THE INTERACTION OF MIGRATION AND REPRODUCTION:
THE FERTILITY PROCESSES OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how Chinese immigrants perceive and practice having children in the course of immigration from China to Canada. While previous studies focus solely on post-immigration fertility outcomes, my research includes prior-to-immigration childbearing perceptions and experiences to provide a holistic framework of fertility processes. Using 42 in-depth interviews, I collect qualitative data on participants’ immigration journey and childbirth history as well as their own accounts of understanding, reasoning about, and reflecting on their lived experiences. Through comparing across-group differences between immigrants who had children in China and those who had children in Canada, as well as within-group differences between people who had more children and those who had fewer, I find that moving across borders at different stages of the reproductive process shapes the ways people perceive immigration to Canada as a temporary stay, permanent settlement, periodic circulation, or springboard to other places. At the same time, variations in navigating immigration systems and reception institutions account for divergences in the timing, spacing, number of childbirths, and citizenship of children. I argue that immigration screening in the first place and reception contexts in turn channel immigrants into different reproduction trajectoriests. I develop an Embodied Dynamics Model to elucidate the constellation of institutional, relational, and situational dynamics that shape the ways individuals cope with moving across borders and having children simultaneously as the individual life course unfolds over time and across space. I argue that immigrant fertility is best understood as a social reproduction process across borders, which involves ongoing triadic interplays of making sense of biographic situations, cooperating with relational circumstances, and navigating institutional contexts.
Lay Summary

This dissertation looks at how Chinese immigrants cope with having children in the course of immigration from China to Canada. Through comparing women who had children in China and those who had children in Canada, as well as women who had more children and those who had fewer, I explore how childbearing drives or holds off migration and how migration enables or constrains childbearing. I find that immigrants need to make sense of their personal biography, cooperate with family members, and navigate immigration systems and reproduction institutions simultaneously. I argue that how immigration policies in a society select and receive immigrant populations shapes individual immigrants’ mobility and fertility trajectories.
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of Jing Zhao. The interviews reported in this dissertation were covered by UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board, UBC Ethics Certificate number H13-02073.
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Dedication

To “me”, and “I”.
Chapter 1: Introduction

I immigrated to Canada too late. If I came here younger, I would have more children.

(Lin)

Thanks to immigration, Canada’s labour force continues to grow by a small amount every year. If it weren’t for immigrants, employers would have trouble finding enough qualified workers to fill available jobs. This is because Canadians are living longer and having fewer children. More of us are retiring, and there are fewer students in our schools. As a result, the pool of Canadian-born existing and potential workers is limited. Immigrants contribute to our economy, not only by filling gaps in our labour force and paying taxes, but also by spending money on goods, housing and transportation.

(the Government of Canada)

Where, when, and in what circumstances immigrants have children can affect the host society’s average age and generational distribution, its residential density, its healthcare services and social welfare costs, the size of the labor force in the future, and the consequent social stratification, which affects both scholarly understandings and policy considerations. Despite immigrants’ and their descendants’ significant role in shaping economic, cultural, social, and political lives of the country, both scholarship and policy has paid little attention to immigrant fertility. Using Chinese Canadian immigrant women’s fertility processes as a case study, this dissertation studies how the interaction between migration and reproduction shapes immigrant fertility. The embodied dynamic approach I developed here illuminates immigrant fertility as a
process during which individual immigrants navigate societal institutions, collaborate with significant others, and make sense of their own biographic situations to deal with immigration and childbearing simultaneously as their life course unfolds over time and across space.

Empirical puzzle

One day while I was watching my preschool son climbing the monkey bars at the playground, a Chinese woman watching another boy approached me. She started the conversation in Mandarin: “This is a nice place for children, isn’t it?” As we got to talking, I learned she had two children. Her little one was about my son’s age. Her older son had already gone to university. She asked me about my other child, asking if the one I was watching was my first or my second, and when I said he was my only, she asked, “Will you have one more?” I told her I wasn’t sure. She was, though: “You will. Everyone has two. I mean Chinese.”

Intrigued, I did some research and learned that in the last 30 years, Chinese women have had the lowest fertility rate of any group of foreign-born mothers in Canada. Their total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.8 in 1981 (Halli, et al 1996) fell to 1.28 in 2011 (McDonald & Belanger, 2016). Looking further, I found that Chinese immigrants to the United States conform far more to the woman’s impressions, with a TFR of 2.3 in 2002 (Camarota, 2005). So why did the woman I met at the playground think Chinese immigrants to Canada generally have two children? Why did Chinese immigrants to Canada have a rate lower than their counterparts in the U.S.? These puzzles motivated me to conduct this research studying how Chinese immigrants perceive and practice childbearing in the course of immigration.
Theoretical gap

Guided by five conventional theoretical hypotheses: assimilation, adaptation, disruption, minority status, and selection, previous studies have attributed the low fertility of Chinese immigrants to North America to resettlement barriers such as access to the labor market and inadequate English language ability (Espenshade & Ye, 1994; Hwang & Saenz, 1997; He, 2000; Tang, 2001), as well as financial insecurity and cultural discrimination associated with minority status (Tang & Trovato, 1999; Chui & Trovata, 1989; Halli, 1987; Johnson & Nishida, 1980; Tang, 2004).

Both the disruption hypothesis and the adaptation hypothesis suggest that immigrants may delay the timing of having of children and have fewer children in order to deal with settlement tasks such as updating education, looking for secure employment, and acquiring housing. Studies on Chinese immigrants’ labour market experiences indicated that language barriers, their lack of recognized education credentials and local experiences account for their unemployment and underemployment. For example, using data from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Woldemicael and Beaujot (2012) found that Chinese immigrants choose socioeconomic integration into Canadian society over childbearing. Adsera and Ferrer (2013) attribute low fertility to disruption, finding that comparatively Chinese immigrants tend to prioritize upgrading skills than other immigrant groups in the first five years after arrival. The United States evidences a similar reproductive pattern. For example, using data from the 5% Public Use Microdata Samples of the 1980 U.S. Census, Espenshade and Ye (1994) found that Chinese
Americans who were more successful in overcoming settlement barriers had lower fertility than those who made little effort to do so. He (2000) found in a mixed-methods study of Chinese immigrants to the United States that they delayed childbearing to complete higher education and establish their careers in America.

The minority hypothesis suggests that immigrants may limit their number of children to overcome disadvantages such as economic insecurities and cultural prejudices. Using data from the Public Use Sample Tape (PUST) of the 1971 Canada Census, Halli (1987) found that the depressing influence of minority status on fertility is stronger for Chinese immigrants than for Japanese immigrants of the same socioeconomic status. He concluded that perceived inferiority status, rather than ascribed minority status, accounts for Chinese immigrants’ low fertility. Subsequent studies show that minority status affects people in different socioeconomic conditions differently. Using data from the 1991 PUST, Tang and Trovato (1998) found that the fertility-lowering impact of feelings of economic inferiority associated with minority status is more severe for well-educated Chinese Canadian women than for their lower class counterparts.

Finally, the assimilation hypothesis attributes Chinese immigrant’s low fertility to socialization of China’s one-child policy and the small family norm (Adsera & Ferrer, 2016; Woldemicael & Beajot, 2012). Tang (2004), however, suggested that Chinese immigrants retain a traditional pronatalist culture after immigration. Using PUST data from the 1991 Canada Census, his study found that Chinese immigrants speed up reproduction once they overcome economic insecurity that immigration imposes on them. Similarly, Hwang and Saenz’s (1997) study of immigrants to the United States found that, although Chinese women from the mainland had fewer children
overall than their counterparts from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam, they had more children, more quickly, after immigration, which they attributed to pent-up desire for children prior to immigration due to China’s one-child policy. Ren (2009) belies the assimilation hypothesis’s narrative of homogeneity among Chinese immigrants specifically. Her study found that Cantonese speakers tended to have higher fertility than Mandarin-speakers after immigration to the United States due to different subcultural norms carried over from source regions.

While literature disagrees on which factors play a determining role, it assumes that at the heart of the immigrant fertility issue is individual decisions made under certain life situations in terms of socioeconomic conditions, cultural preferences, and subjective feelings. Studies cited above have examined the association between the fertility outcome and economic, social, and cultural variables denoted by education, income, language, intermarriage status, residency, etc. However, relying heavily on quantitative methods and focusing on individual characteristics without examining context obscures the mechanisms that cause immigrants’ childbearing perceptions and practices to evolve through the course of relocating from the home country to the host country.

Indeed, childbearing as a life transition process is not a discrete, single event people simply act on at a point in time. Instead, past life experiences and future life orientations have an impact on childbearing. Understanding immigrant fertility requires situating it in a whole life course, as the timing and sequencing of other life transitions such as moving across borders complicates the reproduction process. Treating immigration and childbearing as separate life events distorts these intertwining transition processes. Without looking at what reproductive environments and fertility experiences were like before immigration in the home country, and how immigrants deal
with childbearing and immigration jointly, our understanding of immigrants’ fertility perception and practices after immigration to the host country is partial at best. Thus we need a better framework that is more holistic and thematically integrated to deepen our understanding of immigrant fertility as a process.

Research questions

My dissertation aims to address three research questions: How do immigrants perceive and practice childbearing in the course of moving from China to Canada? How do immigrants’ lived experiences in China affect their understanding of immigration and childbearing? How do immigrants’ experiences of moving across borders affect their reproductive trajectories in Canada?

Contribution

Employing qualitative methods, my dissertation uses the case of the fertility process of Chinese Canadian women to shed light on key mechanisms that generate changing dynamics and thereby shape how individual immigrants deal with immigration and childbearing jointly as their life course unfolds over time and across space, including biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts. This study contributes to current debates about immigrant fertility in three ways:
First, unlike conventional understandings of immigrant fertility as a circumstantial decision made in specific life situations, I conceptualize immigrant fertility as a dynamic process that involves ongoing interplays between individual motivations and experiences and structural enablement and constraints. Bringing concepts of embodiment, temporality, and dynamism into my analyses, I develop a model I call the embodied dynamics model to articulate biographical, relational, and institutional dynamics that drive the interaction between migration and reproduction. I show interconnections such that reproductive dynamics may drive or restrain migration, and that migration dynamics may enable or restrain reproduction. Moving across borders at different reproductive stages leads to heterogeneous migration patterns: temporary stay, permanent settlement, periodic circulation, and springboard to other places. At the same time, variations in how immigrants navigate the immigration regimes account for divergences in timing, spacing, and the number of childbirths. My approach emphasizes the experiential, relational, and dynamic dimensions of immigrant fertility.

Second, while previous studies are mostly focused on the post-immigration period, I situate immigrant fertility in a whole reproductive life within participants’ biographic time spans. My research includes prior-to-immigration fertility perceptions and experiences to provide a holistic framework of how fertility processes evolve over time and across space. Through comparing how immigrants cope with childrearing similarly or differently in the home and host countries, my analyses reveal that childbearing as a life transition process is shaped within biographic situations and relational circumstances embedded in reproductive contexts. Positioned differently before and after immigration, individuals rely on a different set of material resources and cultural schemas to understand life situations and develop courses of action on dual processes of
migration and reproduction as biography unfolds over time and across space. I argue that immigrant fertility as a process is embodied in how immigrants fit childbearing and immigration into their life course, during which they constantly deal with short-term everyday life tasks and long-term future orientations.

Third, going beyond participants’ individual characteristics, I explore how the immigration and reproduction regimes channel individuals into different mobility and fertility trajectories. My across-group comparisons between immigrants who had children in China and those who had children in Canada, as well as within-group comparisons between people who had more children and those who had fewer reveal that the institutional regimes of immigration and reproduction shape immigrant fertility. I find that the key factor driving fertility divergences is the differences in the timings and the sequences of immigration and childbearing. Participants who first had a child in China and then immigrated to Canada later were most likely to end up having fewer children than they originally wanted due to intersecting difficulties arriving at later age, upgrading skills to secure employment in an unfavourable market, and lacking of support from the extended family. By contrast, those who came to Canada first and then had children were more likely to indicate they had met their fertility intentions, since they had more time and easier ways to cope with simultaneous multiple life tasks. However, the evolution of fertility desires occurring across all groups illustrates that the embodied experiences of moving across borders and the sequent changes in institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations all lead to rethinking and rearranging childbearing. I show that varying fertility patterns of these four groups are due less to differences in how individual immigrants navigate immigration systems and reproductive institutions than in the institutional regimes that select and
receive immigrants of different admission categories. Put differently, while prospective immigrants work to position themselves as eligible applicants, plan their children, and reconcile timetabling of moving and childbearing in various ways, the host country’s selection and reception of immigrant populations shape their fertility patterns. This contextualization of immigrant fertility within the structural forces of immigration screening policies and reception contexts addresses the inadequacies of other alternative theories that focus on socioeconomic conditions and ideational preferences.

Dissertation preview

In the chapters ahead, I make my points about how migration and reproduction processes condition and intervene in each other to shape immigrant fertility as an individual life course unfolds over time and across space. In chapter 2, I propose the embodied dynamics model, which posits the embodied dynamics generated from institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations to shape the dual life transition processes of migration and reproduction thereby shape immigrant fertility. Chapter 3 describes the research methods. I collected data using qualitative methods including three components: in-depth interviews, an immigration calendar, and a childbirth calendar. I analyze participants’ own descriptions and narratives to see how immigration and childbearing experiences take different forms and meaning under different situations within different contexts. Chapter 4 investigates the circulating migratory course: unsettling, moving, settling, and/or moving again. I explore the exit contexts in which people leave China, how they navigate the immigration regimes, and the reception contexts in which they encounter Canada. I show that while immigrants act reactively
and reflectively to deal with uncertainties of relocation, their lived immigration experiences also transform them. Chapter 5 examines how immigrant women think about and practice childbearing and childrearing differently in the different social systems of their home country and sending country. I show how people respond similarly or differently to reproductive environments in China and Canada from three aspects: institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations. Chapter 6 examines how the migration process and reproduction process intervene with each other to shape immigrant fertility. My comparative analyses show that different reproduction needs lead to heterogeneous immigration and settlement trajectories, and at the same time, varying migration paths account for fertility divergences among immigrants. I argue that the uncertainties associated with path-dependent life transitions complicate immigration and childbearing. I also attempt to shed light on the influence of immigration regimes and reproduction regimes on individual mobility and fertility trajectories. Chapter 7 summarizes my arguments, highlighting the embodied dynamics approach to understanding immigrant fertility as a process that involves the ongoing interplays between making sense of biographic situation, collaborating with relational others, and navigating societal institutions to shape individuals’ dealing with migration and reproduction simultaneously over the life course.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

In this chapter, I develop an embodied dynamics model to articulate how the interaction between migration and reproduction shapes immigrant fertility. I begin with a critical review of conventional hypotheses on immigrant fertility, pointing out the degradation of embodiment, temporality, and dynamism in existing studies. Then I engage with the literature on migration and reproduction to identify the constellation of embodied dynamics generated from institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations. The embodied dynamics model provides a foundation to thematically explore how individuals simultaneously deal with inextricable life transition events of moving across borders and having children. I argue that immigrant fertility is not a choice of static quantity decided at a situational moment, but a dynamic process that embodies and interacts as individual biography unfolds over time and across space.

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Immigrant Fertility

Current debates on immigrant fertility have yielded inconsistent theoretical propositions and empirical results. One stream of literature uses the assimilation hypothesis. This approach is based on the assumption that experiences of fertility norms and values in the home society shape an immigrants’ attitudes towards childbearing, but that as residence and exposure to reproductive norms in the host society continue, immigrant fertility will converge to the fertility level of the host society (Coleman & Dubuc 2010; Ford, 1990; Hervitz, 1985; Glusker, 2003; Kulu & Hannemann, 2016; Milewski, 2010; Parrado & Morgan, 2008; Stephen & Bean, 1992). In
contrast, the adaptation hypothesis emphasizes that immigrants’ current conditions of education and employment in the host society rather than fertility norms carried from the home society shape their fertility behaviors (Bean et al, 2000; Dubuc, 2012; Ford, 1990; Kahn, 1988; Kulu, 2005; Kulu & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2014; Goldstein & Goldstein, 1981). The minority hypothesis argues that the insecurities and marginalities associated with the minority status in a new society may motivate immigrants to sacrifice time and energy in childbearing in order to improve socioeconomic status, eliminate cultural prejudice, and achieve labor market equality with the majority (Johnson, 1979; Halli, 1987; Hervitz, 1985; Goldscheider & Uhlenberg, 1969). The disruption hypothesis holds that factors regarding the moving process itself, such as spouse separation, economic insecurity, and emotional stressors, lead to the delay of childbearing and lower fertility (Andersson, 2004; Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2002; Calson, 1985; Hervitz, 1985; Goldstein & Goldstein, 1983). The selection hypothesis suggests that immigrants are a special group of people distinct from the majority population in the sending country, whose fertility preferences and behaviors are similar to those of natives in the receiving country prior to immigration (Blau, 1992; Goldstein & Goldstein, 1981; Kahh, 1988; White et al, 1995).

Although not mutually exclusive, the five hypotheses present distinct views of the cultural, economic, and social factors that shape fertility convergences between immigrants and natives. While the assimilation hypothesis emphasizes the effect of acculturation, the adaptation hypothesis emphasizes access to education and employment and the consequent socioeconomic conditions. The disruption hypothesis and the minority hypothesis both highlight the impacts of economic insecurity and social discrimination. However, viewing immigrant fertility as a quantitative decision made based on ideational preferences and socioeconomic conditions, these
theories could not satisfactorily address the complexity of immigrant reproduction. Existing literature fails to take into account three factors my dissertation seeks to address: the embodiment, the temporality, and the dynamic interaction between migration and reproduction as intersecting life transition processes.

*Placing people back into their bodies*

First, conventional approaches ignore the importance of the body and marginalize the embodied experiences of migration and reproduction.

The life experiences of moving across borders and having children involve the movement and functioning of bodies. How individuals perceive and practice moving and childbearing are shaped by the body’s biological life course and social life process that are conditioned by the time-space contexts. Theoretical approaches emphasizing socioeconomic status and ideational preferences obscure this embodiment. While the assimilation and selection hypotheses view immigrant fertility as decisions based on cultural norms, the adaptation, disruption, and minority hypotheses view immigrant fertility as rational choice driven by economic calculations. These perspectives fail to consider how biological bodies condition individuals’ capacities of movement and reproduction. People carry biography through their physical bodies. Their embodied perceptions and practices transform along with their bodies over time. That is, bodies bring life experiences along the biographic timeline. Thus examinations of the migration and reproduction should not leave bodies and biographic dynamics behind.
In the demographic scholarship, emphasizing the human physicality, the proximate determinants model has identified sociobiological factors that directly affect fertility: age, sexual activity, postpartum infecundability, abortion, contraception, pathological sterility, and timing of birth (Davis and Blake, 1956; Bongaarts, 1978; Bongaarts and Potter, 1983; Morgan & Taylor, 2006). According to this framework, economic, social, and cultural influences on fertility must operate through the immediate bodily factors. Unfortunately, the literature on immigrant fertility marginalizes embodied experiences.

