和文化產品，以便我們進行下一次的討論。
E.3 Interview Package - Offspring

Dear Participant

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study. Please know that in telling your story, it will help us understand the topic of intergenerational trauma in Chinese-Canadian families, as it has been scarcely studied. It is meant to explore the research question: How does intergenerational trauma impact Chinese-Canadian families?

This package is meant to help orientate yourself to our discussion about your life story. Completion of this package is not mandatory as it is only meant to help you prepare for this study. The purpose is to explore your experience growing up as a Chinese-Canadian and being raised by a parent who has experienced psychological trauma pre-/post-migration. To help orientate you, I would like you to engage in a writing activity known as Guided Autobiography. Guided Autobiography can be a helpful tool for you to help tell your story in the way that you want it to be told and in a way that is respectful of your experience.

Below are two parts of the Guided Autobiography, part 1 focuses on your general life story by looking at branching points, while part 2 focuses on your experience being raised by your parent. You are invited to write 1 to 2 pages for each of these parts. When you come for our first discussion you are also invited to bring a cultural artifact (such as a photo, item, souvenir, etc.) that represents your story growing up as a Chinese-Canadian.

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**Guided Autobiography**

**Part 1: Major Branching Points in Your Life**

Branching points are events or experiences that significantly impact your life. They are turning points – events, experiences, or insights that have shaped the direction of your life. You can think of your life like a river, where there twists and turns and points where the river may split into separate streams. Branching points are these moments and events and experiences that may change the direction of your life or lead you on different directions.

**Main question:** From your perspective, what were the major branching points in your life? How have these events impacted you and the direction of your life? How did you make sense of it?

Below are some questions that may help you with your reflections and/or writing.

8. What was the earliest branching point or the most significant branching point in your life? How old were you? How made this event so significant?
9. What were other significant branching points in your life? What made these events important and how has that shaped you? How old were you and what happened?
10. Who was involved in these branching points and what role did they have in your life?
11. Who were people that impacted you the most during these moments?
12. What did you learn about yourself in these moments?
13. What was happening in your environment that had an influence on these events?
14. What emotions, thoughts, and sensations did you have during these significant branching points?
Part 2: Your Experience Being Raised by Your Parent as a Chinese-Canadian

Parents have an important, often implicitly understood, role in Chinese-Canadians. Concepts such as “honoring or dishonoring your parents” and its implications are generally understood amongst Chinese-Canadians. This part invites you to explore your experience being raised by your parent and how that has impacted you growing up in Canada. It is an opportunity to write about how your parent’s trauma may have affected you growing up.

Main question: What was your experience of being raised by a parent(s) who was traumatized?

Below are some questions that may help you with your reflections and/or writing.

1. What was it like growing up as a Chinese-Canadian and dealing with two different cultures? How did your parent contribute to this experience?
2. What challenges did your parent(s) experience pre- and post-migration?
3. What are the stereotypical Chinese-Canadian experiences you have experienced? What did these events involve? How have you come to understand these events in relation to being raised by immigrant parent(s)?
4. What was it like to grow up as a child of Chinese immigrants? How does that impact your understanding of yourself and your heritage?
5. What was your experience of being raised by your parent? What values did they instill in you?
6. What stories have they shared about their immigration experience and how has that impacted you?
7. How did you know that your parent(s) were traumatized? How does that impact how you see them? How does that influence your own story?
8. What were key experiences that stand out for you when you think about your experience of your parent?

Part 3: Cultural Artifact

A cultural artifact is an object or item. It can be a photo, toy, souvenir, or any sort of object that represents your story in relation to this topic.

You are invited to bring a cultural artifact to our upcoming discussion.

Thank you for taking part in this activity. Remember to bring a copy of your write-up and a cultural artifact to our upcoming discussion.

Appendix F : Informed Consent Form

F.1 Informed Consent Form

Stories of our Ancestors: Intergenerational Trauma and Chinese-Canadian Families

Principal Investigator: Marla Buchanan, Ph.D.
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology
University of British Columbia
Email: [redacted]

Co-Investigators: Fred Chou, M.A., R.C.C., C.C.C.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology
Email: [redacted]

Dear Participant,
Thank you for your interest in this study. You are invited to be part of this study because you identify as being from a Chinese heritage and your family has experienced intergenerational trauma.

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Overview of the Study
The purpose of this study is to understand how intergenerational trauma has impacted Chinese-Canadian families. To understand this phenomenon, this will involve telling your life story and your family’s story. If you are a parent and have experienced psychological trauma related to pre- and post-migration, we want to understand how that experience has impacted you and your perspective on how that may have affected your children. If you are a child of parents who have experienced migration trauma, we want to understand your awareness of your parent’s trauma and how their experiences may have impacted you growing up in Canada.

Who is Conducting this Study?
This project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and by the Vancouver Foundation. It is done in partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and the University of British Columbia. The research team is composed of the principal investigator and co-investigator and is guided by consultations with the Chinese-Canadian community. This study is also being conducted for Fred Chou’s doctoral dissertation.
Study Procedures
Over the period of one year, to understand and document your story and your family’s story, the co-investigator, Fred Chou, will meet with you for a minimum of two 2-hour interviews. The study may require more than two interviews as it is important to be able to capture your story in the way that you want it to be told. A translator can be involved in these interviews if necessary. A third interview will be conducted if you and your parent/offspring both consent to taking part in the study.

These interviews will be audio and video-taped, translated (if necessary), and transcribed. The first interview will be conducted individually, where you will be asked about your life story related to intergenerational trauma. After the first interview, the taped material will be analyzed and a narrative summary will be created based on the themes of each of your stories. For the second interview, you will be invited to verify your respective stories. Your narrative summary will be presented to you in your preferred language and you will be invited to provide your feedback. Once your story has been verified, the third interview will be a joint conversation with both of you. You will each be invited to share your story with one another and reflect on your experience and its meaning in relation to your family story. This interview will be analyzed and a video will be created based on this discussion. Please note, that the third interview only applies to participants who are part of the same family.

Potential Risks and Benefits
As this study explores your personal subjective experiences related to psychological trauma, there is a possibility that you may experience emotional discomfort during or after the interviews. You will be provided with referral sources for professional support. As this may be an emotionally sensitive topic, please communicate with the researcher should it become emotionally demanding. Debriefing can be provided after each interview. Once the project is complete, you will each have the option to have an hour debriefing with the researcher and an hour counselling session through the counselling team at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. In between and after the interviews, if you experience continued emotional difficulties and are in need immediate psychological relief, please contact the Crisis Center (1-800-784-2433) and/or S.U.C.C.E.S.S.’s help line (604-270-8233 for Cantonese / 604-270-8222 for Mandarin).

There are potential benefits in taking part in this study and participation can be a positive experience. You may experience a greater awareness of your own personal and family story. You may also gain a sense of satisfaction knowing that your experience may help professionals better understand Chinese-Canadian psychological well-being.

Compensation/Remuneration
To compensate for taking part in this study each of you will be provided with a $25 gift credit card at the end of each interview, for a total of $75 each. At the end of the research project, you
will receive a written copy of your narrative in the language that you choose – English and/or Chinese.

Confidentiality
To make sure that your privacy is protected, any identifying information will be kept separate and your name, address, email, and phone number will not be linked with the report. Your names will not be associated with the information you report and all information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with other participants. To ensure your confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used for transcripts and in the communication of findings. Electronic data will be kept in password protected hard drives and will be encrypted. Only the principle investigator and co-investigator will have access to the information. Audiotapes, video-recordings, and transcripts will be kept in a locked filling cabinet and destroyed after five years. Further consent will be sought if these research materials are used for future research projects. Please note that, despite having a pseudonym, as the written analysis of your story will be available to the public there is the possibility that there may be enough identifying information that either of you and/or your family may be recognized by others within your community.

Contact for Information About the Study
If you have any questions or would like further information about this study, please contact Fred Chou at [Contact Information] and/or through email at [Contact Information]. 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
Your signature below indicates that you have had your questions about the study answered to your satisfaction and have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study, be videotaped for the purposes of the study, and that your responses may be put into anonymous form and kept for future use after the completion of this study.