Immigration involves the physical movement of bodies from one place to another. Prospective immigrants need to motivate themselves to relocate, and this involves, as Cresswell (2006) argues, “habitual embodied movement”. As well, prospective immigrants need to articulate themselves according to bodily qualifying criteria defined by the immigration regimes of host countries. Immigration societies prefer young healthy bodies to fulfill their labor force needs and support economic development. To attract and retain human capital that they didn’t invest in, receiving countries formulate screening policies based on embodied criteria such as age, health status, education levels, language abilities, skills, etc. Indeed, immigration regimes construct admission and detention categories based on the differentiation of the physical peculiarities of bodies. Biao Xiang (2007) characterizes immigration as a form of “global body shopping” through which developed countries recruit laborers to serve capitalist economies. Migration studies have documented the “brain drain” of the best and brightest highly skilled migrants (Cerna, 2011), as well as importing low-skilled male laborers (Bauder, 2006; Piore, 1979; Stark, 1991) and female domestic workers (Anderson, 2000; Cox, 2006; Lutz, 2008).
In addition to bodily getting in, immigrants need to work on bodily fitting in. Once approved for immigration, individuals firstly need to land in the host country physically. Then they need to physically live in the host country for a certain length of time in order to maintain permanent resident status or naturalize as citizens. Also, life activities in a new environment, such as eating, speaking, dwelling, clothing, transporting, working, and socializing are experienced in and through the physical bodies. As Urry (2000) argues, the interconnections of the multiple bodily senses in terms of seeing, smelling, listening, and touching lead to humans’ diverse understanding of space and time. As time goes on, immigrants’ bodies and minds transform in accordance with changing life situations. The health scholarship describes the “immigrant health paradox”: the health status of immigrants is better than the average population of the host society at the point of migration owning to the screening effect, but immigrants’ health declines with longer residency due to economic stress, cultural shock, and the adoption of the mainstream diet (Rumbaut, 1997).

However, while prospective immigrants accumulate human capital in terms of education, language ability, and working skills to make themselves eligible for immigration and adapted to new environments, their physical bodies age and fertility wanes. As the surrounding contexts shift from the home to the host country, immigrants experience new reproduction regimes in terms of health care systems, welfare programs, and family policies. Also, they may reconstruct gender and generational relationships based on new life circumstances for each family member. As a result, immigrants think and act with respect to having children differently. Indeed, individuals deal with migration and reproduction in the context of life synchronization. Therefore the theorizations of immigrant fertility need to consolidate views of embodiment to
explore how embodied experiences of immigration and childbearing affect fertility perceptions and practices.

The broader sociological analyses of the body provide theoretical foundations that view the body as a medium between individuals and the social environments. Chris Shilling (2005) criticizes sociological theories that focus on the mind and treat individuals as rational actors, devaluing the body’s needs and capacities. As he put it, “The body is not only a source of and location for society, but is a vital means through which individuals are positioned within and oriented towards society. The sensory and sensual engagement of embodied subjects with the structural properties of social life can either attach them in particular ways to their environment, or distance them from it” (Shilling, 2005, p. 11).

According to Shilling, sociological theories address human embodiment explicitly. For example, Goffman holds that individuals monitor their “shared vocabularies of body idiom” in the social interaction order, in the sense that the bodily performances such as controlling facial expression and body movement are the “presentation of self” during everyday encounters (Goffman, 1963:35). Bourdieu (1978) uses the concept “physical capital” to articulate the link between people’s physical capacities and their social statuses. His theory of social reproduction suggests that physical capital may convert into other forms of economic, cultural, or social capital. The exchange values of physical capital may change over time and across “social fields”. Going beyond the individual characteristics, Foucault (1978, 1997) recognizes that human physicality becomes an object of social control. He develops the concepts “bio-power”, “bio-politics”, and “Governmentality” to describe the societal discipline of the body that brings human life,
including birth, death, reproduction, and illness under the charge of state. Especially, feminist scholars pay much attention to the linkage between women’s self identities, social roles, and their physical bodies. Ann Oakley (1972) challenges the ideas of defining women’s identities and roles by their biologically sexed bodies. Judith Butler (1993) goes further to argue that physical bodies have already been culturally coded and distinguished by societies before assigning meanings and identities to gender and sex. In fact, the sociological literature on body and embodiment which outgrows of gender studies has revealed that the new reproductive technologies and health care reforms dominated by a patriarchal social system lead to the commercialization of biological bodies and reproductive work (Almeling, 2011; Oakley, 1980; O’Brien, 1981).

Building on these ideas, I argue that immigrant fertility should be conceptualized as an embodied process in and through which people deal with immigration and childbearing simultaneously as an individual biography unfolds over time and across space. On the one hand, the migration and reproduction of populations are regulated by institutional regimes. On the other hand, individual responses with regard to moving across borders and having children vary considerably depending on their lived experiences. The embodied experiences of intersecting migration and reproduction processes shape immigrant fertility. Unfortunately, the idea of embodiment tends to fade in literature on immigrant fertility. Theoretical frameworks such as assimilation, adaptation, disruption, and minority status hypotheses neglect bodily experiences while focusing on normative and socioeconomic influences. We need to put people back into their bodies and investigate the embodied experiences of moving across borders and having children. In other words, we should examine how physical bodies matter for immigrants’ dealing with the twin
demands of migration and reproduction. This question also implies understanding the temporal constraints immigrants experience.

Positioning people into time spans

Second, conventional approaches pay insufficient attention to the importance of the temporal perspectives to understand immigrant fertility.

Fundamentally, the human body is ineluctably bound up with time. Physical bodies bring people’s life experiences along the biographic timeline. In this sense, the temporality of the life course conditions the experiences of migration and reproduction. In other words, sequential encounters over the life course shape migration and reproduction processes. Therefore immigrants need to work out timelines of moving across borders and having children. How individuals fit immigration and childbearing into their unique biographical life involves working out short-term daily activities as well as long-term life plans. Unfortunately, previous studies have not paid enough attention to the effects of timing and sequence of migration and reproduction on immigrant fertility. Data gathered does not encompass how people simultaneously organize the two transition events of moving across borders and having children. In fact, both migration and reproduction are time-limited and path-dependent processes within the contexts of varying time spans. On the one hand, prospective immigrants organize the timeline of the immigration process in several stages: anticipating, planning, applying, moving, arriving, and settling in the host country. On the other hand, the bureaucratic timetable of immigration systems structures this individual process: receiving an application, evaluating it,
soliciting supporting documents, security and medical checks, issuing a visa, landing, approving permanent resident status, and granting citizenship. Depending on when one would like to immigrate, individuals strategize life plans accordingly. In the same sense, individuals organize the reproduction process timetabled by the medical systems as first, second, third trimesters. The bureaucratic timetable of maternity health systems that provide prenatal care, birth service, and parturition care structure the individual timeline of the reproductive cycle: intercourse, conception, gestation, parturition, and lactation. Immigrants need to think about when they would like to have children and work out how they would fit childbearing into ordered immigration procedures. Differences in the timing, sequencing, and duration of each step of migration and reproduction lead to varying embodied experiences. Therefore, we need to examine the temporal dynamics that constantly shape migration, reproduction, and thereby fertility processes.

Life course theory provides a model of examining temporal dynamics in an individual’s life stages. It suggests that whether a particular life event occurs, its timing and duration have important effects on subsequent life transitions (Elder, 1985; Giele and Elder, 1998). Accordingly, the life cycle is timetabled, starting from birth, going through transitions such as entry into school, graduation, departure from natal household, marriage, childbearing, divorce, work, change of residence, retirement, and death. This theoretical framework provides a temporal perspective to understand migration, reproduction, and thereby immigrant fertility in a sequential way. Indeed, moving across borders and having children both happen within the temporal structure of biographical life course. Therefore the order, duration, and synchronization of migration and reproduction make a difference in mobility and fertility trajectories.
The broader sociological literature on time provides foundations for understanding human actions as timed, sequenced, and paced. Indeed, while people understand temporality through cosmic time based on the clock and calendar, they also construct time through subjective reflexivity on timespans for ordering life activities and social experiences (Abbott, 2001; Adam, 1994; Bergmann, 1992). Heidegger (1962) holds that people fundamentally find their meaning of being through experiencing the temporality of life process from birth to death. Alfred Schutz (1932/1967) makes a point about the “intersubjective understanding” by and through which individuals synchronize past lived experiences with contemporaries to project future actions. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) extend Schutz’s ideas by emphasizing that over time this intersubjective knowledge becomes routinized and institutionalized. Later, Anthony Giddens (1984) highlights the reversible arrangement of time and coins the term “seriality” to articulate the serial encounters that are routinized and patterned in everyday life (p.115). Different from Giddens’ focusing on serial time for the ordering of daily activities, Bourdieu (1998) suggests that time is experienced as a horizon for life orientation through which individuals synchronize their actions. More recently, Judith Treas (2009) argues that the chronological age is institutionalized as a means for classifying and stratifying individuals based on standard life course. In particular, Barbara Adam (1994) suggests that women’s understanding of the social world is shaped by the sequences of their reproductive circles. Given that the span of human life is subjected to temporality and encounters are sequenced, individuals have to organize life activities sequentially based on both personal biography and social timetable. Drawing on these ideas, I argue that theorizations of immigrant fertility need to consider the concept of temporality and position people into time spans.
In fact, considerations of the time and order of the two transition processes moving across borders and having children, involves planning life trajectories in the long term and scheduling daily routines in the short term. Differences in timing and sequencing of immigration and childbearing lead to divergent life paths. Unfortunately, most studies of immigrant fertility only examine childbearing post immigration rather than a complete childbirth history (Parrado, 2011; Parrado and Morgan 2008; Toulemon 2004). The assimilation and adaptation hypotheses predict the fertility convergence between immigrants and natives over an individual life course or across generations. The disruption and minority hypotheses recognize that immigrant fertility varies by the timing of relocation. These approaches all focus on post-migration fertility patterns. Women’s pre-migration fertility history is not accounted for. Although the selection hypothesis assumes fertility convergence between movers and people in the host country precedes migration, it doesn’t explain how pre-migration childbearing experiences affect post-immigration fertility. More importantly, these theoretical approaches miss the sequence elements of time. It remains unclear how the order and duration of moving and childbearing affect immigrant fertility. My study therefore investigates how individuals timetable immigration and childbearing and how they deal with these two processes jointly.

**Conceptualizing immigrant fertility as dynamic process**

Third, conventional approaches lack a comprehensive examination on how migration and reproduction interact with each other within the context of individual biography.
The life trajectory of individuals varies depending on how they deal with intertwined life transitions. Thus understanding of immigrant fertility needs to consider how immigration and childbearing are related similarly or differently for immigrants. Unfortunately, existing theoretical hypotheses focus on different fragments without seeing the whole picture. Focusing on the destination, the hypotheses of assimilation, adaptation, and minority fail to take into account the influences of reproductive experiences before migration in the home country. The disruption hypothesis emphasizing the depressing effect of relocation also ignores the reproductive dynamics before migration. In fact, childbearing may trigger people to move across borders. The demography research shows that the anticipation of having children increases a couple’s possibility of moving to more spacious and better environments (Andersson, 2004; Clark, 1986; Clark & Withers, 2007; Kulu & Milewski, 2007; Mulder, 1993). As a result, people may select destinations according to their fertility preferences (Kulu, 2007). Studies indicate that while the probability to move after the birth of a first child is high, the larger the family size the lower the possibility of migration due to the economic and psychological costs of relocating (White et al, 1995). In addition, childbearing influences the timing and order of migration for family members. For example, Lindstrom and Giorguli Saucedo (2007) find that with the birth of a child the risk of migration increases for husbands but decreases for wives. Unfortunately, conventional approaches simply focus on childbearing in the host country, lacking a comprehensive examination on the evolutions of reproduction perceptions and practices throughout the course of relocation from the home to the host country. In fact, immigration and childbearing are interrelated life transitions. Moving may affect the pace, schedule, and the embodied experiences of childbearing. At the same time, childbearing may complicate immigration and settlement circumstances. Thus we need a more holistic and thematically
integrated framework to identify mechanisms through which migration and reproduction processes synchronically intertwine with each other to structure fertility patterns of immigrant population. I argue that immigrant fertility should not be conceptualized as a rational or normative choice made at a situational moment, but as a dynamic process that involves the ongoing interplay between personal biographic situations, social relations, and societal institutions.

Sociological theories provide foundations for understanding human action as an ongoing process that involves dynamic interaction between individual situations and societal structures. Individuals engage with structural environments through everyday actions generated from their habitual, projective, and practical agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Bourdieu (1998) uses the concept “habitus” to articulate “the principles of vision and division” that leads to the social reproduction of practices and distinctions. Hans Joas (1996) articulates the practice of “self-transcendence” through which individuals as situated social actors develop different courses of action based on their habits, scripts, and lived experiences: rational actions, normatively oriented actions, and creative actions. This pragmatism approach treats human action as an unfolding process during which the alternation between habit and creativity lead to diverse practices (Gross, 2009). Margaret Archer (1995; 2007) argues that reflectivity allows individuals to deliberately learn, reflect, and develop strategies to act to make their own ways through the world. Ann Swilder (1986; 2001) suggests that people use cultural repertoires as a toolkit to organize different lines of actions: stay with routine ways in “settled” daily life and actively try out new ways in “unsettled” life changes. This dynamic interaction between routine actions and innovative actions constantly operate over individual life course. As Schutz (1932/1967)
envisions, human actions are oriented toward the past, present, or future within the context of “biographically articulated lifeworlds”. Indeed, individuals rely on embodied knowledge and practices learned from lived experiences in the past to deal with recurrent and routine circumstances as well as develop creative responses to cope with new and emergency circumstances. They need to fit daily life activities as well as long-term life goals into unfolding personal biography embedded in particular time-space contexts of society.

Applying these theoretical ideas to examining immigrant fertility, I argue that we need to look at how individuals respond to migration and reproduction dynamics. The embodied experiences of immigration and childbearing fundamentally transform individuals’ mindsets to understand and interpret life circumstances and their ways of working out both life events simultaneously. Therefore immigrant fertility is best understood as a dynamic process through which individuals act reactively and reflectively to deal with anticipated and unanticipated life changes that result from moving across borders and having children. Bringing the concepts embodiment, temporality, and dynamism into analyses of substantive complexities of migration, reproduction, and the intersection of these two processes, I develop the embodied dynamics model in the following section. My approach provides a more dynamic account of social forces than previous theoretical hypotheses.

2.2 The Embodied Dynamics Model
The embodied dynamics model articulates the ongoing triadic interplays of biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts (Figure 2.1). I theorize immigrant fertility as an embodied, interactive, dynamic process that unfolds over time and across space.

**Institutional context**

Social institutions affect individuals’ lives through constituting contexts within which normative perceptions, economic incentives, and administrative sanctions are formulated. The immigration regimes of immigrant screening and reception select a population through bureaucratic practices that define who gets in and sort out who fits in. The reproduction regimes of health care systems, welfare programs, and family policies shape individual perceptions and practices with regard to having children. Individual immigrants need to navigate institutional contexts of migration and reproduction jointly. The institutional dynamics of migration and reproduction have different impact on differently positioned individuals.

**Relational circumstance**

Individuals do not act on immigration or childbearing in isolation. Instead, these two life transition processes are embedded and negotiated among the surrounding social relations. Within the family, gender and generational relations and the division of labour between family members shape perceptions and practices of moving across borders and having children. Outside the family, others important to the individual such as relatives, friends, neighbors, workmates, and so on influence migration and reproduction through social interactions. The relational dynamic in
terms of social referents with whom immigrants interact and social supports they receive lead to varying motivations and trajectories of migration and reproduction.

**Biographic situation**

Depending on their status in the life course, people may think about and act on immigration and childbearing in different ways. Individuals plan, strategize, and schedule migration and reproduction based on personal biographical timeline structured by institutional timetables. Immigrants need to deal simultaneously with the ordered steps of the migration process – anticipating, planning, applying, moving, arriving, and settling – as well as the ordered steps of reproduction – intercourse, pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing. Each step has significant consequences for the sequences and schedules of others. This requires individuals to acquire knowledge and come up with strategies to resolve the conflicts between tasks of migration and reproduction at the same time. In other words, people organize immigration and childbearing within the context of the unfolding life course, during which they act upon anticipated and unanticipated life changes. They constantly work on reconciliation of multiple life tasks and social roles through planning long-term life paths as well as juggling daily routines of life activities.

The embodied dynamic model contributes to current theoretical debates on immigrant fertility by recognizing the mechanisms that shape migration-reproduction interaction. I argue that how individuals navigate societal institutions, how they collaborate with significant others, and how
they make sense of biographic situations shape how they deal with intertwining migration and reproduction processes jointly and thereby shape immigrant fertility.

Figure 2-1 The Embodied Dynamic Model

2.3 Immigrant Fertility as Process

In this section, I engage the literature on migration and reproduction to examine the constellation of embodied dynamics produced by institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations. I first specify how the ongoing interplays between navigating societal institutions, collaborating with others, and making sense of biographic situations shape individual actions of moving across borders and having children. Then I argue that immigrant fertility should be understood as a dynamic process in which individuals simultaneously deal with intersecting migration and reproduction over time and across space.
2.3.1 Institutional Context

Institutional contexts affect migration and reproduction through generating incentives and constraints, constituting norms and values, and implementing bureaucratic administrations. The dynamics of immigration regimes and reproduction regimes structure individuals’ deliberations on moving across borders and childbearing.

Migration

The importance of embodied dynamics of the institutional context for migration patterns is clearly illustrated by the literature. The migration scholarship has analyzed collective population movements as driven by economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics of the society. Studies in the 1960s and 1970s suggest that the economic development of modern society creates push and pull forces that shape rural to urban migration as well as international migration (Lee, 1966). Two opposite theoretical perspectives explain how economic dynamics structure mobility of the population. The neoclassical economic model suggests that individual migrants consider various alternatives on the “immigration market” and choose options that best suit them. As people move from low-wage labour-surplus regions to high-wage labour scarce regions, a global equilibrium of wage levels would prevail in the long run (Borjas, 1989). Expanding from individual calculus to family strategies, the new economics of labour migration model articulates that migration of individuals or the entire family unit represents a strategy at the household level for income diversification and risk aversion worldwide (Stark & Bloom, 1985).
On the contrary, *world system theory* recognizes the institutional links between countries positioned differently in a stratified global system, within which the penetration of the capitalist economy dislodges the traditional survival of “peripheral” countries and creates potentially available mobile laborers for the “core” countries (Wallerstein, 1974). In other words, migration dynamics emerge from conflicting economic interests and imbalanced labor supply and demand between differently developed geographic locales. The geographical consequences of the core-peripheral relationship lead to constant exchanges of products, technologies, cultures, and people between the countries (Castle, 2003; Ritzer, 2000; Sassen, 1992).