___________________________________________  _______________________
Name (Print)                                      Date

_____________________________________________
Signature
F.2  Informed Consent (Chinese)

知情同意書
我們祖先的故事：世代創傷和中國裔加拿大家庭

Principal Investigator: Marla Buchanan, Ph.D.
研究計劃主持人 靈部教育與輔導心理學系
University of British Columbia
Email: marla.buchanan@ubc.ca

Co-Investigators: Fred Chou, M.A., R.C.C., C.C.C.
共同主持人 博士候補
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology
Email: fred.chou@alumni.ubc.ca

致: 參與者們
感謝您(們)對這項研究的興趣。邀請您(們)成為本次研究的一部分，因為您(們)擁有中國的傳統並且經歷過世代創傷。

您(們)的參與是自願的。您(們)有權拒絕參與這項研究計劃。如果您(們)決定參加，仍然可以選擇在任何時間從本研究退出，而不會有任何負面影響。

研究綜述
這項研究的目的是了解世代創傷如何對中國裔加拿大家庭造成影響。對參與者的父輩(們)，我們渴望了解心理創傷對您(們)的影響，包括移居到加拿大之前或之後。己身這一代的參與者，我們也渴望去了解您(們)在加拿大成長的生活體驗；包括您(們)父母的心理創傷如何影響您(們)的一生。要了解中國裔加拿大家庭的世代創傷，我們嘗試從中國裔加拿大家庭的故事進行描述，這當然涉及到不斷的重述參與者們生活中的故事和他們家人的故事。

是誰在進行這項研究？
該項目是由加拿大社會科學及人文研究委員會和由溫哥華基金會資助。它是 S.U.C.C.E.S.S.和不列顛哥倫比亞大學的合作成果。本研究小組是由研究計劃主持人和共同主持人組成，並透過諮詢中國裔加拿大社區共同進行。這項研究也與 Fred Chou 周先生的博士論文有關。

研究程序
通過一年多的時間，研究單位將進行了解和記錄參與者的故事和您的家人的故事，共同主持人 Fred Chou，周先生將與您(們)每個人進行兩個 2 小時的採訪，第一個是單獨與參與者，另一個是您與家人們在一起的聯合採訪。這項研究可能需要三個以上的採訪，因為如此才能夠完整捕捉到您(們)的故事，您(們)希望它如何被重述也至為重要。若果翻譯者能夠參與這些訪談，更為必要。
這些訪談將會以音頻和視頻來錄製、翻譯（如有必要）和轉錄。第一次面試將單獨進行，你會被問到有關世代創傷怎樣影響你的生活。第一次面試後，錄製材料會進行分析，並會根據每個故事的主題敘述總結。對於第二次面試，每個人將被單獨邀請去驗證各自的故事。你的敘述摘要將提交給你的首選語言，您(們)會被邀請提供您的反饋意見。一旦您(們)的故事被驗證過，第三次面試將與您(們)雙方進行交談。您(們)每個人都會被邀請，分享彼此的故事和經驗，相對的也會體現對於您的家庭故事的意義。根據整個對話，這次採訪將會被分析並以視頻製作。

潛在風險和益處
由於這項研究探討了有關心理創傷的個人主觀體驗，在每個訪談後，您(們)如果遇到或感到不適，我們將為您(們)提供專業的支援。由於這可能是一個情緒敏感的話題，如有任何情感上的要求，請及時與計劃主持人或共同主持人溝通。每次面試後則視需要提供進一步的細節討論。一旦該項目完成後，在每個面試之間和之後，您(們)每個人都可接受由中僑互助會 S.U.C.C.E.S.S.提供的輔導，並且有一小時的時間和研究者一起討論細節，如果遇到持續的情感困難，需要立即心理疏導，請與危機中心（1-800-784-2433）和/或中僑互助會 S.U.C.C.E.S.S.的幫助熱線（604-270-8233 粵語 / 604-270-8222 普通話）聯絡。參與這項研究是一個積極的經驗而且具備潛在的好處。您(們)可以藉著整個過程，更清晰的認識自己，包括了己身和家庭的故事。這也是一個以結構性的方式與對方分享您的故事的機會。您(們)也可能獲得一種滿足感，原來您(們)的經驗可以幫助一些專業人士們，去更進一步了解中國裔加拿大人的心理健康。

補償/報酬
為了彌補參加這項研究，您(們)每個人將在每次面試結束時提供$25的禮品卡，完成三次者則獲得$75的禮品卡，以聊表謝意。在該研究項目結束時，您(們)每個人都會收到一份您所提供的故事敘述本，該書面副本的語言可以選擇為 - 英語和/或中文。此外，如果雙方彼此授權，第三次的聯合討論中的視頻記錄（第三個面試）將在項目完成後提供給您。該錄像將被加密，這樣只有您才擁有權限去觀看。此外，停車費或公共交通費也可以報銷。

保密
為了確保您的隱私受到保護，任何識別信息將保持獨立，您的姓名，地址，電子郵箱和電話號碼將不會與本報告有任何的關聯，所有信息將被嚴格保密，也不會與其他與會者共享。以確保機密性，化名將用於轉錄和結論。電子數據將被加密和保存在密碼保護的硬盤。只有主要研究者和合作研究者才有權限接觸這些數據。錄音磁帶，錄像，及抄本將被保存在一個上鎖的櫃子內並在五年後銷毀。如果這些研究的材料能用於今後的研究項目，我們將尋求進一步的同意。請注意，儘管有化名，因為你的故事的書面分析將提供給市民，您和/或您的家人有可能會被你所屬的社區所識別。

聯繫以獲取有關研究
如果您有任何疑問或想了解更多關於研究的信息，請聯繫共同主持人 Fred Chou 周先生，電話和/或通過發送電子郵件至。
如果您對作為研究的參與者的權利和/或您的經驗有任何疑問或投訴，您可以向本大學的倫理審查委員會辦事處申訴，電話：604-822-8598，電子郵件：RSIL@ors.ubc.ca 或免費長途電話：1-877-822-8598。

同意

下方的簽名表明，您(們)已經了解本研究的本意和目的，有關研究人員的回答讓您滿意，並已收到本同意書的副本，作為您(們)自己的記錄。您的簽名表明您已同意參與這項研究，也了解錄像進行研究的目的，你的反應可能被放入匿名形式，這項研究完成後將被保存或作為將來研究使用。

如果適用請選取（可選）：
□ 我們同意接受聯合採訪我們的錄像，其中包括我們的故事

___________________________________________  _________________________
姓名 (正楷書寫) – 家長  日期

___________________________________________
簽名 Signature

___________________________________________  _________________________
姓名 (書寫) – 子女  日期

___________________________________________
簽名 Signature
Appendix G: Demographic Questionnaire

G.1 Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following demographic questions as accurately as you can. All the information that you provide will be kept confidential. The purpose of the questionnaire is to provide us with the context for your story.

i. Age: _____________ years

ii. Date of birth ______________________________

iii. Are you: ___ male / ___ female / ___ other

iv. Country of origin: ____________________________________________

v. Identified ethnicity: ____________________________________________

vi. When did you immigrate to Canada (if applicable): __________________

vii. If applicable, what countries have you lived in: __________________

viii. How many years have you lived in Canada? __________________

ix. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? __________

x. Career:
   a. Former profession (before immigration): __________________ or not applicable
   b. Former profession (after immigration): __________________ or not applicable
   c. Former profession: _____________________________________________
   d. Current profession: _____________________________________________

xi. Family
   a. Marital status: __________________
      i. If applicable, name of partner: __________________ / Age:____
   b. Siblings (if applicable):
      i. Number of sibling(s):__________________________________________
      ii. Age of sibling(s):____________________________________________
   c. Children or dependents (if applicable):
      i. Name: ___________ / Gender: _______ / Age:____
      ii. Name: ___________ / Gender: _______ / Age:____
      iii. Name: ___________ / Gender: _______ / Age:____
      iv. Name: ___________ / Gender: _______ / Age:____

xii. Current living arrangement: ______________________________________
G.2 Demographic Questionnaire (Chinese)

人口統計學的調查問卷

請以最精確的資料作答以下有關人口統計學的調查問題，所有提供資料將會保密。本問卷的目的旨在為我們提供故事的情節與內容。Please answer the following demographic questions as accurately as you can. All the information that you provide will be kept confidential. The purpose of the questionnaire is to provide us with the context for your story.

i. 年齡 Age: _____________ years

ii. 出生日期 Date of birth _年__月__日 ______________

iii. 性別Are you: ___male 男/ ___female 女/ ___other 其他

iv. 出生地 Country of origin: __________________________________________

v. 種族背景Identified ethnicity: __________________________________________

vi. 甚麼時候移居加拿大When did you immigrate to Canada (if applicable): ______

vii. 定居在加拿大前，曾居住或生活過的國家或地區 If applicable, what countries have you lived in:____________________________________

viii. 定居在加拿大有多年? How many years have you lived in Canada?