Indeed, economic dynamics not only cause migrant flows but also shape migrants’ employment trajectories at the destination. The *dual labor markets model* suggests that within the economic system of the host society, there are two segments: a primary sector of secure, well-paid work, taken by local workers; and a secondary sector of low waged, temporary, unpleasant work that locals avoid that becomes available to foreign labor (Piore, 1979; Bonacich, 1972). Immigrants of different admission categories are channeled into different economic incorporation trajectories (Roth et al, 2012). Discriminated against and rejected by the mainstream labor markets, settled immigrant groups may establish the ethnic economy segment where ethnic enterprises and occupational niches receive newcomers (Light, 1972; Waldinger, 1994; Wilson & Martin, 1982; Zhou & Logan, 1989; Zhou, 2004). As a result, immigrants selectively incorporate into different segments of stratified economic systems (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997), and adapt to the host society through progressive or bumpy paths (Alba & Nee, 2003; Gordon, 1964; Gans, 1992).
Political dynamics also determine the volume and the direction of migration flows. As Aristide Zolberg (1978) argues, “International migration is an inherently political process, which arises from the organization of the world into a congeries of mutually exclusive sovereign states” (p. 81). The state imposes border control on entry and exit. Immigration societies of different politics differ in the immigration systems (Freeman, 1995). Also, the internal dynamics of state agencies manifest in immigration laws (Satzewich, 2015). The migration regimes create selection policies that determine who gets in, which kind, from where, how many, and how long to stay. Prospective migrants are screened before departure from the origin. As Kingsley Davis (1988) argues, “migration is a creature of policy”. Immigration policies with regard to origin and numerical restriction lead to racial differentials on admissions (Ngai, 2004). The reception contexts enacted by the host society sort a mobile population into different settlement trajectories. The governmental reception policies of exclusion, passive acceptance, and active encouragement determine access to resources and services of newcomers under different admission categories (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). The legal regimes with regard to definitions of legal status, rights, and citizenship shape immigrants’ access to public services and social benefits as well as their understanding of identity (Mejivar, 2014). In particular, policies in conceptualizing and modifying definitions of citizenship play a crucial role in determining immigrants’ adaptations to the host society (Faist, 2000; Joppke 1999; Soyal, 1994). For example, Irene Bloemaraad’s (2006) comparative study illustrates that the normative stances and policies of the United States and Canada, rather than immigrants’ own political skills, produce differences in political incorporation and naturalization. Moreover, the home states also shape the migration dynamics. Unlike immigrants of the past who broke completely with their home
societies, today’s immigrants keep a foot in two or more societies (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Levitt, 2001; Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). Transnational migration studies have found that policies in receiving and sending countries condition immigrants’ transnational economic, political, cultural, and social activities (Castle, 2010; Faist, 2010; Kivisto, 2001; Portes & Martinez, 2019; Vertovec, 2009).

Indeed, how countries treat the mobile population structures the directions, volumes, compositions of migration. Beyond the political economic dynamics that the worldwide division of labor creates, the demographic dynamics of the receiving country drives immigrant policies. Demographic scholarship has highlighted the connection between migration and reproduction. For example, Wilbur Zelinsky’s (1971) hypothesis of the mobility transition proposes that along with economic growth and the consequent demographic transition from high mortality and fertility to low mortality and fertility, societies will go through transformations from net emigrations into net immigrations. Coleman (2006) proposes a thesis of third demographic transition: low fertility combined with high immigration disseminated in most industrial countries. In this sense, the migrant population is admitted as a substitute for the effect of low fertility on the aging of the population and the lack of labor force in receiving countries. Fargue (2011) views international migration and the demographic transition as a two-way interaction. Indeed, migration and reproduction are related social transformations that stem from the changing division of productive and reproductive labor within a global society.
The importance of embodied dynamics of institutional contexts on reproduction patterns has been clearly illustrated by the literature. In explaining the worldwide fertility decline, the demographic scholarship has recognized institutional explanations such as socioeconomic development (Caldwell, 2004; Bongaarts & Watkins; 1996), birth control technologies (Montgomery & Casterline, 1996; Knodel & van de Walle, 1979), and ideas about individualism and small families (Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 1988; Lesthaeghe & Moors, 1994). The demographic transition theory articulates that societies “experience modernization progress from a pre-modern regime of high fertility and high morality to a post-modern one which both are low” (Notestein 1945, p.361).

From the perspective of economic dynamics, the economic development and subsequent improvements of living conditions increase the monetary and opportunity costs of having children. Gary Becker’s (1960) household economic theory posits that a family’s fertility choices are a tradeoff between quantity and quality of children. Taking into consideration consumption, intergenerational transfers, and the accumulation of capital, “the number of children in a family depends not only on its demand but also on its ability to produce or supply them” (Becker, 1993, p. 231). Similarly, John Caldwell’s (1982) theory of intergenerational wealth flow revision articulates that: in traditional society children provide a positive net flow of money and services up the generational ladder to parents, whereas in modern society parents contribute resources downward to children with minimal expectation of return. In other words, when children’s status is superior to that of parents’, parents need birth control in order to devote more time and care for fewer children. As Philippe Aries (1980) puts it, “One’s children getting ahead in a climate of social mobility was the deep motivation behind birth control” (p.647).
Moreover, the shift of “reproductive self” from producer to consumer leads to increasing sentimental and financial investment in children in terms of items such as pianos, sewing machines, bicycles, and cameras (Van Krieken, 1997). Indeed, when children cost parents more than they contribute, fertility declines occur worldwide.

Along with economic development, cultural changes with regard to the values of children shape women’s perceptions and practices on childbearing. Ron Lesthaeghe and Dirk van de Kaa (1986) distinguish the “first demographic transition” due to improving living conditions and reduced utility of children between the 1860s and 1960s, from the “second demographic transition” due to the ideational changes regarding individual autonomy and self-realization after the 1960s. Caldwell (2005) attributes the wealth flow reversal from upward to downward to mass schooling, new ideas about childhood, and western nuclear family culture. The increase in women’s education attainment and labor force participation in the second half of the 20th century and, thereby, the incompatibility of career and childbearing, lead to the postponement of motherhood and lower fertility (Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991; Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000; Mason, 1984; Lesthaeghe, 1995). Facing a dilemma of work-family competence, women in countries where the state welfare systems provide strong supports to the combination of work and family may have higher fertility than those in countries without such policies. Research shows that prenatal family policies play an important role in encouraging higher birth rates, through programs such as social security, tax incentives, childcare provisions, childcare allowances (, and parental-leave allowances (Hoem, 2008; Mills et al, 2011).
Indeed, the institutional dynamics of fertility are embodied in welfare programs and family policies. Esping-Andersen (2009) asserts that the driving force behind low fertility is “the incomplete revolution”: the adaptation of the welfare state to women’s new social roles, aging population structure, and children’s development. Nonetheless, the states’ intervention on individuals’ fertility perceptions and practices interact with other societal institutions such as the labor market and school. McDonald (2000) proposes a gender equality model to understand the low levels of fertility in economically advanced countries. He argues that if women have equal opportunities as men in individual-oriented institutions such as education system and market employment, but face constraints in family-oriented institutions such as child related services and patriarchal family structure, they will have fewer children than they might have otherwise (McDonald, 2000). Chesnais’s (1996) finding of a U-shaped relationship between gender equity and fertility patterns across countries supports this argument. He uses “feminist paradox” to describe low fertility in developing countries and less egalitarian developed countries and high fertility in more egalitarian developed countries.

The institutional dynamics of fertility are also embodied in maternity healthcare services. Family planning programs provided by health clinics and communicated through social media play an important role in the socialization of ideas with regard to birth control biotechnologies and family size norms (Bernardi, 2003; Bongaarts & Watkins; 1996; Knodel, 2001; Montgomery & Casterline, 1996). However, feminist scholarship has criticized the modern reproductive institutions embedded in a capitalist and consumerist context for medicalization and commercialization of female bodies and reproductive works. The literature has indicated that the health care systems manipulate women’s experiences of reproductive cycles and shape their
reproductive subjectivities through creating legal sanctions to force women to undergo standardized maternity care practices (Oakley, 1980; Martin, 1987; O’Reilly, 2006). Mary O’Brien (1981) argues that reproductive technologies and the neoliberal state’s healthcare reforms driven by the combined capitalism and patriarchy devalue feminine reproductive consciousness in favor of masculine dominance. Ann Oakley (1980) argues that the maternity care system controlled by male dominated medical professionals construct women’s reproductive identity based on childbearing and childrearing.

Indeed, women’s bodily and conscious autonomy with respect to fertility is subjected to institutional reproduction regimes. The quantity and quality of childbearing is shaped by the institutional dynamics that generate economic incentives, administrative sanctions, and cultural norms. Individuals perceive and practice fertility in order to adapt to their institutional reproductive environments. Immigrants deal with childbearing in the context of changing reproductive institutions such as the welfare state, family policies in workplace and school, maternity health system, and the childcare system in both their home and host countries.

2.3.2 Relational Circumstance

Individuals do not organize migration and reproduction in isolation; instead, they negotiate these two simultaneous life transitions within the surrounding social relations. The embodied dynamics of generational relationship and conjugal relationship within the family as well as the relationship with significant others shape migration and reproduction motivations and trajectories.
Migration

The migration literature has illustrated the importance of embodied dynamics of relational circumstances for shaping migration patterns. Scholars describe “chain migration”, through which prospective migrants learn of information and get assistance with transportation, initial accommodation, and employment opportunities from their predecessors (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). Douglas Massey and colleagues (1990, 1993, 1998) develop the cumulative network theory, arguing that interpersonal ties connecting migrants, pioneer migrations in destination, and non-migrants in origin create the social structure to sustain subsequent migration. According to this framework, once a critical number of pioneer migrants have settled at the destination, other migrants can draw upon their social network to gain access to resources, financial assistance, and other support. Charles Tilly (1990) identifies four ideal types of networks that structure migration: coerced, circular, chain, and career, bounded respectively by family, kinship, acquaintance, and work. He argues that migration is a step-by-step process that “transplanted major segments of existing network from the old country to the new, and modified the network’s structure in the process” (Tilly, 1990). Indeed, the social dynamics of immigrant communities contribute to migration’s self-perpetuation independent of the economic dynamics that originally cause it.

Studies of ethnic communities identify various models that determine immigrant groups’ incorporation as a result of confrontation with discrimination in the host society, such as middleman minority (Bonacich, 1973), ethnic enterprise (Light, 1972), ethnic enclave economy
(Wilson & Portes 1980; Wilson & Martin, 1982), and ethnic niches (Waldinger, 1996). Scholarship shows that ethnic membership provides economic resources, cultural values, knowledge and skills (Light & Bonacich, 1988; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Zhou & Logan, 1989). However, the relational dynamic of ethnic communities can be a double-edged sword in which preceding migrants act both as ‘bridgeheads’ and ‘gatekeepers’ for group members (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Sanders & Nee, 1987; Waldinger, 1993). As Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) argue, immigrants balance between recourses available within the ethnic community and outside society since the “situational solidarity” of ethnic networks can both enable or constrain immigrants’ economic mobility.

In addition to the reception contexts in the host society, the relational dynamic of families may also promote or derail migration. As Monica Boyd (1989) explains, households’ differences in age, structure, and life cycle stages lead to different migration trajectories because a family as an unit needs to achieve a fit between resources, consumption needs, and productive activities. The family provides economic and social resources for upward mobility (Sanders & Nee, 1996). However, familial interests may not align with those of individual members. Research has found that the hierarchies and conflicts of interests between family members may produce tensions in the migration process. For example, Jacob Mincer (1978) notes that married individuals as “tied-movers” or “tied-stayers” have to decide where to live and whether to stay together when they have distinct preferences and different opportunities across locations. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) shows that gender dynamics differ among people who migrate together and those who do so separately. Orellana, et al (2001) highlights that immigrant children play an important role in shaping chain migration and transnational circulation.
In particular, feminist scholars have recognized gendered migration patterns: female migrants move across the border not only as paid laborers much as male migrants do, in response to market demand, but also as subordinated wives and mothers who take up unpaid domestic activities such as housekeeping and caring (Espiritu, 1999; Foner, 1998; Glenn, 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Lutz, 2010; Parrenas, 2001; Pedraza, 1991; Pessar, 1995; Pessar and Mahler, 2003; Sassen, 2000). Therefore women’s migration experiences differ significantly from men’s. Immigrant women confront more difficulties in proceeding simultaneously in two divergent but nonetheless corresponding life tasks of work and family. Indeed, individuals respond differently to institutional dynamics of migration because of the varying gender and generation relations they confront.

Reproduction

The demography literature has indicated that the embodied dynamics of gender and generational relations affect fertility differently. The conjugal relationships provide a basic template for childbearing perceptions and practices. Friedman, Hechter and Kanazawa (1994) develop the uncertainty reduction theory of parenthood as an alternative to rational choice theory, viewing the decision to have a child as a means of reducing life uncertainty and enhancing marital solidarity. In fact, a solid marital relationship leads to earlier childbearing and higher fertility (Myers, 1997; Rijken & Thomson, 2011). In contrast, couples in an unstable relationship would lengthen the births intervals and decrease the chance of childbearing (Lillard & Waite 1993).
Nonetheless, couples need to reach consensus on family planning as well as the timing, spacing, and number of childbirths. They need to negotiate individual plans of becoming a parent and resolve diverging intentions. Each partner proposes, negotiates, and adjusts individual intentions to reach consensus with the other on decisions throughout three reproductive stages: preconception, pregnancy, and postnatal periods (Hass, 1974). While some studies find that the wife’s fertility preference has a stronger influence on pregnancy and birth than the husband’s (Beckman, 1984; Thomson, 1997, Stein & Pavetic, 2013), others find that both partners have equal effect on fertility decisions (Bauer & Kneip, 2013).

In addition to ideational references, the division of labor between the couple can have varying effects on fertility. Most studies have observed that traditional gender norms and labor division contribute to earlier childbearing and higher fertility (Kaufman, 2000; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997). Neoclassical economic theory suggests that the gender specialization regime through which men participate in the labor market while women take on household tasks and childcare enables fertility, whereas the dual employment regime constrains fertility (Becker, 1993). Some find that an egalitarian labor market participation thereby increasing financial security may increase fertility (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000). For example, Torry and Short (2004) find that the relationship between having a second child and gender equity with respect to child is U-shaped: the probability of having a second child is higher in families with either very low or very high gender equality. In addition to the division of labor with regard to work-family spheres, domestic work distribution also affects fertility outcomes. Studies find that husbands’ childcare provision rather than housework share is positively associated with fertility (Cooke, 2009; Miettien, et al 2015).
In addition, the dynamics of generational relations also affect fertility through socializing norms and providing supports such as financial aid, housing, and childcare help (Axinn, et al, 1994; Thornton 1980). For instance, Laura Bernardi (2013) identifies three types of fertility norms transmitted within the dyadic mother-daughter relationship, including permissive norms (what is acceptable); proscriptive norms (what is to be avoided); and prescriptive norms (what is best to be done). Daughters learn about normative beliefs from their mothers regarding the appropriate timing of becoming a parent, the ideal family size, and sequencing of life course, based on reflection and reinterpretation of their own experiences of roles as daughters, wives, and mothers.

Indeed, perceptions and practices with regard to migration and reproduction are embedded and negotiated within the social relations. As the societal contexts shift, the relational dynamics may also change. Positioned variously in the home and host society, individuals perceive and practice immigration and childbearing in accordance with their changing relational circumstances. The different ways in which people deal with relational circumstances can lead to diverse migration and reproduction motivations and trajectories and, thereby, fertility perceptions and practices.

2.3.3 Biographical Situation

Migration and reproduction as life transition events require individuals to acquire knowledge and come up with strategies to deal with these two intertwined processes simultaneously. This means that people need to fit immigration and childbearing into the unfolding life course. On the one
hand, individuals think, plan, and strategize long-term life goals and orientations. On the other hand, they synchronize daily activities in different spheres of life. People think about and act on immigration and childbearing differently under different biographic situations. How these two life events fit into personal biography leads to diverse immigrant fertility trajectories.

Migration

The literature has illustrated the importance of biographic dynamics that at different stages in the life course people move across borders for different reasons. Demographic scholarship has documented that people move in response to different residential needs and life tasks (Clark et al., 2009; Mulder, 1993). Halfacree and Boyle (1993) propose to locate migration within the individual biography, taking into account the practical consciousness, individual experiences, and particular life circumstances. In fact, unlike earlier migrants who generally have built a family before migration, coming to the host country alone then bringing family over, contemporary migrants often arrive with a spouse and children (Courgeau & Lelie`vre, 1993). More recently, Kulu (2008) argues that relocations are often related to life transitions such as graduation, job change, marriage, childbirth, divorce, and retirement. Indeed, the temporal and spatial dimensions of migration cannot be separated. Under different biographic situations, individuals define motivations and navigate immigration regimes differently. Firstly, immigrants at different life stages vary in the ways they articulate their personal situation into qualifying criteria defined by the screening policies of the receiving country. Secondly, immigrants at a different life stage bring with them different starting sets of financial, social, and cultural capital that affect their settlement in the host country (Nee & Sanders, 2001). Indeed, immigrants need
to acquire knowledge and come up with strategies to organize ordered steps of the migration process – anticipating, planning, applying, moving, arriving, and settling. This requires individuals to constantly work on reconciliation of multiple life tasks and social roles through planning long-term life paths as well as juggling daily routines of life activities within time-space specific contexts.

As Georg Simmel (1911/1971) puts it, migration is an adventure of “dropping out of the continuity of life”, and migrants need to make adjustments to the “rhythm of life” in a new place (p.187). Moving across borders and leaving familiar environments entail disruption and reestablishment of daily life activities. Migration involves both spatial and temporal processes. Newcomers need to gather information, make decisions, and adjust to a new reciprocal movement between home and other nodes such as workplace, shopping place, and other activity locations (Roseman, 1971). They need to deal with basic life tasks such as housing, transportation, work, etc. Settlement is a homemaking process that needs repetitive configurations of daily routines: physically settling in a place, socially settling down into interpersonal relationships, and emotionally settling for simultaneous life situations (Lauster and Zhao, 2017). Nonetheless, the experiences of living in a new place may or may not fit their original intentions before departure. Immigrants retrospectively contrast current and past lifestyles and selectively reckon their ambivalences (Benson and O’Reilly, 2009). Indeed, biographical dynamics shape individuals’ understandings and assessments of past, present, and future life needs. The migration process involves an ongoing interplay between individual situations and structured opportunities. Whether to move or not, when to move, where to settle,
return or not, and whether or not to move to another place depend on how people fit migration into their life course and how they synchronize everyday tasks.

Reproduction

The literature has indicated that individuals deal with childbearing differently under different life situations. Whether to have a child, when to have a child, and how many children to have, involve rational reasoning and calculation as well as non-rational motivations, intentions, expectations, and responsibility. People may rationally calculate benefits and costs of having children, weighing the rewards from reproductive behaviors against rewards from other activities, and individuals may sacrifice fertility to advance economic mobility (Becker, 1960; Mills & Blossfeld, 2005). However, they may also understand biographic situations differently. For example, Kreyenfeld (2010) reveals that while highly educated mothers respond to economic uncertainty by postponing childbearing, their less-educated counterparts deal with this by becoming mothers. Moreover, people make sense of the meanings associated with parenthood and decide their own parental commitment. Women’s understanding of motherhood shapes their fertility choice (Johnson-Hanks, 2006; Lauster, 2010). Recognizing heterogeneity in life orientations, Catherine Hakim (2000) proposes preference theory for understanding fertility choices as shaped by the relative importance of childbearing in a woman’s life. As she puts it, “It is this heterogeneity of lifestyle preferences that impedes attempts to predict fertility after the contraceptive revolution and the equal opportunities revolution have given women genuine choices over the shape of their lives for the first time in history” (Hakim, 2000. p.369).
Even though women have conscious choices, the embodied dynamics of biographic situations shape the economic and ideational considerations involved in childbearing. The economic, cultural, and social influences on fertility must operate through sociobiological factors. The *proximate determinants model* breaks the reproduction process into three steps: intercourse, conception, and gestation. It points out that age, sexual activity, postpartum infecundability, abortion, contraception, pathological sterility, and timing of parturition directly determine fertility (Bongaarts, 1978; Bongaarts & Potter, 1983). In fact, when people experience life changes such as the lack of a suitable partner, pursuit of education, and residence relocation, their proximate determinants of fertility also change (Hayford, 2009). Indeed, reproduction should be viewed as a time-limited and path-dependent process during which each childbirth affects the subsequent childbearing and thus the total number of children a woman may have in her reproductive period (Bongaarts & Feeney, 1998; Morgan & Taylor, 2006). Therefore, the understanding of fertility should examine each single childbearing event in light of its specific biographic situations.

Ultimately, the reproduction process involves an ongoing interplay between institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations. While Philip Morgan asserts that at the heart of individual fertility is the ideal number of children women or couples want and whether they realize this “moving target” (Morgan, 1985; Morgan & Rackin, 2010; Quesnel-Valle´e & Morgan, 2003), Johnson-Hanks suggests that women’s attitudes toward childbearing and childrearing cannot be understood as fixed intentions; instead, they are uncertainties depending on “judicious opportunism”: future life contingencies such as education and
employment, which are also uncertain (Johnson-Hanks, 2005; Johnson-Hanks, et al 2011). As she argues,

People do not necessarily have explicit plans of action in reference to reproduction. The plans that do exist may change before they are accomplished. They may also be vague, underspecified, or relatively unimportant compared with other simultaneous plans. Actions with reproductive consequences also have other, even more important, motivations. People must collaborate with others in the relevant actions. Even when people have clear intentions, biology often thwarts their achievement. At some basic level, reproduction remains partially outside the calculus of conscious choice, even in post transition societies. (Johnson-Hanks, et al 2011, p. 307)

Indeed, people may form and modify fertility preferences and practices consciously or unconsciously as the life course unfolds over time and across space. How individuals balance different concerns, negotiations, and ambivalences with fertility depends on their locations within society, and encountering different structures can produce differences among persons in both the mental maps they create and the situational cues they experience. Therefore, fertility is not a once-and-for-all decision at a situational moment. Instead, it is a dynamic process of life transition simultaneously intertwined with other life activities. Thus immigrant fertility is best to be understood as a dynamic process that involves the ongoing interplay between biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts.
In sum, migration and reproduction are embodied processes. The interaction between migration and reproduction over life course leads to diverse processes of immigrant fertility. How individuals fit immigration and childbearing into their biography depends on how they navigate societal institutions, collaborate with intimate family members, and make sense of their biographic situation. The embodied dynamics model proposed in this chapter contributes to theoretical approaches to immigrant fertility by taking into account embodiment, temporality, and dynamic interaction between life transition events. Later in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I use this model to examine Chinese immigrants’ lived experiences of immigration and childbearing respectively, with the aim of identifying major similarities and differences in the institutional, relational, and biographic dynamics. Then in Chapter 6, I investigate how dealing differently with the two joint life transitions lead to divergent immigrant fertility processes.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of my dissertation is to provide the sociological underpinning for mechanisms that shape the interaction between migration and reproduction. Through 42 in-depth interviews, I gathered data on the lived experiences of jointly dealing with immigration and childbearing by Chinese Canadian immigrant women to gain insight into the fertility process. This qualitative approach allows me to tackle the complexities and contradictions of immigrant fertility, find out the incompleteness of previous theoretical explanations, and develop my Embodied Dynamics Model. In this chapter, I first discuss how I designed the research, then I show the mechanics how I conducted the interview and analyzed data, and finally explain how my approach can enhance our knowledge of immigrant fertility.

3.1 Research Design

This study was designed to address three research questions: How do immigrants perceive and practice childbearing in the course of moving from China to Canada? How do immigrants’ childbearing experiences in China affect their fertility perceptions and practices in Canada? How do immigrants’ experiences of moving across borders affect their reproductive trajectories? Drawing on Stefan Timmermans and Iddo Tavory’s (2012) ideas on “abductive analysis” in theory innovation, I first approached my case with preexisting theories and methods on immigrant fertility and then engaged in exploring surprising themes that emerged from my own data. To justify my selection of a qualitative approach to investigate a presumed quantitative question, I shall discuss the gaps in quantitative methods and databases and display the attractive
features of qualitative methods which enable a substantive account of conceptualization of immigrant fertility as a dynamic process rather than a once-for-all decision.

The gaps in quantitative methods

Most literature on immigrant fertility relies on quantitative data and methods to analyze the association between fertility outcome and individual immigrants’ characteristics such as age, education, duration of residence, language, etc. Quantitative studies contribute to the understanding of divergence or convergence of fertility patterns between immigrant groups and natives. However, it overlooks the contexts within which immigration and childbearing are embedded as well as situations under which immigrants cope with childbearing in the course of immigration. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, fewer studies have examined the actual childbearing experiences of immigrants. What is particularly unclear is how immigrants fit childbearing into relocation across borders. This limits our understanding of the mechanisms involved in the interaction of migration and reproduction processes.

Existing quantitative studies generally use cross-section survey data such as the Census, Family and Fertility Survey, World Fertility Survey, General Social Survey, Labour Force Survey (in the UK), or Community Survey (in the US) to study immigrant fertility. These studies employ Total Fertility Rate (TFR) as a dependent variable to estimate the average number of children a woman would bear throughout her reproductive life. This indicator relies on the age pattern of childbearing across birth cohorts to provide an estimate, under the assumption that the age-specific rates for a given calendar year remain steady. However, influenced by fluctuations in the
tempo of childbearing, it offers ease of calculation, but it does not correspond to the lifetime trajectories of actual birth cohorts. As Hajnal (1947) argues, when women can time their fertility, the measure of TFR is inaccurate because “a change in the rate at which people are having children in a given year can no longer be taken as an indication of a change in the number of children they will bear altogether in the course of their reproductive lives” (p. 143). Especially for immigrant women, timelines of moving and childbearing jointly shape the timing of fertility. On the one hand, prolonged move process, family separation, and postponement of childbearing due to resettlement would result in low fertility. On the other hand, women may exhibit high fertility after arrival in later reproductive age as they compensate for a disrupted childbearing preceding or during immigration. Also, migration driven by family formation is more like to result in high fertility than migration driven by other reasons (Anderson, 2004; Kulu, 2005). Therefore, the TFR is problematic as an indicator of immigrant fertility because the process of migration can alter the timing and age patterns of childbearing (Parrado, 2012).

In the Canadian context, most scholars use data from the Public Use Sample Tape (PUST) of the Canada Census to analyze the fertility patterns of immigrant groups. For example, Adasera and Ferrer (2016), Caron-Malenfan and Bélanger (2006), Bélange and Gilbert (2003), Ng and Nault (1997), Ram and George (1990), Chui and Trovato (1989), Halli (1987), Trovato (1981) all used summary measures such as cumulated fertility and current fertility derived from census data to estimate the fertility of immigrants. The mostly employed “own children method” use the census’s “the number of children living at home” as a fertility measure. However, fertility estimates derived from the census lack a comprehensive childbirth history. Thus they underestimate immigrant fertility because the survey excludes immigrant children left behind
with extended families in the home country (Dubuc, 2007; Parrado, 2012) and grown children attending college or living in their own homes elsewhere. In addition, Canada’s census does not report complete immigration information such as admission category or entry program, landing date, and place. It includes the year at which the immigrant becomes a permanent resident. However, the year at which the immigrant first comes to Canada is in many respects more salient. A lot of immigrants first come to Canada as temporary residents, as international students or temporary workers, and have lived in Canada for years by the time they become permanent residents. Without accurate information on timing, it is hard to examine the tempo effect associated with immigration. The Longitudinal Immigration Database and the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada collect detailed information on immigrant class, admission category, landing date, and landing city, there is no complete information on fertility and childbirth history. Due to data constraints, no attempt has been made to analyze the fertility variations of immigrants admitted through different immigration classes. Moreover, although linking census data with the longitudinal immigration data now allows to examine the interaction between immigration and fertility to some degree, it may not have enough cases of a specific ethnic group to come up with analyses with statistical significance.

The selection of qualitative approach

In order to gain deeper insight into the complexity and dynamism of the interaction between migration and reproduction processes, I employed a qualitative method in this dissertation research. My approach stood in contrast to the conventional view of immigrant fertility as once-for-all decision. As I discussed in Chapter 2, five theoretical frameworks based on quantitative
studies: assimilation, adaptation, disruption, minority, and selection hypotheses have presented distinct views of the cultural, economic, and social factors that shape immigrant fertility. While highlighting the association between characteristic variables and fertility outcomes, these approaches marginalize the embodied experiences, miss the temporality effect, and lack a comprehensive examination of dynamic interaction between immigration and childbearing. Many studies described characteristics without setting them in a rich context, therefore cannot really examine the lived experiences and meaning.

The qualitative approach can better capture the stories and narratives behind the variable associations. I wanted to explore how immigrants think about and experience immigration and childbearing as intertwining life transitions. Using in-depth interviews, I can gather information on participants’ immigration journey, childbirth history, and their personal accounts and reflections of lived experiences of immigration and childbearing. The analyses of interview data allow me to describe particularly the evolvement of Chinese immigrant women’s fertility perceptions and practice in the course of the immigration from China to Canada, as well as generally identify mechanisms through which migration and reproduction processes synchronically intertwine with each other to structure fertility processes of immigrant population. Given its emphases on induction, the selection of qualitative methods makes it possible for me to capture the emergent concepts and themes and to develop a more holistic and thematically integrated theoretical framework of immigrant fertility. I argued that immigrant fertility is not a choice of static quantity decided at a situational moment, but a dynamic process that embodies and interacts as individual biography unfolds over time and across space.
3.2 Methods

Data Collection

The research took place from January 2012 to July 2013. Drawing on the idea of “strategic in-betweenness” (Charmaz, 2006), I collected and analyzed data simultaneously over one year and a half. It was an ongoing reflexive process that involved testing out the primary guidelines, reframing questions, and adding new questions as more interviews were conducted.

Sampling

The principal aim of my sampling was to obtain a group of participants who had gone through childbearing in the course of immigration from China to Canada. While I used purposive sampling to select women who were born in China, approximately 40 years old, currently married to ethnic Chinese men, and came to Canada from mainland China. By limiting the sample to women who have likely completed their reproductive years I could catch the whole childbirth period and examine how reproduction process affects migration process. Limiting the sample to women with own-race marriage allows me to screen for the assimilation effect on fertility and to focus on how spousal negotiation influences immigration and reproduction.

In order to investigate the impacts of institutional contexts in China and Canada, I selected sample groups for comparison based on the place of childbirth and the cumulative number of children a woman has had. As Figure 3.1 shows, the groups are 1) participants who had children
in China; 2) participants who had children in Canada; 3) participants who had only one child; 4) participants with two or more children, also 5) participants with no children. The number of ten in each group made me feel the point of theoretical saturation where I got repeated information, patterned experiences, and confidence in good understanding of the research questions.

Table 3-1 Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of childbirth</th>
<th>Country of childbirth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. 1 child</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 1 child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 2 children or more</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 2 children or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. 0 child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I also tried to diversify my samples by institutional and personal characteristics in order to capture the variations that exist in their experiences. I used two strategies to obtain samples across a range of socioeconomic background in terms of occupations, economic resources, social ties, and English language ability. First, I sampled participants admitted under different immigration categories. As socially constructed categories, the split between economic and family immigrants may represent differences in wealth, resources, social ties, and English ability. Second, I sampled participants living in different residence areas: the city of Vancouver, and suburban cities such as West/North Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Surrey,
White Rock, Langley, and Maple Ridge. These areas vary by average annual income as well as proportion of Chinese population identified by the Canadian Census. By selecting immigrant women who came to Canada under different programs and living in different areas, I had a sample that represented a range of socioeconomic characteristics. This allowed me to examine the way individuals positioned differently in societies perceive and practice immigration and childbearing similarly or differently.

Recruitment

Samples were recruited through different resources. I began by identifying online discussion forums that would help me to access the immigrant population. Advertisements were placed on three popular Chinese-language on-line immigration forums:


Founded in 2004 by IASK.CA Inc, http://forum.iask.ca/forums/ (加拿大家园论坛) is the oldest and mostly used Chinese-language online in Canada forum that includes regional sub-forums such as Toronto.iask.ca, Montreal.iask.ca, Vancouver.iask.ca, Calgary.iask.ca, etc. Launched in 2008 by Vanpeople Network Ltd, https://forum.vanpeople.com/portal.php (人在温哥华) was most visited by Chinese immigrants in Vancouver. In contrast,
https://www.ourdream.ca/forums/index.php (驿路枫情) was created by a nonprofit organization Ourdream China-Canada Communication Association. By providing the platforms where people can share information on the Canadian immigration process and personal immigration experiences, as well as recourses on jobs, housing, transportations, foods, housekeeping services, language classes, cultural events, etc, these forums connect established Chinese immigrants and newcomers in Canada with potential migrants who are looking to enter Canada on a permanent or temporary basis. Nineteen women responded online as my initial contacts.

In addition, I also posted recruitment flyers at community centers and public libraries in different areas in Great Vancouver. Seven responded in this way. These twenty-six participants later referred me to other women who were also interested in this study.

Interview

The interviews took place in coffee shops, community centers, libraries, and occasionally in participants’ offices or homes. I asked participants choose locations that were convenient for them. Interviews were ranged from one to three hours in length. Before start, I first got myself settled and tried to make participants comfortable in the surroundings. Then I introduced myself, reiterating the purpose of this study, providing and explaining the consent form, and seeking permission to record the interview. With participants’ consent, all interviews were recorded. In the same time, I asked participants whether they preferred to talk in Chinese or English. All interviewees chose Chinese (Mandarin).
The interview process included three components: an immigration calendar, a childbirth calendar, and open-end questions with semi-structured interview guidelines. Calendar mapping combined with interviewees’ accounts of biographic events, can provide rich data for me to reconstruct their past life experiences and examine the intertwining courses of migration and reproduction.

Building upon the Life History Calendar (Caspi et al, 1996; Freedman, 1988), I developed an immigration history calendar and a childbirth history calendar, including a timeline on one axis and critical events on another. This calendar approach enables me to collect retrospective data on sequential activities and keep track of participants’ individual trajectories over time. The biographic information can be made more accurate through the use of calendar mapping. This way also enhances participants’ recalls around specific situations and transitions.

While listening to participants’ describing their pathways of moving across borders, I used the immigration calendar to fill in the timelines of key events and transitions, such as deciding to immigrate, preparing the application, taking the medical examination, receiving the immigration visa and landing paper, first landing in Canada, and becoming Canadian citizen.
Next, participants were asked about their complete reproduction history. They naturally brought up autobiographical events chronically, such as getting married, getting pregnant, prenatal check-up, delivering a baby, and caring for a newborn. Using the thematic calendar to record the timeline of each childbirth separately, I can compare biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts between earlier and later childbirths. While filling in the calendar, I asked the participants to explain their accounts of life circumstances and lived experiences of the 10-month childbearing procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Immigration events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Prepare application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Submit application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Application Received by CIC (AR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Documentation Verified by CIC (DV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Medical Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Approval by CIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Landing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Initial work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Initial housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Buy a home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Apply for citizenship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-3 Childbirth History Calendar (an illustration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reproduction events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>First pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>First childbirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Second pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Second childbirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Abortion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the semi-structured interviews permitted detailed descriptions and interpretations of past life experiences by participants themselves. It also provides opportunities to capture participants’ own accounts of understanding, reasoning, and feeling of lived experiences. After asking about basic information such as age, work, residence area, I started the conversation simply by letting people tell me how they came to Canada. I encouraged participants to talk about the details of how their immigration courses and childbearing events unfolded, how they coped. I was attentive to what happened, how interviewees described their thinking and feeling, and how they responded to life changes. A list of preliminary questions based on previous immigrant fertility literature questions served as a touchstone that helped to focus on the topic. But I allowed interviewees to lead me into things that they wanted to tell. I waited them to highlight the key issues and critical events. I asked questions about specific contexts or things that I was not familiar with. In this way, new concepts that hadn’t discussed by preexisting
literature emerged as the conversation unfolded uniquely in each interview. I identified analytic themes from earlier interviews and clarified emergent concepts in subsequent interviews.

Data Analyses

Focusing on immigrant women and choosing individual as the unit of analysis is shaped by the research questions I asked to understand how individuals think about and experience childbearing in the course of immigration. The interviews, combing calendar mappings with interviewees’ own accounts of lived experiences provide a rich source of data for me to construct the intertwining processes of migration and reproduction that I set out to understand. I cast my analytic net more broadly to include immigrant fertility literature and sociological theories in general. By referencing preexisting theoretical frameworks and examining new finding in my data, I sought to develop my own theoretical model.

My approach draws on Stefan Timmermans and Iddo Tavory (2012)’s idea of “abductive analysis”:

Abductive analysis involves a recursive process of double-fitting data and theories. An abductive inference involves making a preliminary guess based on the interplay between existing theories and data when anomalies or unexpected findings occur. If the existing theories fully account for the empirical phenomena, the researcher has simply verified an existing theory…. Anomalies, which are inevitably both empirical and theoretical, then require the development of tentative new theories built on inductive conceptualization of
Indeed, accounting for empirical findings involves an ongoing process of “abductive reasoning”, in which researchers referring to existing approaches’ explanations on general cases and constructing new ways of understanding anomalies. In my study, I recognized themes that had already been observed by explanatory hypotheses in previous literature. Moreover, I attempted to develop theoretical ideas based on surprising discoveries.

Coding

I first coded quotes that pertained to themes suggested by conventional approaches of immigrant fertility such as assimilation, adaptation, disruption, minority status, and selection hypotheses. For example, I coded explanatory quotations “I saw Canadian women have children in their 40s” and “I think local women generally have two children” as assimilation and normative factors. I also came up with new codes for concepts indicated by previous literature but identified differently in my interviews. For example, previous studies have used English proficiency as an indicator of assimilation and find that immigrant women who speak English well and frequently more likely to have lower fertility than those who don’t. However, I treated English proficiency not only as an assimilation factor but also as an adaptation factor, because I found that immigrant women with higher English proficiency might experience less difficulties in dealing with new health care system and other institutions such as daycare centers, schools, and labor market. In fact, the embodied experiences can be more complicated than theoretical concepts. For instance, a participant’s accounts for not having an extra child, “my husband works in China, and just visit
us in holiday seasons like Chinese New Year”, I coded this both as immigration disruption and as relational circumstance.

I used “open coding” or “latent coding” (Shapiro & Markoff, 1997), and “in-vivo coding” (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to discover new themes arising from open-ended interview questions. For example, I was intrigued by how participants’ projective vision of future influences their planning, strategizing, and timing about immigration and childbearing. The descriptions and accounts showed that the temporal dynamics at what point of life immigrants started to think about and carried out immigration is related to when they planned to have children and how they wanted to raising up children. In other words, the manner in which immigrant women experience childbearing is shaped by their scheduling strategies and perceived timing issues. I found that the ways how people fitted personal timetables of immigration and childbearing into the institutional timetables of immigration system and reproduction institutions lead to patterned immigrant fertility processes. As a result, what emerged from the interviews were the new concepts and themes: the synchronization of activities along temporal dimensions, including timing, order, pace, and linking present situation with past experiences and future orientations.

Analyzing

First, I looked at individual characteristics such as education, occupation, income, living arrangement and family relations before and after immigration to capture life changes resulted from shifting societal contexts. I examined experiences of the immigration course from thinking
about and deciding immigration, preparing and sending application, waiting for approval, going through medical examination, to finally landing and starting new life in Canada. Then, I compared fertility desires before and after immigration, as well as lived experiences with reproductive institutions in China and Canada.