________________________________

ix. 教育程度? What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

________________

x. 職業Career:

a. 定居在加拿大前之職業Former profession (before immigration): ________________

or not applicable

b. 定居在加拿大後之職業Former profession (after immigration):___________________

or not applicable

c. 以前職業Former profession:_____________________________________________

d. 現今職業Current profession:_____________________________________________

xi. 家庭成員 Family

a. 婚姻狀況 Marital status: ______________

i. 配偶姓名 If applicable, name of partner: _____________________

ii. 配偶年齡 Age:_______

b. 兄弟姊妹 Siblings (if applicable):
i. 兄弟姊妹人數Number of sibling(s):____________________________

ii. 兄弟姊妹年齡Age of sibling(s):______________________________

c. 子女或家屬Children or dependents (if applicable):

   i. 姓名Name: ________ / iii. 性別Gender: _____ / 年齡Age:____

   ii. 姓名Name: ________ / iii. 性別Gender: _____ / 年齡Age:____

   iii. 姓名Name: ________ / iii. 性別Gender: _____ / 年齡Age:____

   iv. 姓名Name: ________ / iii. 性別Gender: _____ / 年齡Age:____

xii. 目前的生活安排 Current living arrangement: ______________________________
Appendix H : Interview Protocols

H.1 Interview Protocol - Parent

Participant #: Date:
Interview Start Time: Interview End Time:
Informed consent □ Informed consent copy to participant □

Orientating Statement
Thank you for taking part in this study. The purpose of this study is to understand how intergenerational trauma impacts Chinese-Canadian families. This concept has been used to study other populations, such as Holocaust survivor families and the impact of colonialism and residential schools on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. However, it has not been used to study Chinese-Canadian families, despite the challenging histories of Chinese immigrants. We want to understand this phenomenon by hearing your story as an individual who has experienced psychological trauma and how that has impacted your family. The writing activity and the cultural artifact that I had you bring to this meeting will help orientate us to your story. Throughout the interview you may refer to your write-up and artifact and I will be asking your questions and details about your experience. The purpose of this discussion is so that we can get a good understanding of your story of immigration and trauma. It is meant to answer this research question: How does intergenerational trauma impact Chinese-Canadian families?

Also, as a reminder, please know that you are under no obligation to discuss anything or answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering or discussing. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Life Events Checklist/Demographic Information
Before we begin our interview, I would like you to fill out an assessment and some demographic information (hand participant Life Events Checklist and Demographic Questionnaire). This checklist inquires about several potentially traumatic events and whether or not it has happened to you personally, you witnessed it happen to someone else, you learned about it happening to a close family member or friend, you were exposed to it as part of your job, you’re not sure if it fits, or it doesn’t apply to you. This information will help orientate our discussion and allows us to track the traumatic experiences that you may have been exposed to. The questionnaire also helps us have a contextual understanding of your story. May I get your verbal permission to carry-on?

General Question(s):
1. What are the significant moments or branching points in your life that have influenced you?
2. How have you experienced psychological trauma before and/or after your immigration to Canada and how has that impacted you and your family?
3. How has your experience of psychological trauma impacted your children and how you have raised them?

Follow-up question(s):
• What were some of the most significant branching points in your life? What made these events important and how has that shaped you? How old were you and what happened?
Family Chronology
[At this point after inquiring, invite participants to construct a family chronology based on the events shared. This can be done visually with a timeline]
If we were to map a family chronology that connects your story and your offspring’s story, what would it look like? Where would you map certain major events?

Debriefing
[Take this period to debrief with the participant and check-in if additional resources are required]
Thank you for taking part in this section of the research. We will write-up a narrative summary based on the themes that emerged from your story. Once that is complete, I will schedule another time with you review and verify the narrative summary in order to ensure that it reflects your perspective and your intentions. You will be sent a copy of your narrative summary a week prior to that meeting so that you have sufficient time to review it. During the next meeting you will have an opportunity to add/remove/modify anything from your story and you will be invited to reflect on your experience. Your input is vital as it is important that the written story reflects your personal truth. Once a narrative summary is created that reflects your perspective and intention, we will set-up the last meeting between you and your child. This last meeting will involve you sharing your narrative summary and cultural artifact with your child.
H.2  Interview Protocol - Offspring

Participant #:  Date:
Interview Start Time:  Interview End Time:
Informed consent ☐  Informed consent copy to participant ☐