I used the “constant comparison method” (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to examine similarities and differences in intragroup and across groups. By comparing across-group differences between immigrants who had children in China and those had children in Canada, as well as within-group differences between people who had more children and those who had fewer, I worked to understand how immigrants cope with childbearing similarly or differently. Through these convergent and divergent comparisons, I found the similarities and differences in individuals’ lived experiences with immigration systems and reproduction institutions. My comparisons across time and space enlarge theoretical understanding of the nuances of immigrant fertility.

Theorizing

As I have discussed earlier in chapter 2, my approach to immigrant fertility is based on three layers of existing theoretical frameworks: first, the immigrant fertility hypotheses; second, the migration theories and reproduction theories; third, the sociological perspectives in general. These ways of understanding together with my own findings lead me to develop an Embodied Dynamics Model.
Viewing immigration and childbearing as transition events that unfold over the life course, I give greater consideration to four levels of factors that shape life transitions: “human agency, linked lives, historical and geographical context, and timing of life events” (Elder, 1998; see also Giele & Elder, 1998). “Human agency” here refers to how respondents perceive the issue of immigration and childbirth, under what life circumstances immigration and childbirth happen, what strategies were used to respond to particular life situations, and how childbearing is related to and fits into immigration. “Linked lives” refers to how cross-gender and cross-generational relationships are different before and after immigration. “Historical and geographical context” refers to participants’ experiences of differential institutions in China and Canada, including the healthcare systems, maternity policies, welfare programs, daycare, school, etc. The “geographical context” reflects different sets of structural opportunities and constraints. The “historical context” consists of the interaction of individual experiences and historical events. “The timing of life events” refers to the timing of immigration and settlement, and the timing and spacing of childbirths. Building on this, I proposed an Embodied Dynamics Model to tackle the complexities of intertwinement between reproduction and migration. I argue that embodied dynamics generated from the institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations shape varying ways individual immigrants jointly deal with immigration and childbearing.

Building on “historical and geographical context” in life course theory (Giele & Elder, 1998), as well as “context of reception” (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996), “local circumstances” (Massey, 1998), and “the receiving country bias” (Castles, 2010) in the migration literature, and family policy (Esping-Andersen, 2009; McDonald, 2000) and maternity health care system (Oakley, 1980;
Martin, 1987) in the reproduction literature, I articulated the institutional dynamics generated from the reproduction contexts as well as immigration systems.

Drawing from “linked lives” in life course theory (Giele & Elder, 1998), as well as “cumulative causation” (Massey, 1993), “transplanted network” (Tilly, 1990), “tied-movers” (Mincer, 1978), “gendered transitions” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994) in the migration literature, and the family economics (Becker, 1993; Caldwell, 2005), marital solidarity and division of labor (Friedman, et al, 1994; Myers, 1997; Lillard & Waite, 1993; Anderson, 2000), family socialization (Bernardi, 2013) in the reproduction literature, I articulated the relational dynamics generated from shifting family roles and relations before and after immigration.

Borrowing ideas of relating immigration and childbearing within the individual biography (Halfacree & Boyle, 1993; Mulder, 1993; Kulu, 2005), I articulated the biographic dynamics generated from dealing with moving across borders and having children simultaneously and synchronization of activities as the life course unfolds over time.

My approach the Embodied Dynamics Model suggests that the interaction between migration and reproduction is shaped by a constellation of intertwining processes including institutional dynamics of the societal systems, relational dynamics within the family, and biographic dynamics of the individual life course. I argue that these embodied dynamics set the stage for people’s perceptions and practices on jointly dealing with immigration and childbearing.
I used the immigration calendar and childbirth calendar as a guide to elicit participants’ experiences with strategies used to cope with life transitions, I seek to identify the dynamic processes of immigration and childbirth.

Data presentation

To protect anonymity and confidentiality, I use pseudonyms for participants when describing their stories, citing quotes from them, and discussing their detailed life activities. Suppositious names were provided according to how migrants presented themselves. For example, if a participant provided a Chinese name: Meili, I used Meiyun. If a participant provided an English name: Medline, I used May.

3.3 Reflexivity

I think how scholars position themselves in research is fundamentally shaped by their epistemological understandings about neutrality, objectivity, subjectivity, and the nature of knowledge. Despite the dichotomization of objectivism and subjectivism in epistemological positions, the chosen research topics, questions, designs, procedures, guidelines, strategies, mechanics, analyses, and results are all rooted in our understanding what is knowledge, how we come to know, and how much we can know.
I have chosen immigrant fertility as my research topic and selected a qualitative approach because of my primary inquiry to the question how immigrants think about and deal with childbearing in the course of immigration. Through the in-depth interviews, my knowledge about this issue was produced through a dialogical process that involved an ongoing interplay between me as a researcher and my participants. Upon reflection, I was aware that my standpoint, perspective, interests, bias, knowledge, experiences, as well as my instant responses to what participants said and disclosures of myself during the interview processes shape the research directions and results. Put it simply, my embodied knowledge and experiences determined what, how, and how much I could know.

By focusing on the case of Chinese immigrant women in Canada, I can investigate the issue of immigrant fertility on the basis of both my personal experiences and familiarity with the scholarly debates. On the one hand, I myself experienced moving across borders and changing from an international student to a permanent resident, as well as having a child in China and bringing him up in Canada. On the other hand, I learned about theoretical frameworks and empirical findings from migration and reproduction literature as a part of my training as a doctoral student in sociology. These embodied knowledge and experiences shaped why I was motivated and how I designed and carried out this dissertation research. I think I would not be able to gain rapport naturally, build up trust warmly, and know things and feelings my participants described sympathetically, had I not experienced the intertwining immigration and childbearing myself.
In the interviews, I presented myself both as a PhD student doing a professional sociological research and as an immigrant woman in her 30s, having a son of two years old. The “sympathetic understanding” of what they talked about and how they felt were the key reasons participants befriended me and opened up to me in the first place. And I employed Rubin and Rubin (2005)’s idea of “responsive interviewing”, which acknowledges the mutual influence between interviewer and interviewee in gathering rich data and generating deep understanding. I used probes and disclosed myself a bit more when I met participants who were not very talkative to encourage them to describe their experiences, viewpoints, and feelings. Whereas for participants who were good at telling stories, I just listened more and let them lead the conversations. I was attentive to what people said and waited them to highlight the key issues and critical events. I also tried to answer participants’ questions about Canadian childcare and school systems, college applications, and occupational requirements as much as I could. In this way, I entered into and proceeded the conversations naturally, keeping my mind open to unanticipated questions and answers. I tried to find the balance between exploring the new themes and staying within the parameters of my research questions.

Following each interview, I noted down my instant thoughts, highlighting key words, information, and ideas. After a while, I reflected upon prior conversations with participants, sorting out what were common or unique about the directions and contents of the conversations with people from diverse backgrounds. In retrospect, I worked through my thoughts on findings. I used graphic and journal to trace my own thinking processes on developing my theoretical model through out the research.
The descriptions of lived experiences by participants themselves as well as the conversations between them and me provided an opportunity for me to objectify their experiences as the subject matter of this study. Scrutinizing the complexity of the interview data allows me to develop a novel theoretical framework to immigrant fertility: the Embodied Dynamics Model. Unlike existing assimilation, adaptation, disruption, minority and selection hypotheses that approach immigrant fertility as a one-for-all decision or a single life event, I theorize immigrant fertility as a dynamic process that involves the ongoing triadic interactions of institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and personal situations.

Limitation

This study has a number of limitations. First, most participants had a bachelor degree or higher. Although this makes the sample roughly similar to the population of recent Chinese immigrants to Canada, reflecting the skilled immigrants bias in Canadian immigration policy, not having a broad sample of less educated immigrants limits the range findings. Second, retrospective accounts may result in inaccuracies of timelines of life events due to the fallibility of memory. The calendar approach of mapping out event recall was an attempt to mitigate such inaccuracies, but it is not infallible. Third, participant’s self-selecting and recommending friends into this study may potentially affect the sample representation. Fourth, I was only able to find two participants who not had children. Although the deviant cases served as contrast point to provide insights, but might be insufficient to draw theoretical understanding and conclusions about the essence of this group. Finally, missing men’s voices limited the understanding about the effect of relational dynamics and processes on immigrant fertility: how moving across borders and having
children were experienced by them, how they coped with the life changes, how they negotiated the shift of various roles before and after immigration, all play an important role in shaping women’s perceptions and practices. Excluding husbands or not doing couple interviews were constrained by resources and time. Within these limitations, I looked at how participants’ perceptions and practices of immigration and childbearing shapes their fertility processes. I examined the ways individuals simultaneously deal with the two intertwining life transition processes as their biography unfold over time and across space.
Chapter 4: Migration Process

This chapter examines how individuals situate, negotiate, and navigate the migration process depending on their positioning within specific time-space contexts. By presenting the cyclical migratory course: unsettling, moving, settling, and homing or unsettling and moving again, I show how individual immigrants fit migration into their life course, navigate the changing immigration regimes, and deal with sequential life changes. The analyses reveal a constellation of embodied dynamics generated from institutional contexts, relationship circumstances, and biographic situations. I argue that migration is best understood as an embodied process as their biographic course unfolds over time and across space. In and through this process individuals synchronize the life transition event of moving across borders with other anticipated and unanticipated life activities.

4.1 From A Stage Approach To A Process Approach

Migration theories have offered fragmented frameworks to articulate why people move across borders, how people settle in the host country, and how they engage in transnational activities. These frameworks employ concepts such as assimilation (Alba and Nee, 2003; Gans, 1992; Gordon, 1964; Park and Burgess, 1921; Rumbaut and Portes, 2001), segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou, 1993), cultural pluralism (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963), selective acculturation (Waters, 1990), ethnicity (Sarna, 1978; Morawska, 2009), hyphenation (Alexander, 2001), and transnationalism (Faist, 2010; Glick Schiller et al, 1992; Vertovec, 2009) to denote migration patterns of early sojourners, contemporary settlers, and present transnational
movers. While it has offered valuable insights, existing migration scholarship suffers from lacking an integrated approach to account for the multiple facets of migration. A good deal of it adopts a stage approach to study the extent and speed with which immigrants adapt to economic, social, cultural, and political spheres in the host society. For example, Piore (1979) described migration in three phases: “sojourner phase,” “transition phase,” and “settlement phase.” More recently, Friberg (2012) articulates a three stages model: an initial stage of going abroad for temporary work, a second stage of the transnational commuter, and a final permanent settlement stage. As he puts it, “The migration process may be conceptualized as in stages, rather than just as different categories of migrants and adaptive strategies” (p.1591). However, a stage approach diverts attention away from the dynamics of migration itself, imaging discrete stages from building a new life from scratch to becoming more or less settled. Accounts of the stage approach lack a causal mechanism explaining divergent migration patterns of different immigrant groups. In fact, migration as a dynamic process involves the ongoing interplay between individual life changes and societal transformations. Therefore, instead of the degree and speed of assimilation, acculturation, integration, incorporation, settlement, or transnational move, migration theories need to examine the mechanisms that link individual mobility trajectories to structural migration dynamics.

Notwithstanding attempts such as Castles and Miller’s (2009) Migration System Theory, Yang’s (2010) Multilevel Causation Theory, and Morawska (2009) and O’Reilly’s (2012) using a structuration model to investigate international migration, few scholars have tried to develop a grand migration theory that accounts for both historical and contemporary migrant flows given their diversity and complexity across space and time. In chapter 2, I proposed an Embodied
Dynamics Model to study how migration interacts with reproduction to shape immigrant fertility. This model conceptualizes migration as a process that is embodied in three sets of dynamics: making sense of the migrants’ personal biographic situation, negotiating social relations, and navigating immigration regimes. I ground my exploration of the fundamentals of migration in a sociological perspective, attempting a more sophisticated understanding and explaining of the interaction between structural migration contexts and individual moving trajectories. Unlike a stage approach, my process approach identifies institutional, relational, and biographic dynamics that operate in a synthetic and cumulative manner to shape how individual migrants reactively and reflectively respond to the opportunities and constraints they encounter. This chapter makes the case that an Embodied Dynamics model can illuminate multiple configurations of migration. In the following section, I specify dynamics that drive the cyclical migration process: unsettling, moving, settling, unsettling and moving again.

4.2 The Cyclical Migration Process

Based on the empirical study of immigrant women moving from China to Canada, I find differently positioned individuals rely on different economic resources and cultural schemas to synchronize migration with other life events. At the same time, their bodies, minds, and actions transform as the embodied migration course unfolds. I argue that migration is embodied in the dynamic processes in which individuals navigate immigration bureaucracies, cooperate with significant others, and deal with biographic situations within a specific time-space context.
In answering the question “why did you decide to emigrate?”, participants in my study referenced the desire to live in a “better” environment as the most powerful impetus for the move from China to Canada. They described emigration as the result of unsettling institutional contexts: environment pollution, rigid education systems, excessive work demands, and complicated social systems in China.

For example, Chloe explained, “It was simply my son’s asthma made us finally decide on immigration. The doctor said the only way to save him is moving to a place with fresh air. So we have no choice”. In addition to “clean”, when asked about what constitutes a “better environment”, participants mentioned attributes such as “safe”, “food safety”, “quality education for children”, a “fair social system”, “comprehensive welfare system”, and “simple way of life”. These descriptions reflect immigrants’ perceptions about Canada before immigration as well as their lived experiences before moving. Respondents described having chosen Vancouver because of its warmer climate, nearer distance to China than Toronto, and established Chinese community. Most immigrant mothers described Canada as a great place to raise children rather than a desirable place to work.

For example, Lily described the two key reasons she wanted to move to Canada:
First and foremost reason, I want an extra child. But it was not allowed. The other reason is that I don’t want to get crazy, given the crazy education system, basically your children’s homework is your homework, how children do at school depends on how parents make efforts to cooperate with teachers and attend after-school programs run by teachers. Isn’t that crazy?

In Lily’s view, Canada’s advantage over China largely has to do with China’s educational system.

In contrast to the explicit aim of “Change an environment [surrounding] to live” sought for by the majority of participants, a few women indicated that they immigrated to Canada largely by following a trend of going abroad. Three participants who came to Canada before the millennium did so because of China’s reform and opening policy in the 1980s and the subsequent flows of travel, study, and work abroad. For example, Rui, who first came to Canada as a visitor in 1996 then became a permanent resident within Canada after a year, indicated that everybody wanted to go abroad in the 1990s but only those who had relatives abroad were permitted to leave China. Another woman, Iona, mentioned that because of curiosity about western life, she and her friends applied together to immigrate to Canada in 1998 and landed together in Vancouver in 2000. She thought they were probably the earliest cohort of skilled immigrants from China to Canada. These two cases illustrate that China’s transforming emigration rules resulted in a trend of going abroad since the 1990s. The trend was so pervasive that even people with no intention of immigrating began to consider it. Lin recalled the first time she heard about immigration:
One day at work, I heard my colleague was talking on the phone about immigration. I then asked her about that. She said a lot of people are trying immigration and it is very easy. First, take an assessment online to see if you are qualified. Then just prepare some documents and send it out. That’s it.

Because they had not given immigration much thought, Lin and her husband came to Canada without a clear plan. They just wanted to see what living in Canada was like, and figured they could always return to China if she was not happy. However, Lin ended up staying in Canada while her husband returned to China, because she felt her son had better life chances although she was having difficulty foreseeing her own betterment. Her story conforms to Vanessa Fong’s (2011) finding that “at the individual level, migration decisions were not made on a rational analysis of the costs and benefits of migration but rather on subjective responses to events that seemed unpredictable to those who experience them” (p. 94).

Unlike the economic promise, as suggested by theories that labour migration drives the individual course of moving across borders, these three cases show that individuals consciously or unconsciously respond to institutional migration dynamics and select themselves into a migration process, but they may not have a strong purpose or a clear projection about their lives in the new country. Nonetheless, individuals’ perceptions and practices of migration are embedded in the broader social transformations of the society within specific historical time-space contexts. Much of the migration of the Chinese immigrants to Canada has to do with the pull forces of Canada’s labour demands as well the push forces of China’s economic development and the consequent environmental degradation.
Relational Dynamics

Surrounded by various social relations, individuals not only need to justify their own motivations for migration but also negotiate and cooperate with their partners and close relatives to undertake the migration action. Their relational dynamics may enable or constrain the initial move and shape the subsequent moving trajectories. On the one hand, the support people gain from social networks may contribute to individual migration by giving them access to resources and collective strategies. On the other hand, having divergent life goals and conflicts in the division of labor within family may make it difficult to migrate.

Many women in the sample led the immigration journey from China to Canada. A slight majority were the principle applicants for immigration visas, and many others had persuaded their more eligible husbands to sit for the language test and hand in the application on behalf of the family as a whole.

For example, Yan described how she had persuaded her husband to apply:

For me, clean air to breathe is a big deal for life. But my husband was reluctant to immigrate, because he had already established a promising career. Compared to his high position in a Fortune Global 500 company in China, it’s hard to see what would await him in Canada. He was afraid of the uncertainty in a foreign country. But I said you still
cannot solve the problem of polluted environment no matter how rich or how successful you are.

Sylvia found her mother-in-law a barrier when she sought to persuade her husband:

My mother-in-law said a fortune-teller had warned that her son might go abroad someday. So she tried everything to avoid that. She was unhappy the first time we met since she knew I majored in English [in university]. As a consequence, my husband was hesitant about immigration because of his mother. But he was also concerned about the quality of education in China. We both wanted our daughter to get educated in western countries. So he finally agreed to immigrate to Canada. But my mother-in-law hated me so much that she did not support us. We didn’t get a penny from her to bring to Canada. She even hid our marriage certificate and the house property certificate when we were preparing documents.

As Sylvia’s case suggests, children are a key piece of the relational dynamics that prompt migration among women in the sample. Many mothers had migrated to seek cleaner air or a better education or both for their children. Dina and her husband had returned with their daughter to China after a year in the United Kingdom, where he was a visiting scholar at a university, and found that their daughter could not adapt to the Chinese education system. This had prompted their permanent move to Canada. As such cases illustrate, individuals cooperate with intimate family members and deal with gender and generation relationships that affect their interpretations of life situations under which immigration is considered and pursued. In other
words, migration is embodied in relational dynamics that shape motivation and strategies about moving across the borders.

Biographic Dynamics

Migration is not a single action for individuals; instead, it is synchronized with other life events. Positioning people into the time span of biography, life transitions such as getting married, having a child, children reaching school age, coming to a career bottleneck, loss of a family member, and the like may put individuals at a crossroad situation under which they consider migration as an alternative.

For Jade the crossroads was seeing bored at her job as a magazine editor in China. She said,

I [could] see myself the same in five or ten years, working this boring job until retirement. It was not that I didn’t enjoy my job. I just didn’t want to do the same thing everyday forever. I [could] handle a week’s workload just in one day. I can even get things done with my eyes closed. To get rid of the boredom, I volunteered at an NGO on weekends. I also worked a part-time job as a lecturer at a local college. I was just bored. I wanted to live a different life. When I browsed websites and saw people going abroad. I wanted to give it a try.

Also, career impetus made it necessary Jade did not know what to expect when she migrated. For her, leaving China was a leap into the unknown. In such cases, immigration is not a rational
choice based on the calculation of benefits and costs of relocation, but a coping strategy to deal with an unsettling situation in the life course.

For another example, Ann had a better idea what to expect as she had been abroad before, having earned her MBA in the United States, then returned to China for two years before applying to immigrate to Canada. But like Jade, she felt stuck and unsettled in her job during the two years she lived in China. With a master’s degree and professional background, she easily qualified to come to Canada as a skilled immigrant. However, even after living in Canada for three years, she was not sure she wanted to stay. She said,

I still want to go to the States…. Generally, I think the States has more job opportunities than here in Canada.

Like Ann, Megan, who earned her bachelor degree in Denmark and then returned to China, felt that her time in the West had made it difficult to live in China. She said,

I returned to China after finishing four years of undergraduate study in Denmark. But I found that I already got used to the western lifestyle. It was difficult for me to live in a way as before. Unfortunately, it’s impossible to stay in Denmark unless you married a native guy. So my husband and I came to Canada instead.

For Megan and Ann, the lived experiences of a temporary stay abroad as visitor and student had changed their mindset and skillset and they understood and dealt with their life situations after
they returned to China in a new way. More importantly, the embodied experiences of staying in western countries also gave them knowledge and transferable skills that made it easier to gain a visa to move to Canada. Nonetheless, as biographic dynamics drove migration processes, perspective immigrants need to fit themselves into immigration regimes.

4.2.2 Moving

Migration does not happen in one night. Nor is it a once-and-for-all decision. Instead, the migratory course is a path-dependent, sequential process in which prospective migrants navigate the immigration systems, cooperate with “significant others”, and make adjustments in accordance with their everyday life situations.

Institutional Dynamics

Most participants in my study possessed university degrees and professional skills before coming to Canada. Yet whether individuals can qualify to immigrate to Canada depends on finding the right information about how to qualify and figuring out how to fit their specific cases properly into Canada’s institutional regimes. Then they have to figure out how to handle the bureaucratic procedures required and address the bureaucracies that directly administer their applications.

First of all, making a match between particular personal cases and general immigration selection is not easy. The Canadian immigration regime emphasizes education and occupational skills (Alboim & Cohl, 2012; Boyd, 2013; Ferrer et al, 2012; Green & Green, 1999). Its point system
has undergone numerous modifications since its establishment, assigning different weight to age, English and French language skills, education, occupation, work experiences, and adaptation ability. For example, the 2002 reform adopted a human capital model to replace the labour market model, so that skills rather than occupations took priority (Ferrer et al, 2014). Then the 2008 reform restricted the Federal Skilled Worker Program to persons who could either receive employment offers in Canada or work experiences in one of 38 occupations in their home countries. The listed occupations were reduced to 24 in 2012. In 2013 a Federal Skilled Trades Program was introduced to recruit immigrants in specific trades. Since 2015, the Express Entry System has used a 1200-point-scale to choose immigrants with a job offer or provincial nomination while all applicants are entered into a pool of candidates. Canadian immigration regimes also recruit people who come as investors and entrepreneurs to establish or invest in businesses and provide employment opportunities for locals. In addition to the federal programs, each province has its own Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) that allows it to select candidates who meet local needs. Permanent residents and Canadian citizens can also sponsor their close family members including spouses, dependent children, and parents. Given all this complexity, migrants need to know precisely the admission criteria for categories for which they may qualify and to react properly to bureaucratic case processing.

Ann described how she navigated the system, and tried different programs.

When we decided to immigrate, my husband found an immigration agent to assess our case and prepare documents for application under the business class. Unfortunately, we got refused without any explanation about why. Then I tried to apply under the skilled
worker category since I had a MBA certificate earned in UK and some working experiences. Then I became the principle applicant and my husband became the dependent. It is funny that we got approved this time.

Unlike Ann who was able to work things out by herself, some immigrants navigate the system with the assistance of immigration agencies. One woman mentioned that she turned to the PNP after her application under the federal programs got refused. Another woman ended up coming to British Columbia because Quebec did not accept her for their PNP application. Others entered as temporary residents first and then applied to change their status to permanent resident within Canada. For example, Rui first came to Canada as a visitor to join her husband who was then an international student in Saskatchewan. They became permanent residents after a year in the country.

As participants described, the application process is lengthy, uncertain, and frustrating. Indeed, individuals are vulnerable dealing with the immigration regime. For example, Chloe sent her application to the Canadian Embassy in France when she was a student there in 2005 but received no response and therefore returned to China after graduation. She found a job and had a child in China, and her son developed asthma. In 2009 she sent an email seeking information about her application to the Embassy in France, only to learn that the embassy had lost it when it relocated its office. Her case got approved right after inquiry, though it cost 4 years. Another respondent’s file was also lost, at the Canadian Embassy in Hong Kong. While such losses are rare, approval or denial normally took years from submitting the application, regardless of the immigration category or programs. The fact of the waiting period further complicated the
decision to migrate, as it is long enough to experience life transitions such as job change, marital status change, or having a baby. These transition events then affect their motivations for immigration and concrete plans of moving across the border. Indeed, migration is embodied in the relational circumstances and biographic situations of individuals as their life course unfolds.

Relational Dynamics

After the approval of their applications, immigrants are supposed to land in Canada within a certain time period. This proved complicated due to the need to cooperate with other family members to plan and arrange the move. Relational dynamics shape the moving processes.

For Ann it was more than 4 years between the approval and her family fully settling in Canada:

We landed [in Canada] together. My husband then returned to China after staying here about two months. At that point, I was five months into my pregnancy. I stayed here until my daughter was born. He came to visit when the due date approached. Then we returned to China together because he couldn't stay for long and I couldn’t take care of the newborn by myself. I then came back to Canada myself after two years. I came here alone because I wanted to prepare for the realtor license exam. My daughter was two. I couldn’t take care of her while studying. After I passed the exam, got the license, and started work as a realtor, my husband and daughter came to join me. We finally settled down.
All of these upheavals were necessary to meet the short-term needs and long-term life goals of their family. Ann was typical in having a stay in Canada without her husband, whose breadwinner status made it harder to relocate quickly, although for many participants such stays were with their children.

Unplanned life changes and the unforeseen uncertainties and difficulties generated by the complex bureaucratic immigration system could make things even more complicated. Xia’s husband, David, first came to Canada as an international student majoring in business management. After he received his bachelor degree and worked as an accountant for two years in Canada, he applied for permanent residency within Canada, a process that took a year. Having received his permanent residency, he decided to visit for a period of time in China, where he and Xia then met and married. He returned to Canada alone, planning to sponsor Xia’s return, but when he answered a routine question “if anything changed” by answering he had gotten married, the officer declared his permanent residence void and cancelled his immigration visa, accusing him of failing to inform CIC [Citizenship and Immigration Canada] about his marital status change. David was allowed across the border as a temporary worker since his work permit was still eligible. Then he re-applied for permanent residency, listing Xia as a dependent applicant. This second application took another year. David’s story illustrates that changing relational circumstances complicated the move procedure.

Interestingly, participants termed landing in Canada as two sequential steps “short landing” [temporary landing] and “long landing” [permanent landing]. About a third of the participants had done a short-landing: a trip to Canada of up to a month. Short landings involve taking a few
days off from work and staying in a hotel or similar accommodation while they address resettlement issues such as apply for a permanent resident card, a social insurance number, a health care card, and a bank account. Some women or their husbands had traveled across Canada to consider where they wanted to settle in future. Those who took a short-landing and then returned to China, decided if they still wanted to come to Canada and planned the long-landing. The long-landing is preceded by quitting their jobs and packing up their belongings. Most participants stayed in Vancouver the first time they came for landing, but three had lived in Toronto, Calgary, and Saskatoon, respectively, prior to moving to Vancouver.

Indeed, while relational dynamics shaped the timing and order of moving for family members in a single household, individual immigrants arranged landing and settlement according to their biographical situations at the time of the move.

Biographic Dynamics

Immigrants arrange their short-term daily activities in a new country and build their future life plans on their long-term life expectation. As Culic (2010) put it, the migration process “involves waiting, planning, anticipating, postponing, and waiting again” (p. 350). While they waited, their plans to migrate played a determining role in their daily lives.

For example, Lily explained her changing attitudes toward immigration,
I couldn’t take it easy after three years of waiting. The biggest issue was that I wanted to have a second child. This is not allowed due to the one-child policy. I waited to give birth in Canada. Another issue was that my first child was about school age. I expected him to go to school in Canada. It all depended on whether our immigration application was successful or not. If it got refused, that means I cannot have an extra child, and my son has to go to school in China. His catchment school was not good. So I have to pay a big sum of money for enrolling him in a better school. That’s why we were eager about approval this year. Especially that I am turning 35. I want to complete childbearing by this age. Otherwise, I have to change my plans. Life will become totally different.

Nonetheless, migration is a life transition that proceeds simultaneously with other life activities. Under their biographic situations, individuals need to plan, arrange, and synchronize the interlocking life tasks such as education, employment, and family formation and maintenance. Immigrants have to fit migration into unanticipated situations as the individual life course unfolds over time. Most participants felt that the immigration process had been longer and more uncertain than they expected, and this complicated their personal timetables and led to divergent migration trajectories.

4.2.3 Settling

In an unfamiliar environment, intersecting resettlement tasks such as finding employment, accessing housing and transportation, and using public services were challenging for immigrants when they first came to Canada. On the one hand, reception contexts structure immigrants’
settlement trajectories (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). On the other hand, the social, financial, human, and cultural capital immigrants bring with them also affect their daily circumstances in the host country (Nee & Sanders, 2001). Indeed, immigrants actively make themselves feel at home through reestablishment of new life routines within the enabled or constrained institutional contexts (Lauster & Zhao, 2017).

Institutional Dynamics

Although highly educated, the majority of participants in my study indicate that their English language ability was not good enough to deal with basic life tasks such as setting up bank accounts, accessing health care services, using public transportation, enrolling children in school, and participating in communities. Without English proficiency, many people may not even know certain public services are available. As one woman described, “I felt handicapped in Canada because I can’t communicate with local people.”

Many participants took advantage of Canada’s public offerings to assist newcomers with linguistic barriers. Some took ELSA or ESL programs at community colleges where free English classes are provided. Some attended English classes for adults at their local high schools. A few women attended ESL programs organized by local churches in order to improve their English skills. A few used private bilingual tutors as well. Many women in the sample had relied on the Chinese communities in Vancouver for information and assistance. Some women mentioned helpful Chinese media such as Ming Bao, CityTV, and organizations such as hometown fellow
associations, alumni associations, and ethnic churches or temples. As they gradually adapted to things and places, their connections with these ethnic institutions faded.

Participants in my study expressed their appreciation for the government’s incorporation programs designed to ease newcomers’ initial settlement. They accessed services through settlement organizations such as the Cross-Cultural Community Service Association, MOSAIC, and S.U.C.C.E.S.S, the DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, and the Immigrant Services Society of BC, for basic interpretation and assistance with searches for jobs and housing. Services these institutions provided played an important role in helping newcomers become familiar with local contexts and involved in local communities.

However, challenges in daily tasks still remained. For example, a lot of participants had to take the road tests multiple times even though they were experienced drivers. They contended that failure was not due to their inexperience behind the wheel but their previous driving habits. To cope with this difficulty, some had paid private tutors to teach them the local rules and supervise their driving. Timothy Fong (1994)’s finding on Chinese Driver Stereotype may explain some of the difficulty. Indeed, adaptation to a new country involves concrete everyday life activities such as eating, clothing, housing, transporting, working, and caring. The institutional contexts within which immigrants deal with these tasks shape settlement trajectories in different but nonetheless intertwined spheres. When newcomers encounter a welcome or hostile reception in these spheres upon first arrival, this prompts or hinders their adaption into the new home. For instance, the institutional changes in the housing market and labor market simultaneously structure immigrants’ residential and employment trajectories.
Settling in housing

The literature on immigrants’ residential patterns has centered on a theme of “spatial assimilation”: newcomers first settle in ethnic communities due to a lack of familiarity with the receiving country and language barriers, then move to a wealthier neighborhood where whites live as their language ability and financial situation improve (Massey & Denton, 1985). Studies of contemporary Chinese communities have conflicting findings. Some suggest that Chinese immigrants tend to live in concentrated co-ethnic communities when they first immigrate (Fong & Wilkes, 2003; Hou, 2004; Hou & Wu, 2009) while others show that they are much more likely to bypass living in the inner-city ethnic enclaves and directly settle in suburban areas than other non-white immigrant groups (Alba et al, 1999; Painter, 2004; Yu and Myers, 2007). Researchers have found both concentration and dispersion residence patterns, what they term “Ethnoburbs” (Li, 1998), “Suburban Chinatown” (Fong, 1994); or “transnationalization” “Trans-Pacific life line” (Ley, 2010).

In my study, some participants resided in clustered Chinese communities and others in more racially mixed areas. When asked about what factors they considered about when choosing a home location, most mentioned the quality of schools as the most important determinant, while some mentioned distance to workplace, amenities of neighborhood, lot size, and the size of the homes. A few participants indicated that they paid more for housing than they could afford in order to obtain a spot in desirable catchment schools for their children.
My analysis is in line with previous findings that Chinese immigrants have a higher rate of homeownership than other visible minorities in Canada (Mendez, 2009; Haan, 2007; Painter, et al, 2003). As Table 4-1 shows, 28 out of 42 participants owned a home: 13 owned a detached house, 10 owned a townhouse, 5 owned an apartment respectively. The literature has attributed Chinese community’s instant housing achievement to higher socioeconomic status and human capital (Sanders & Nee, 1994; Yu & Myers, 2007), a cultural preference for owning over renting (Ley, 2010; Yu & Myers, 2007; Wong, 1998), peer influences (Patnter et al, 2003), household strategies (Yu, 2010), and ethnic resource sharing strategies (Alba et al, 2002). Supporting the cultural explanation, participants described homeownership as a sign that they had settled successfully and that they considered property a good investment. In fact, most people started in rental housing but many eventually became owners.

Within the pattern of homeownership, I found that more recent immigrants had bought their homes more quickly than their counterparts who came to Canada in the more distant past. About two third of participants bought a home when they established long-term employment and secured a stable financial situation after staying Canada for a couple of years. Five participants bought homes within a year of arrival. Two of them had actually purchased a home before relocating to Canada, after viewing photographs on social media. The participants had relied on realtors their friends recommended to choose homes. To account for their speedy homeownership achievement, we need to contextualize immigrants’ housing career within a bigger picture. The reason more recent immigrants could purchase homes more quickly is that they had owned at least one condominium in metropolitan cities in China before immigrating to Canada, purchases made possible by a boom in the Chinese housing market that began in 2008
when the Summer Olympics was held in Beijing. Upon immigration they had economic capital from selling properties in China that made it easier to purchase homes in Canada and to do so in more expensive neighborhoods.

Table 4-1 Housing Trajectories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Housing in China</th>
<th>Housing in Canada (Initial)</th>
<th>Housing in Canada (Current)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own a home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhouse</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent a home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House (rooms)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhouse</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s home</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-unit(^1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school-dormitory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) The work-unit refers to the state-owned sectors which assign home to workers.
Some, like Ann, became realtors after purchasing their own homes. She described homeownership as a rational way to beat inflation as well as a desirable marker in Chinese culture. She said:

“It is our tradition in Chinese culture to own a home. It is also wise economically to buy a home, the earlier the better. You know the real estate market is hot in Vancouver. Housing is becoming unaffordable. But for us as immigrants [we] can take advantage of this in-between: the mortgage rates in Canada are still relative[ly] low, compared to savings or investment interests in China. You know the market volatility. In addition, taking into account of exchange rate Chinese Yuan to Canadian Dollar, it is wise to purchase a home with a mortgage no matter how. That is a rational strategy used by a lot of people. The rich buy homes with mortgage and use money to make other investments. The poor buy a home and rent a room out to pay off the mortgage. So you should buy as early as possible even if you are not sure about whether you will stay here or return to China. If you decide to return or move to other places in future, they can sell homes then.

The institutional dynamics that generate gaps between housing markets in the host and home countries provide opportunities for individual immigrants to leverage resources and take advantage of homeownership. Ann also described her job as far preferable to the precarious jobs available to newcomers with limited English proficiency. The increasing demand for housing in Canada among overseas Chinese provides ample opportunities for immigrants like Ann to serve immigrants who might prefer to converse in their native tongue. The strategic building of social
ties with the immigrant community in which realtors must engage serves as an alternative that can contribute to economic progress. Another reason to become a realtor is that recent immigrants are aware of institutional discrimination and the difficulties they should expect to face in the Canadian labor market before arrival. In this sense, individual immigrants’ housing circumstance is not separate from their working circumstance.

Settling to working

Participants employed a number of work strategies in Canada. Fifteen out of forty-two women reeducated and earned certificates in Canada after migration before entering Canada’s labor market. As shown in Table 4.2 and in Appendix D, a lot of women slipped from prestigious high-skilled professions and managerial positions in China to entry-level or low-skilled work in Canada. Before immigration, these participants worked as doctors, engineers, software developer, program managers, finance directors, university instructors, civil servants, bank managers, or magazine editors in China. Unfortunately, they were unable to transfer the skills learned in China to equivalent occupational status in Canada. As a result, they took entry level and precarious jobs in service sectors such as bookkeeper, factory worker, insurance and real estate agent, sales and marketing representative, accountant, and air traffic controller. Seven took informal jobs like sales or turned to the ethnic sectors such as grocery stores. One woman became a pharmacist while two became health assistants and lab technicians after re-education and re-training. Only three women started small businesses. A couple of women found business with consumers back in China. And nine became stay-at-home mothers. Indeed, participants’ occupational mobility has been fundamentally shaped by the economy in Canada and China.
Table 4-2 Occupational Trajectories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Working areas in China</th>
<th>Working areas in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied sciences, engineering</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences, education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, finance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With skills ill-suited to Canadian labor market demands, participants often sought additional training. For example, Yun, who worked as physiotherapist, described her education and employment experience after immigration:

When I first came to Canada, I was thinking about updating my education. First, because my major was Japanese, I had to learn English from the beginning. Second, I had to think
about majors that would get me a job. I did a bit of research and finally narrowed down to healthcare. As more and more Chinese immigrants come in to Vancouver, graduates who have bi-linguistic skills are needed in health sectors. I found that becoming a registered nurse or pharmacist was too hard for me. So I chose a physiotherapist program. It didn’t require too much health knowledge, and would not take too long a period to finish. I end up landing a job when I was doing my internship. They hired me because I was the only graduating student that can speak both English and Mandarin. If I could speak Cantonese, I would get more, even better job offers.

Yun indicated that this was the best choice, putting financial concern first, although it was not the job she really liked to do. Research suggests her experience is typical, as Chinese immigrants face unemployment and underemployment in Canada in spite of their advanced education and professional skills built in China (Guo, 2013; Li, 2008; Man, 2004; Wang & Lo, 2005). Most participants, like Yun, turned to the booming sectors of healthcare, childcare, real estate, finance, insurance, tourism, and banking to make it in the mainstream Canadian labor market.

Others started up small businesses of their own to avoid working in jobs well beneath their prior educational qualifications and professional experiences. Hua founded a café in a suburban neighborhood. She explained,

It is not hard to find a full-time job here if you are willing to bend for the local labor market. But the problem is that even if you got one job, it is not stable working for someone else, given the uncertain economic situation in Canada. They may hire you
today and fire you tomorrow. I saw many immigrants experienced layoff. It is normal. I thrive to work for myself. Coffee shop is good business. Everybody drinks coffee here in Canada.

Another woman, Shelly, described how her nine years of work in Canada led her to run a cleaning business:

Upon first arrival, I found a job at T&T [supermarket]. I prepared food in the kitchen. My sister introduced me to homeowners who need weekly house cleaning in her neighborhood in North Vancouver. Most of my customers are her neighbors. White people. I like doing that, cleaning. I started just doing randomly. Taking consideration of my childcare responsibility, this is [more] flexible than other jobs. To my surprise, more and more clients are coming to me. I am too busy to take all of them. I had to ask some other available immigrant women to take over. Given this demand in cleaning service, I decided to launch a startup of my own. My business now expands to hotel room maintenance. I also work with building contractors.