Orientating Statement
Thank you for taking part in this study. The purpose of this study is to understand how intergenerational trauma impacts Chinese-Canadian families. This concept has been used to study other populations, such as Holocaust survivor families and the impact of colonialism and residential schools on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. However, it has not been used to study Chinese-Canadian families, despite the challenging histories of Chinese immigrants. We want to understand this phenomenon by hearing your story as an individual who has grown up with a parent who experienced psychological trauma pre-/post-migration. The writing activity and the cultural artifact that I had you bring to this meeting will help orientate us to your story. Throughout the interview you may refer to your write-up and artifact and I will be asking your questions and details about your experience. The purpose of this discussion is so that we can get a good understanding of your story of immigration and trauma. It is meant to answer this research question: How does intergenerational trauma impact Chinese-Canadian families?

Also, as a reminder, please know that you are under no obligation to discuss anything or answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering or discussing. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Life Events Checklist/Demographic Information
Before we begin our interview, I would like you to fill out an assessment and some demographic information (hand participant Life Events Checklist and Demographic Questionnaire). The checklist is for you to assess your parent’s experience of traumatic events. It inquires about several potentially traumatic events and whether or not it has happened to them personally. This information will help orientate our discussion and allows us to track the traumatic experiences that they may have been exposed to. The demographic questionnaire helps us have a contextual understanding of your story. May I get your verbal permission to carry-on?

General Question(s):
4. What are the significant moments or branching points in your life that have influenced you?
5. What were some of the traumatic experiences that your parent(s) experienced pre- and post-migration?
6. What was your experience of being raised by your parent(s) who experienced these traumatic events and how did it influence you growing up as a Chinese-Canadian?

Follow-up question(s):
- What were some of the most significant branching points in your life? What made these events important and how has that shaped you? How old were you and what happened?
- Who was involved in these branching points and what role did they have in your life?
- Who were people that impacted you the most during these moments?
- What did you learn about yourself in these moments?
• What was happening in your environment that had an influence on these events?
• What emotions, thoughts, and sensations did you have during these significant branching points?
• What was happening in your environment that contributed to these events?
• What was it like to grow up as a child of Chinese immigrants? How does that impact your understanding of yourself and your heritage?
• What did your parent(s)’ traumatic experience consist of? How did you become aware of their experiences? How did that impact you when you learned about these experiences?
• Are there ways in which you can see a link between your parent(s)’ traumatic experience and the way that they have parented you?
• What was your experience of being raised by your parent? What values did they instill in you?
• What stories have they shared about their immigration experience and how has that impacted you?
• How did you know that your parent was traumatized? How does that impact how you see them? How does that influence your own story?
• What were key experiences that stand out for you when you think about your experience of your parent?
• What is your understanding of your parent’s challenges related to migration?
• How does your cultural artifact reflect you and your story?

**Family Chronology**

[At this point after inquiring, invite participants to construct a family chronology based on the events shared. This can be done visually with a timeline]

If we were to map a family chronology that connects your story and your parent’s story, what would it look like? Where would you map certain major events?

**Debriefing**

[Take this period to debrief with the participant and check-in if additional resources are required]

Thank you for taking part in this section of the research. We will write up a narrative summary based on the themes that emerged from your story. Once that is complete, I will schedule another time with you to review and verify the narrative summary in order to ensure that it reflects your perspective and your intentions. You will be sent a copy of your narrative summary a week prior to that meeting so that you have sufficient time to review it. During the next meeting you will have an opportunity to add/remove/modify anything from your story and you will be invited to reflect on your experience. Your input is vital as it is important that the written story reflects your personal truth. Once a narrative summary is created that reflects your perspective and intention, we will set-up the last meeting between you and your parent. This last meeting will involve you sharing your narrative summary and cultural artifact with your parent.
Orientating Statement
Thank you for taking part in the next part of this study. As mentioned before, the purpose of this study is to understand how intergenerational trauma impacts Chinese-Canadian families. The purpose of this meeting is to understand your family story and to provide you with an opportunity to share your story to one another. After sharing I will ask you to reflect on your experience of hearing each others stories and how that impacts you and your perception of each another. I will then ask you questions related to how you understand your joint family story.