Although she felt lucky she had been able to develop her interest into a career, Shelly emphasized that it was not her initial ideas or available resources that prompted her to start a business, but customer needs that pushed her to do so.

Other immigrants tried other strategies to overcome the barriers they faced as immigrants. Cathy had a part-time online business selling vitamins and health products while working a fulltime job
as lab technician. Before immigrating Cathy was an engineer at an IT company in China. After coming to Canada, she first obtained an undergraduate degree in a dental computer program. Then she did an internship in a hospital in Alberta, and finally moved back to work in Vancouver. Later, she also acquired a certificate in Immigration Consulting and tried several application cases before turning to online business. For her, a full-time job with a stable annual salary was not enough. She saw her online business as a hedge in case of layoff. She said,

As immigrants, we really cannot just put our destiny to the hands of the host society. You never know what is the future for the Canadian economy. What if I got la[id]off someday? We need to establish ourselves, not depending on any employers. I found this opportunity selling heath products online. Some of my customers are new immigrants. Others are middle-class Chinese. You know a lot of people in China, like us, they can afford exotic things. And they have the consciousness of buying health products.

Cathy expressed her concern about the vulnerable status as an immigrant in Canada. She was not the only participant who built an e-commerce business with Chinese consumers. Jenny became an independent distributor of nutritional supplements, selling vitamins to acquaintances in China. Qin, who worked as kindergarten teacher, at the same time had an online-store with Taobao, selling maternity and baby products such as formulas, diapers, bottles, and lotions. A report from Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research shows that the urban middle class in China is increasingly spending money on discretionary and luxury items (Goldman Sachs, 2016). Participants were finding ways to take advantage of the rising purchasing power of a new class of consumers in China in consumption categories such as food, clothing, travel, recreation,
luxury, and real estate property. Immigrants may work as purchase agents or provide consulting services in immigration, college application preparation, and travel to Chinese planning to visit Canada. The three women who worked as realtors mentioned that they used social media to find consumers in China. They sometimes made business trips back to approach potential homebuyers. Some of their clients were adult international students and parents who sought to buy homes in Canada to enable their children to study in Canada in the future. These businesses thus relied on their networks in China.

As the various kinds of work participants found suggests, settling to working is embedded in the broader contexts and opportunities they could find, similar to the pattern that emerged with respect to housing. In other words, the economic mobility of Chinese immigrant communities is structured by the economic contexts in both Canada and China as these two countries participate in the global economic system.

Relational Dynamics

While navigating institutional contexts in a new society, immigrants’ settlement trajectories are complicated by their relational circumstances. In other words, how people deal with changing relationship circumstances following relocation affects how they experience settlement. Moving across the borders together, the family as a unit evolves rather then remaining static as each family member goes through the migration process. Different experiences of each individual lead to changes in relational dynamics that may either contribute to or hamper the settlement processes. My study, focusing on how changing gender and generational relationships resulted
from the relocation effect on individual settlement, finds that some Chinese immigrant women can take advantage of new circumstances in Canada to reconstruct family roles. At the same time, the changing family dynamics lead to divergent settlement trajectories of participants.

**Gender dynamics**

As the literature on immigrant family has generally indicated, immigrant women and their husbands often experience adjustment gaps after immigration to a new country. For example, Shelly, who had moved from cleaning houses to running a home cleaning business, complained that her husband was not willing to take a job he considered beneath him. She said,

He is just checking instant messages, watching TV, play computer games. If I asked him to go out to do something, he became angry, and yelled at me: what do you expect me to do? He doesn’t want to talk to local people. How can he improve English skills? Neither does he want to take a casual job. I have to work and do the household chores after work. He just shops for groceries at T&T.

The adjustment gap between the two individuals had damaged the marital relationship which in turn created difficulties in settlement of the family as a whole. Shelly’s husband wanted to return to China. He finally started to work for Shelly’s business but conflicts between them continued. A number of women in the sample had a similar experience: they had integrated economically and socially into the host society but their husbands were lagging behind. Many husbands were more bothered by their loss of status and identity. Neither landing a likable job nor taking on
more responsibilities in household chores and childcare, some women’s husbands returned to China. As a result, many families experience difficulties in partnership because of living apart.

In contrast, some couples cooperate with each other and mobilize resources to ensure that the family as a whole gets reestablished in the new society. For example, Flora described how working out their new life in Canada had improved her relationship with her husband. Before immigration, they both worked as computer engineers with decent incomes. When they first came to Canada, they jointly worked out coping strategies based on what the Canadian labor market would offer them and their financial conditions. Flora worked whatever jobs she could find until her husband finished his MBA degree and landed a banking job. Her husband also worked part-time at an ethnic store during his studies to supplement the family income. Flora said that she didn’t want to pursue higher education because she suspected a Master or PhD degree would not be an advantage over an undergrad degree to secure herself a job in Vancouver. Lacking local experiences and networks in a new country pushed Flora and her husband to look to each other for support and complement each other. In this case, establishing the husband’s career first and the wife’s later does not necessarily manifest gender inequality but rather couple complement. The family as a whole was able to get ahead. Flora reflected,

Unlike other immigrant couples who just blame each other, we openly discuss our feelings, experiences, and challenges. We make plans cooperatively. We share housework and childcare. We talk about the problems confronting us and see how we can solve them together. In this way, we grow and change as a couple not simply as an individual. For example, we always stand up for each other if one of us is in conflict with
the other’s parents. We agree that parents just take their own children’s side but they are not familiar with life circumstance here. So the best way is that I deal with my parents and he deals with his parents. This makes life easier when parents visit us.

Flora and her husband were able to avoid having gender dynamics interfere with the health of their relationship, but her reference to generational dynamics invokes the gender dynamics these often entail. Indeed, immigrant women perform and manage social roles as wives, mothers, and daughters, juggling the cultural expectations of their host country and their home country. Life transitions following immigration both shape and are shaped by the changing generational relations. These lived experiences in turn affect settlement processes.

*Generation dynamics*

Immigrant mothers in the sample described finding that they need to rethink and learn new ways of mothering in the Canadian context. Canada’s childcare and school system require them to adapt to unfamiliar cultural norms and institutional practices. They also lack support from extended families, which leads them to struggle to perform everyday parenting tasks. As a result, the parent-child relationship may be renegotiated and reconstituted after immigration.

A lot of participants in my study felt unsure about how to parent in Canada, because they were struggling about how to retain Chinese culture while embracing Canadian culture. In addition, some of their children experienced relocation differently than their parents, given the interventions of new educational institutions and peer pressures. Improving English quickly,
learning new things and acquiring social skills easily, immigrant children may take on new roles because of their faster adaptation to a new environment. Confronted with this generational role reversal, some immigrant women have to work out strategies to navigate Canadian childcare and education systems and move between Canadian and Chinese ways of mothering. As Portes and Rumbaut (2006) articulated, immigrant family may experience “dissonant acculturation”, that case that immigrant parents and their children jointly learn and accommodate to the language and culture of the host society; or “consonant acculturation”, the case that immigrant children appreciate but their parents reject the language and culture of the host society.

Rui described different relations with her daughter born in China and with her son born in Canada. She explained,

My daughter knows what I expect her to do or not to do. My son always challenges me. That’s totally different dynamics. So I have to adjust ways of mothering. Actually my daughter is very helpful. She understands her brother and lets me know what he thinks. Then I work from there to see how I can deal with him.

Winnie has four children, and the eldest has different cultural expectations than her other three:

My first daughter was born in China. She went to Japan with us at preschool age. Because she grew up in Japan, she thought she was half Japanese. Then we came to Canada when she was about to go to secondary school. After she finished high school here, she told us she wanted to go to medical school back in Japan. You know how hard it
is to become a doctor in Japan? It is time consuming and uncertain to prepare for the entrance exam. We have to pay her expensive tuition as an international student. My second daughter and son were born in Japan too, but they came to Canada aged 7 and 4 respectively and mostly grow up here. Although they like Japanese cartoon and snacks, they are pretty Canadian. They both do well at school here. My little daughter was just born here. She is a Canadian. I guess we will bring her up in very Canadian way.

These two cases illustrate that migration is embodied in changes in parent-child relational dynamics as well as mothering perceptions and practices. Disagreements on scholastic goals, social activities, and personal identities may emerge when immigrant parents and children adapt to the new society both as individuals and as families. Indeed, shifts of reproduction contexts result in changes in everyday routines for both children and parents. As a result, how immigrant mothers juggle multiple daily tasks affect family settlement.

Participants who became mothers before migration said that the work of mothering in Canada was more tiring than it had been in China. They had jobs in China, but grandparents or professional caregivers had provided childcare and housework. In Canada they lacked this support, and they encountered a long waiting list and expensive cost of daycare, shorter school day, and limited after school programs. They spend much more time on cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and minding their children in Canada than they had in China. Many had sought assistance from their extended families, which required them to renegotiate intergenerational relationships between themselves and parents or parents-in-law in Canada. As a result, although relieved from household chores and childcare, they might experience sociocultural and
generational conflicts.

Those who could invite their parents or in-laws to come over for visits did receive significant help. Chinese grandparents not only devote time and energy to daily tasks such as preparing meals, cleaning, laundry, babysitting, and housekeeping, but also provide financial support and Chinese cultural traditions. The experiences of participants who gained such help accords with research showing that Chinese grandparents contribute to their children’s settlement and upward social mobility in Canada by providing a “stable, intimate, loving home environment” (Zhou, 2014, p. 292). However, most grandparents had difficulty adapting to Canada. Lacking language skills and friends, their experiences as described by study participants conform to the literature on elder immigrants, which reflects the difficulties of aging in a foreign country: reduced confidence, crowded living, economic dependence, generation conflicts, etc. (Chappeell, 2005; Durst, 2005; Lunt, 2009; Treas, 2008). For example, Lai’s (2004, 2011) study of Chinese senior immigrants in Canada described a “three-not-identity”: “not a master, guest, or servant” (p. 290).

Not all participants qualify to sponsor their parents, and those whose parents came as visitors on temporary visas could not help their parents access public services. The difficulties grandparents faced were a strain for participants as well.

Moreover, Chinese immigrants’ perception about “filial piety” complicates the generational relationships. As elderly parents started to need care, they could become more of a burden than help. In particular, singletons who have no siblings to help and women bear a heavy burden. Flora and her husband both have this experience:
Both my husband and I are the only child in the family. We have the responsibility to take care of four aging parents. That is the Chinese family culture. Although we can survive in Canada without parents’ help, we are supposed to bring them over. Otherwise, they would be very disappointed. Luckily my family reunification applications for them have been approved. I am thinking about buying a home big enough for them to share. We will move to a townhouse or an apartment. It is better for two generations to live close but separately than living together.

The Canadian neoliberal reforms on sponsorship programs have made it increasingly difficult for immigrants to secure family reunification for their parents (Chen & Thorpe, 2015; Franklin, 2015). Participants who could not sponsor their parents or in-laws expressed that they felt guilty about leaving elderly parents in China and indicated that they would eventually return to China in order to provide nursing care and companionship for their aging parents, recognizing that China’s geriatric services are underdeveloped.

Indeed, as immigrants settling in a new country as individuals who deal with a set of new daily tasks, participants also negotiate and reconstitute relationships with surrounding family members. Driven by the common goal of gaining a foothold in a new country, individuals within the same family may become more interdependent as they are forced to support each other and work out collective strategies to cope with precarious settlement circumstances generated by institutional barriers in the host country. They may also experience relationship changes because of the discrepancies in life goals of different family members and intergenerational conflicts. In other words, settlement as a dynamic process involves ongoing interactions and negotiation:
gender and generation dynamics influence individual immigrants’ settling, and at the same time, individual settling affects gender and generation roles and relationships. Individual immigrants constantly respond to institutional constraints and opportunities in accordance with their changing biographic situations as the life course unfolds over time and across space.

Biographic Dynamics

Moving at different stages of life, immigrants have different sets of resettlement tasks to deal with. Yan, described juggling the incompatible demands of career and childcare after immigration to Canada:

As new immigrants, we start from scratch in a foreign country. We suffered so much in the first two years. When I first came here, I tried four times to pass the driving test despite that I was an experienced driver in China. Refused by local employers in my area, I took odd jobs to get by. Also, I was about 38 at the point when I should have a child. Things become even more miserable after my son was born. I didn’t know it’s so hard to get a spot at daycare centers. Also, it doesn’t make any sense I work a low paid job and send my son to an expensive daycare. So I quit my job. My husband worked in the day and took care of the baby in the night to give me more sleeping time. Other people can turn to grandparents for help, but my parents and parent-in-laws are too old to come here.

Yan faced securing employment in an unfavorable labor market, having children at a relatively later reproductive age, coping with an unaffordable daycare system, and lacking assistance from
extended family. This situation of intersecting difficulties was very challenging. Her parents and in-laws cannot help her as they are infirm.

In contrast, immigrants who moved across the borders earlier, having studied or worked abroad before, generally experienced settlement as an anticipated life transition. For example, Dina who did undergraduate study in Europe before immigrating to Canada, mentioned feeling at home when she first came to Canada:

> Everything here seems familiar to me. I had abroad experience. I was there for 5 years. I also traveled to the U.S. several times. No big difference for me. I feel at home here in Canada. Downtown, suburban, shopping mall, school, community centers, etc, just like in Europe. I know how things work. So I adapt to a new life in Canada easily.

Dina immigrated with transferable education credentials and working skills, without the pressures of the biological clock on childbearing, which helped her settle more comfortably than Yan had. Indeed, participants who had them frequently used past mobility experiences to contextualize their current lives. Benefits and advantages are constantly weighed against the tensions and struggles that accrued from migration processes.

Zoe’s reflection on her migration journey suggests the importance of life stage:

> It is hard to say whether the immigration decision is right or wrong. Even if I hadn’t immigrated to Canada at that point, I would struggle with making my son go abroad to
study now. As for me, immigration at different age makes substantial differences. If I came here in my late twenties, I would have enough time to study, improve English, and try a different occupation. But I arrived here when I was 38. I had to prioritize my son’s education, not mine. I was not brave enough to start from scratch in my later 30s. If I could do it over again, I would immigrate earlier.

Zoe’s insight was born out by participants who came to Canada in their later 30s, had an established career and had children in China. Reconstructing their lives in Canada and overcoming systemic barriers and personal difficulties was very difficult. By contrast those who came at a younger age, with transferable education credentials and employment experiences, without many family responsibilities, were more likely to excel at navigating the institutional systems and coping with settlement tasks. Indeed, the embodied dynamics generated from changing biographic situations shaped how individual immigrants arrange short-term daily routines as well as make long-term life plans.

4.2.4 Homing, or Unsettling and Moving Again

Settlement may not end with establishing a new career, buying a home, building up social networks, and engaging in local communities in the host country. Migration is a path-dependent sequential process that involves constant prioritizing of life activities in accordance with changing biographic situations. As well, the lived migration experience itself may set people moving again. While immigrants seek to feel at home through establishing routine interactions with places, people, and things in a new environment, they themselves are transformed by
embodied daily activities such as eating local food, listening and speaking in a new language, seeing and socializing with local people, transporting, shopping, entertaining, cleaning, doing laundry, providing care, babysitting, etc.

Linda described what made her feel like she had become a Canadian:

I feel that I am getting used to life here. Years ago, I took trips back just for food in China. I miss wining and dining out there. But this time I went back, I suddenly felt that meals at restaurants were too oily and salty. I couldn’t bear that anymore. I didn’t even notice the change. It just happened unwittingly. I started to like western food.

Flora found that Beijing had started to feel foreign and she felt that being there made her ill. She said,

Vancouver is my second home. Beijing was my home. I grew up there, but I found that I couldn’t live there anymore. I get [a] bad cold every time I travel back. Was very sad that Beijing changed a lot. Bad air. Never-ending construction. More and more cars on the roads and in neighborhoods. It becomes [undifferentiated] from other cities like Calgary or Toronto to me. The shrinking living-space and resources make people become even more intolerant. After I lived in Canada a couple of years, my body changes. I guess it is too clean here. I just easily get sick when I go back.

Interestingly, many participants mentioned that they felt at home in Canada when they stopped
automatically converting Canadian dollars to Chinese yuan when they shop for groceries everyday. Indeed, living in a different environment results in not just economic, cultural, and social changes in personal lives, but also fundamental bodily transformations. Bit by bit, as immigrants adapt to the host country, they themselves are changed. As a consequence, immigrants’ migration trajectories may adjust in accordance with embodied experiences and new life orientations. Indeed, as their individual life course unfolds over time, people may confront a new constellation of intertwining dynamics generated from biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts.

Chloe explained how her plan to move to France affected her behavior. She had obtained her undergraduate degree in France.

I haven’t bought an RESP [i.e., invested in a Registered Education Savings Plan] yet. It is probably not useful for me, if we end up moving to France. I like France. Practically, I plan to let my son go to French universities since post secondary education there is free. So why should I bother to set up RESP now?

Ann had also studied in another country, the United States, and she plans to move there. She said,

The States is a much better place than Canada in terms of job opportunities. There are more cities and bigger populations in the States. With a MBA degree in U.S. and working experiences in Canada, maybe I can get a better job there. If possible, we would like to
move to the States. It’s actually also for the benefits of my daughter. She will have better life chances there too. I feel people in the States work harder than here.

These two cases illustrate that immigrants’ previous mobility trajectories shape their future life projections. Yet only a few advantaged women who had previous mobility experiences had these options. A majority of women feel they cannot act in favor of their own life chances and their children’s but must choose. For example, Jane, said

My son stayed in ESL class for 2 years. Now he is in the regular class at school. I feel very relieved my son finally adapted to school in Canada. I came here for the sake of his education. I am okay with [moving] downward about my own work. As long as he did well at school, we stay here. Otherwise, we may return to China.

Like Jane, a lot of participants stay in Canada “for the sake of children” even though they themselves are in an unfavorable labor market. They also adjust their living arrangement based on children’s needs at different stages of development. Some wanted to bring children back to China for elementary education and return to Canada for secondary education. Some were planning to wait until their children go to college in Canada then retire in China. Others planned to return to China for a more promising career and to care for their aging parents, but to retain Canadian residence so they could retire in Canada.

Sue lamented about her life in Canada,
I think immigrants like us, who were in the middle class, make much more money, and have more prestige in China. Here in Canada, we are nobody. Even if we make it to find an equivalent job like before, it’s still different cultures. Never can Canada offer us a prestigious life.

Many did not see their move to Canada as permanent. Rather they expected migration to continue in response to changing biographic situations as well as societal transformations. In fact, the Chinese governments’ policies encourage overseas skilled professionals and scholars to go back, which facilitates plans to return (Liu, 2012; Wang, et al 2015). Notwithstanding their intentions, when asked what they would do differently, if anything, most participants indicated they would still come to and stay in Canada for fresh air, food security, and easy access to education.

Nonetheless, the Canadian immigration regimes will actually determine whether they can stay in Canada. Some are eager to become Canadian citizens to make sure they have options.

For example, Gloria said,

I haven’t decided about where to go yet. It is too early to decide now. But first I need to become a Canadian citizen and get a Canadian passport. I’ve been sitting in the immigration prison [meaning the residence requirement for naturalization]. I still need to stay 2 more years in Canada to meet the requirement 4 out of 6 year. People say residency requirement will revise back to 3 out of 5 years once the Liberal Party wins,
but it is still up in the air. Only if I get a Canadian passport, I am free from immigration prison. But then I need to think about what should I do with my house here if I really return [to China].