Sharing of Stories
I invite you to share your story based on the story that was constructed. The purpose is not to inquire about each other’s story, but to understand the joint story. As the other individual shares their story, I ask that you to refrain from making any comments or questions, instead focus and reflect on what stands out for you. A translated copy will be provided if necessary. Once the story is shared, I invite you to share their reflection as to what they heard and how that resonated with you. Afterwards the next person will share their story and, like last time, I will ask for reflections and comments to be refrained until after the sharing is complete.

Questions
- What was it like for you to hear each other’s stories? What was a significant moment that stood out from each other’s story? How does that impact you?
- How have you come to understand your story differently based on what the other person has shared?
- How does hearing these stories change how you understand the other person?
- What does this mean for your family? How do your stories contribute to your family story?
- How do you understand the Chinese-Canadian family story differently now?

Family Chronology
[At this point after inquiring, invite participants to construct a family chronology based on the events shared]
If we were to map a family chronology that connects both your stories, what would it involve?

Debrief
[Take this period to debrief with the participant and check-in if additional resources are required]
Thank you for taking part in this interview. From this point we will be creating a story based on this video-taped material and the themes that emerge from your discussion and reflections. Unlike your individual stories, the narrative summary will not involve a verification process. Instead, once the analysis is complete, a final analysis will be included with a video copy of the joint interview upon completion of the study.
Appendix I : Mental Health and Social Support Resources

I.1 Mental Health and Social Support Resources

Crisis Phone Line
1-800-784-2433

Chinese Help Lines
Cantonese: 604-270-8233
Mandarin: 604-270-8222

310 Mental Health Support Line (province wide)
24 hrs Crisis line: 604-310-6789
• for emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Counselling Services
Tel: 604-408-7266 / General Services: 604-684-1628
info@successbc.ca

DIVERSEcity Counselling and Resources
13455 76 Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3W 2W3
Tel: 604-597-0205
Email: info@dcrs.ca

Touchstone Family Association – Counselling Services
120 - 6411 Buswell Street, Richmond, BC, V6Y 2G5
Tel: 604-279-5599

Chimo Community Services
120 - 7000 Minoru Boulevard, Richmond, B.C., Canada V6Y 3Z5
Tel: 604-279-7077
chimo@chimoservices.com

Linkage Counselling Services
Burnaby CCM Centre
Crystal Mall, Level 2-4533 Kingsborough Street
Tel: 604-629-2266
burnaby@ccmcanada.org

Mood Disorders Association of BC (www.mdabc.net/)
1450–605 Robson Street (at Seymour), Vancouver, BC.
Tel: 604-873-0103
• MDABC has more than 40 support groups across the province

Family Services of Greater Vancouver
201- 638 East Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V5N 1W1
Tel: 604-731-4951
Delta Group - Family Support
2nd and 4th Wednesday 7-9pm
Delta Hospital Education Room, 5800 Mountain View Boulevard
Contact: Janet at 604.943.2274

S.A.F.E.R. – Suicide Attempt Follow Up Education and Research - They offer up to 3 appointments at their office for concerned others, to talk about what to do, how to help and where to go for more support
301-1669 E. Broadway, Vancouver, BC. Tel: 604-675-3985

Crisis Line Association of BC
1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE) if you are considering suicide or are concerned about someone who may be.

Crisis Intervention of BC for Youth
Online Chat: www.youthinbc.com  Also 24 hrs phone: 604-872-3311

Crisis Counselling and Support
South Fraser Region call: 604-951-8855 (24 hrs) Serving Surrey, White Rock, Langley, N.Delta

Canadian Mental Health Association – Information and publications covering various topics: Anxiety Disorders, Attention Deficit Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Eating Disorders, Mood Disorders, Psychosis, Schizophrenia, Self-Injury, Suicide, Violence
http://www.cmha.ca

Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health
http://camimh.ca/resources/

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre – provides various resources that are tailored for parents and caregivers, health professionals, school professionals, and youth and young adults.
http://keltymentalhealth.ca/

Here to help - To help individuals and families better manage mental health and substance use problems.
www.heretohelp.bc.ca
I.2 Mental Health and Social Support Resources (Chinese)

精神健康與社區支援資源

危機中心熱線
1-800-784-2433

中文求助熱線
廣東話（粵語）：604-270-8233
普通話（漢語）：604-270-8222

310 精神健康支援熱線（適用於全省）
24 小時危機熱線：604-310-6789
• 需要情緒支援，信息和特定的精神健康資源

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.中僑互助會輔導服務
電話：604-408-7266 綜合服務：604-684-1628
info@successbc.ca

DIVERSEcity 輔導和資源
13455 76 Avenue, 素里市，不列顛哥倫比亞，加拿大 V3W 2W3
電話：604-597-0205
電子郵件：info@dcrs.ca

Touchstone Family Association – Counselling Services 試金石家庭協會 - 輔導服務
120 - 6411 Buswell Street, 列治文市，不列顛哥倫比亞，加拿大 V6Y 2G5
電話：604-279-5599

Chimo Community Services 奇姆諾社區服務
120 - 7000 Minoru Boulevard, 列治文市，不列顛哥倫比亞，加拿大 V6Y 3Z5
電話：604-279-7077
chimo@chimoservices.com

Linkage Counselling Services 聯動輔導服務
本拿比 CCM 中信中心
麗晶廣場二樓. Crystal Mall, 2nd Floor 4533 Kingsborough St. Burnaby, B.C., Canada
電話：604-629-2266
burnaby@ccmcanada.org

Mood Disorders Association of BC 心境障礙協會（www.mdabc.net/）
1450-605 蘇博森街（夾 Seymour 街），溫哥華。
電話：604-873-0103
• MDABC 全省擁有 40 多個團體的支持
Family Services of Greater Vancouver 大溫哥華地區的家庭服務
201- 638 E. Broadway, Vancouver, BC. 溫哥華, V5N 1W1
電話：604-731-4951

Delta Group - Family Support 三角洲團體 - 家庭支持
每月第 2 和第 4 個週三晚上 7-9pm
三角洲醫院教育廳, 5800 Mountain View Boulevard 三角洲市山景大道 5800 號
聯繫方式：Janet at 604.943.2274 珍妮特女士聯絡

S.A.F.E.R. - 自殺未遂追蹤教育與研究 - 提供多達 3 個約見，幫助查詢者去哪裡尋求更多支持
301-1669 E. Broadway, Vancouver, BC. 溫哥華。電話：604-675-3985

Crisis Line Association of BC 不列顛哥倫比亞省危機熱線協會
1-800-784-2433 如果你正在考慮自殺或擔心別人具自殺傾向。

Crisis Intervention of BC for Youth 不列顛哥倫比亞省服務於青年的危機干預
在線客服：www.youthinbc.com 或 24 小時電話：604-872-3311

Crisis Counselling and Support 危機輔導和支援
南菲沙地區電話：604-951-8855 (24 小時)
服務素里市，白石鎮，蘭里，北三角洲市

Canadian Mental Health Association 加拿大精神健康協會 – 提供信息和出版物涵蓋各種主題：焦慮症，多動症，雙極性疾患，抑鬱症，進食障礙，情緒障礙，精神病，精神分裂症，自傷，自殺，暴力
http://www.cmha.ca

Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health 對精神疾病和精神健康的加拿大聯盟
http://camimh.ca/resources/

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre Kelty 精神健康資源中心 - 提供了量身訂製的資源給病患者的父母和其照料者，衛生專業人員，學校專業人員以及青年和青成年人各種資源。
http://keltymentalhealth.ca/

Here to help – 本會幫助個人和家庭更好地管理精神健康和藥物使用的問題。
www.heretohelp.bc.ca
Appendix J : Letter of Support from S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

July 15, 2016

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Support Letter for “Stories of Our Ancestors: Intergenerational Trauma Among Chinese-Canadian Families”

I am writing this letter to offer my support to the research project, Stories of Our Ancestors: Intergenerational Trauma Among Chinese-Canadian Families.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is a multi-service organization in British Columbia working for the well-being of Canadians and immigrants. The organization has been providing settlement, counselling, employment, business development, early childhood development, children and youth services, women services, senior services, health, and community services in Metro Vancouver for more than 40 years, contributing greatly to building social capital of Canadians and immigrants.

As an immigrant social serving agency, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has worked with various organizations and ministries to build bridges for immigrants and refugees. We work in partnership with various organizations to provide a more comprehensive service to immigrants and refugees.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is glad to partner with UBC Counselling Program to conduct the above-mentioned research project with support from Vancouver Foundation.

I am pleased to be able to provide this letter of support, and I believe the outcome of this research will benefit the Chinese-Canadian families.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to call me at [Redacted]

Yours sincerely,

Mary Kam
Program Director
Family and Community Services
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.