In fact, some immigrants hold a Chinese passport but live in Canada, whereas others hold a Canadian passport but live in China. As Gloria mentioned, immigrants need to physically live in Canada for certain length of time and present a range of supporting documents to obtain a Canadian passport. Despite the fact that some do not plan to stay in Canada or are not sure, most participants see a Canadian passport as more useful than a Chinese passport, even though it will mean they need a visa to travel to China, given that China does not recognize dual nationalities. As the literature indicates, immigrants’ multiple positions within transnational social fields help explain seemingly contradictory behaviors (Teo, 2011).

Indeed, the options of staying permanently in the host country, rotating back and forth periodically between the host and home country, and relocation to another country are shaped by how immigrants cope with their own life chances with family roles embedded within the changing institutional contexts of both the host and home countries.

Conclusion

Migration does not happen over night. Instead, the journey has twists and turns. Nevertheless, migration as an embodied dynamic process involves ongoing interplay between individual and structural opportunities and constraints. First, migration is a selective and selected process.
People need to motivate and fit themselves into the immigration regimes as well as adopt pragmatic strategies to deal with reception contexts such as labor markets, schools, and local communities in the host country. Second, migration is an interactive and negotiable process. As the individual life course unfolds over time and across space, immigrants constantly cope with changing gender and generation relations. Third, migration is an embodied sequential process. Living in a different country, immigrants’ lived migration experiences transform their bodies and mindsets. Therefore they need to make sense out of personal biographic situations to deal with short-term daily tasks as well as make long-term life plans. Positioned differently in institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations, individuals draw on different economic resources and cultural schemas to synchronize migration with other life events as the life course unfolds over time and across space.
Chapter 5: Reproduction Process

In this chapter I compare Chinese immigrant women’s childbearing and rearing experiences in China with those they have had in Canada. Through examining how having children is perceived and practiced similarly or differently in women’s everyday lives before and after immigration, I illustrate that a constellation of embodied dynamics generated by societal institutions, social relationships, and the individual life course drives the reproduction process. I argue that immigrant fertility is best understood as an embodied dynamic process that unfolds over time and across space, as people make sense of biographic situations, cooperate with significant others, and navigate reproductive environments.

5.1 Institutional Contexts

Reproductive environments structure having children by generating economic incentives, cultural norms, and administrative sanctions through institutions such as maternity health care systems, family laws, welfare policies, child care and education systems. Different reproductive environments provide different sets of opportunities and constraints with respect to these issues. Immigrants need to navigate the changing institutional contexts within which they are embedded to form new fertility perceptions and practices. Immigrant women understand new reproductive contexts through reference to their childbearing experiences in previous reproductive contexts.

5.1.1 The Reproductive Context in China
Confucianist culture describes having children as both the replacement of selves and a cardinal virtue because it continues a bloodline (Peng, 2010). Pronatalist elements are deeply ingrained in traditional Chinese family norms such as “among the three unfilial acts, childlessness is the most serious one,” “the more children the more happiness,” and the ideal “five cardinal relations” (Shek, 2006). However, state interventions in reproductive behavior limit individuals’ choices. The implementation of state birth control policies in the late 1970s, such as “later marriage, longer birth intervals, fewer births,” and the so called “one-child policy” implemented in 1980 effectively changed China’s reproductive contexts (Greenhalgh, 2003). In fact, the mean fertility rate of Chinese women dropped from 5.6 in 1951 to 2.6 in 1981, then fell below the replacement level to 1.8 in 1993, and remained around 1.5 in the 2000s (Liang & Lee, 2006). A cultural preference for a larger family has been gradually replaced by the willingness to raise only one child (Zheng, 2004). Whereas the average Chinese couple wanted 2.5 children in the 1980s, it fell to 1.7 in the 2000s (Feng & Zhang, 2002). In my study, when asked about whether they wanted to have an extra child if the one-child policy is abolished, only about half of participants said they would. Women’s fertility desires are tempered by the increasing financial burdens of childrearing resulting from China’s economic development. This likely explains why the revision that allowed couples who were both only children to have a second child starting in 2013 did not lead all eligible families to take advantage of the policy (Basten & Jiang, 2014), and the end of the one-child policy in 2016 did not create the baby boom the state had anticipated either.

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2 Five cardinal relations: a big family that has great grandparents, grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren.
Moreover, although the total number of children desired decreased, son preferences persisted. Greenhalgh and Li (1995) found that most Chinese parents wanted two children including at least one son. Murphy (2003) indicates a similar pattern: “a daughter is desired [for caregiving and helping with housework] whereas a son is essential for the sake of bloodlines and economic security” (p.602). Thus personal desires have blended with China’s reproduction bureaucracy.

Figure 5-1 China's Baby Bureaucracy

Unlike countries where a “Birth Certificate” will be issued right after a child is born, China requires its citizens to first apply for a “Family Planning Service Certificate” (termed a “Birth Permit Certificate” until the 2000s), then get a “Birth Certificate” (the medical birth registration issued by the hospital) and “Hukou” (the household registration issued by the government). The birth permit regime was adopted in 1990s to ensure the birth quota in an administration department of the birth planning system has not been used up (Scharting, 2003). It requires parents to collect over a dozen official stamps from workplace, street neighborhood committee, and family planning bureau and to assemble supporting documents such as household registration booklet, marriage certificate, approval letters from employers before the birth of their baby.
To receive maternity services at a public hospital, women must present a Family Planning Service Certificate. Hospitals can turn away expecting women who fail to do so. Upon a child’s birth, the hospital issues a “Medical Birth Certificate” that makes it possible for parents to register “Hukou” for their newborn. A person’s Hukou is determined at birth and tied to basic public services, distinguished by the two basic categories of identity: agricultural and nonagricultural status. Children born unregistered will not be entitled to public health care or education. Without a Hukou registration, they also cannot apply for a passport, either.

Under the one-child policy, Chinese couples were expected to sign a “One-child Certificate” devised by the government to encourage compliance with the one-child policy. Signing a “One-child Certificate” makes the family eligible for special benefits such as longer maternity leave, priority access to health care and school, and a monthly stipend. Couples who had more than one child not only lost access to these benefits but were subject to hefty fines and dismissal from work. Research shows that quick signature of the certificate was more common among couples with high education and income (Zhang & Sturm, 1994). Unplanned children could get a Hukou only if their parents paid “social maintenance fees” or “social support fees” to local household registration authorities. The fines for unauthorized births varies by location but is generally at least 3 times an area’s average annual income and can be as much as 10 times (Scharping, 2003).

Registering children in the city where their parents live is not always possible. Mia, who came to Canada as a dependent spouse under the federal skilled worker program, was able to register her son born in China but she had to register him at her hometown, Qingdao. She and her husband were renting their home and she lacked a Beijing Hukou and her husband’s was tied to a
collective residence where he had lived before they married. Thus she had been forced to travel
to Qingdao to give birth. She was not eligible for the public health plan because she didn’t have a
Beijing hukou and had to pay her medical bill for childbirth RMB 4,000 (CAD$ 800) out of
pocket. This experience and her desire for a second child – she herself was a second child, as she
had grown up in a rural area where the one-child policy was not enforced – was a factor in her
desire to move to Canada.

Lily also chose to migrate in part because of the one-child policy. She had always wanted a
second child and hoped for a long time that the policy would change. She applied to immigrate,
but she got pregnant by accident before her immigration application was approved. So she lost
her job as an HR manager at a state-owned IT company. She also had to pay a fine of RMB 300,
000 ($60,000) in order to get a hukou for her daughter, a necessary step to seek a passport for her
to apply for immigration to Canada.

These cases exemplify the clash between state birth regulation and personal fertility desires. Both
women wanted to have their second children overseas, but childbearing is an embodied process
that follows a biological timetable. Without migration, expectant parents must plan ahead to
accommodate childbearing and other life activities such as work; the complicated and uncertain
migration processes make this much worse.

In contrast, some Chinese women are rich enough to pay an immense sum for extra children. For
example, Hong, a 45-year-old woman who had three children in China had the first in the city
where she resided and the other two in her hometown where she found a way to get maternity
care in spite of policies. For her, paying the money for the extra two children had not been much of a hardship, but “getting the right persons to make it to render the baby bureaucracy navigable” was far more difficult. This case illustrates that although birth control policies are enforced by the central government and implemented by multiple levels of bureaucratic apparatus, individuals positioned differently in society may navigate the reproduction institutions differently. Only elites managed to have second children under the one-child policy, drawing on funds for fines and social capital to bargain with local cadres for Hukou for unauthorized births (Scharping, 2003). Like Mia and Lily, Mei could not afford this. Her hukou problem led her to decide to emigrate.

When I got married with my husband, my parents-in-law were concerned about my hukou. It turned out everything is troublesome without a Beijing hukou. They are sort of looking down me because I am an outsider. When I think about having children, I was told to first get a birth permit. But I don’t have a Beijing hukou. I was born in Chengdu where my “hukou” was registered. Although my husband has a Beijing hukou, a child’s hukou is supposed to register with mother. So I need to collect stamps from household registration and family planning bureau in my hometown. It is really annoying.

After a couple of unsuccessful attempts to obtain documents for the birth permit, Mei gave up. She recalled,
I was so pissed off. Going through the bureaucratic procedure was suffering. I had to do that twice: one for birth permit, another for hukou. This pushed me make up my mind not to have children in Beijing. I would have children in Canada instead.

Experiencing difficulties with baby bureaucracies in China, Mei ended up having two children in Canada. In this way, her children become foreigners born abroad as Canadian rather than outsiders in Beijing.

*The overwhelmed maternal healthcare system*

In addition to the state’s population regulations, people’ fertility choices and experiences are structured by the maternal healthcare institutions. Indeed, as the delivery of children has moved from home to hospital, childbirth changes from a family event to a medical event (Oakley, 1980). Participants in my study described unpleasant experiences with prenatal healthcare in China: difficult access, cumbersome administration, excessive prenatal examination, and obligatory postpartum family planning education.

Competition for a spot in a public hospital with high quality maternity care is fierce, especially in metropolitan cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Lily spent a few months when she was trying to conceive searching for an obstetrician in any of the highest quality hospitals in Beijing. A friend’s referral helped her gain access to a doctor. At her initial visit she was enrolled, filed, and given a pregnancy health booklet. She was told she could expect to see her doctor 12 times for routine checkups and that she must queue up in person at the hospital’s reception desk for each
visit; she could not make an appointment. As she explained:

Lining up at the registration desk is crazy. People hire someone to hold a spot in the queue way earlier before the hospital opens. My doctor told me [at my first visit that in the future I should] check in as a “special need patient” which is easier than a normal patient. In this way, costs of registration and tests double and are not covered by public health insurance. But otherwise I cannot even reach her. To save money, I did some tests as a normal patient, such as the expensive ultrasound scan, and other tests as a special patient, such as cheaper urine tests and the blood tests.

Lily had the resources to pay special fees for at least some of her visits, but this was not necessarily easy. In fact, the social welfare system covered all maternity healthcare costs in the collective era, but since the 1980s economic reform this system has eroded. Public health insurance programs cover basic services, but as Lily’s story suggests the “normal” care can be substandard whereas the “special” care would be from the women’s own pocket. Some participants purchased private health insurance to complement the portions uncovered by public assistance.

Janine provided a calculation of her birth costs:

I made a reservation for a private delivery room in advance. Firstly I paid a RMB 8,000 deposit [$1,600] when I was hospitalized. A vaginal birth cost about RMB 4,000. Half was covered by my public health insurance. The remaining expenses were covered by the
commercial insurance I purchased. I didn’t feel like I spend anything on that.

Participants in my study also mentioned that their desires for natural birth might be tempered by the doctor’s preference for cesarean delivery. Much like the hospitals Armstrong (2000) studied in the United States, Chinese public hospitals pressure women to comply with the institutional routines and expectations rather than to meet their own needs.

Chloe, who worked for a real estate company, was an exception. While she had a surgical birth in a public hospital in China, she was comfortable with it:

When I went to hospital for checkups, experts and even the director met me in a VIP room. They scheduled my doctors’ appointments. I don’t have to line up for routine checkups or examinations such as blood test or ultrasound scan. All my questions and concerns were answered immediately. When the due date approached, experts discussed with me about birth options. I wanted a vaginal birth. But they strongly recommended a cesarean delivery instead. At first I thought they just wanted to make more money. [Reimbursements for surgical births are higher.] But the director told me he wouldn’t treat me like other normal clients. He said I needed to have C-section because of fetal position. Due to my funnel pelvis, labor might not progress even if I tried for 10 hours longer. That said, if I hadn’t known the director and doctors, I would have terrible experiences.
Only elite women like Chloe have the economic resources to afford childbearing costs and the social network to get the best doctors. Study participants with somewhat fewer resources than Chloe adopt other strategies; some give the delivery doctor a “red envelope” (gift money). Of the practice, Dan said,

This is normal at the hospital. I didn’t know anyone who works in the healthcare system. On the due date, my mom quickly figured out which doctor was going to take me and immediately gave her a “red envelope” of RMB 1000. People usually do that just before entering the ward. Not guarantee a good experience, at least couldn’t go too bad.

When released from the hospital, puerperal women generally practice the custom of “doing-the-month” ("坐月子 zuo yue zi"): staying in bed for recovery the entire first month after giving birth, attended by their mother or mother-in-law, female relatives, or professional caregivers. Some women in my study indicated that they hired a “yue sao” (”月嫂”, maternity matron) to take care of themselves as well as the newborn in the month of maternity confinement, although their parents also helped them with household chores. It is not uncommon to pay RMB 5,000 to 10,000 ($1000-$2000) for hiring a maternity matron. Some women had an extended period of “doing-the-month,” focusing on breastfeeding, infant care, and recovery. In general, reproductive women on average take a six-month maternity leave before getting back to work. At this point, most must seek childcare.

*Rigorous childcare and education system*
In China, most women in dual earner families asked their parents to move in with them or hired a nanny at the beginning after having children. Daycare expenses normally ranged between RMB 2000 and 5000 ($400-$1000) per month depending on whether it was is public or private. The costs could go up if bilingual English-Chinese programs are provided. Participants who lived in China when their children were school age sought to enroll their children in better schools rather than catchment schools in their residential districts, which are typically of poor quality. According to China Daily, the “School-selection fee” (“赞助费 zan zhu fei”) charged by the chosen high-quality schools in Beijing soared by almost forty-fold since the 1990s, to RMB 300,000 ($60,000) in the 2000s. Many respondents in my study indicated that they purchased housing at great expense in quality school districts (“学区房 xue qu fang”), or paid the “School-selection fee” to get a spot in desired schools. Gloria described Canada as an “education refuge” after calculating that School-selection fees for her daughter would have amounted to RMB $1200,000 ($ 200,000) all told from kindergarten to college for premiere schools.

While committed to having children, many women in my study said that they feared such burdens, which they rightly perceived as higher than those their own parents bore after they were born in the 1970s. Raised during the reform era, today’s Chinese families bear a larger share of the reproduction costs than in past generations due to the elimination of state financed housing and childcare (Zhang, 2002). My participants estimate that nearly forty percent of average family expenditures go to supporting children, through clothes, recreation, school selection, extracurricular classes, nutritional supplements, travel, housing, and paying for their weddings.
Nonetheless, participants were willing to pay significant portions of their income on their children’s extracurricular classes such as math, English, art, music, and sports in order to prepare their children to compete in school and beyond. Regardless of socioeconomic status, a lot of women sent their kids to English classes or private English tutors. Some indicated that they would have sent their children overseas for post-secondary education to win elite stature in the globalized society even if they had not been approved to immigrate to Canada. This is consistent with Vanessa L. Fong’s (2004) ethnographic research on Chinese only children and Teresa Kuan’s (2015) study on urban middle-class Chinese families, revealing that parents invested heavily in children’s education in order to give them possible advantages in pursing upward mobility.

However, some participants saw immigration as a way to free their children from China’s competitive school atmosphere. For example, Mia mentioned that she was different from most Chinese parents. She said,

In China, parents try their best to find a good school for children. I don’t think it should be like that. My daughter goes to a kindergarten in our neighbourhood. Next year she will go the elementary school nearby. I don’t feel like everyone should go through this ridiculous competition. Kids need an enjoyable childhood rather than rigorous education. This is one of the reasons we wanted to immigrate to Canada. And, food safety is another reason. That’s absolutely vital for children.
Mia’s definitions of quality education and desirable childhood are different from many other participants. She tried to emphasize vital needs such as clean air, safe food, and healthy exercises rather than academic performance. Quality also includes food safety (Hanser & Li, 2015). Indeed, while immigration to Canada for some mothers is an opportunity to find quality schools without the stress and cost required in Canada, others see it as a chance to live a secure and relaxed life.

Indeed, China’s reproductive context—the cumbersome baby bureaucracy, inaccessible maternal healthcare services, rigorous education, increasing direct economic costs and opportunity costs of raising children—create disincentives for Chinese women to have children regardless of their values and parenting style. As Becker (1993) suggests, developing countries often impose a quantity-quality trade-off because of the lack of public supports for childbearing and childrearing. Research has attributed low Chinese fertility to the increasing costs of childbearing and childrearing, as well as the cultural shift of parents (Cai, 2010; Greenhalgh, 2003). The fact that many of the women in this study adopted immigration as a way to realize fertility desires and obtain quality education for their children suggests this is accurate. As the next section will describe, immigrant women use their reproductive experiences in China as a point of reference to understand Canadian reproductive contexts and to interpret their new situations for having children in Canada.

5.1.2 The Reproductive Context in Canada

Canada’s reproductive environment is quite different from China’s, and immigrants’
childbearing perceptions and practices are shaped by their new position in Canadian society. Both China and Canada are low fertility countries: Canada’s total fertility rate was 3.9 in the 1960s, declined below the replacement level of 2.1 in the early 1970s, and fell to 1.5 during the 2000s (Statistics Canada, 2011). Canadian women have children at a later age and desire more children than Chinese women. The average age of Canadian women giving birth to their first child has risen from 25-29 in 1991 to 30-34 today (Statistics Canada, 2011). The ideal number of children Canadian women wanted to have was 2.22 in 1999 (Statistic Canada, 2010) and 2.6 in 2013 (Nanos, 2016). In addition, Canada’s healthcare services, family welfare programs, childcare and education systems are very different from those in China.

Comprehensive maternal health care

Canada’s healthcare system offers greater choice of maternal care providers and healthcare settings than China does. Women in Canada usually see doctors at the medical clinics and can choose to give birth at home or go to hospital. Within the Canadian maternity healthcare system, family physicians, obstetricians, pediatricians, midwives, and nurse practitioners may work cooperatively to provide services through the whole reproduction process: prenatal care, pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care for new mothers and newborns. When asked about experiences with the reproductive healthcare systems in Canada, most participants were very positive: they found it easy to access, a humanized environment, with simple administration procedures, and nice healthcare providers.

Mia compared her experiences of giving birth in China and Canada:
[In Canada,] I find an obstetrician and see her for general checkups every 4-6 weeks in the beginning of pregnancy, then every 2-3 weeks after 30 weeks, every 1-2 weeks after 36 weeks, until labor. She is responsible and skillful. I did two ultrasound scans at 10 weeks and 20 weeks. Finally I gave birth in the hospital. I think the environment and facilities are very good here. Each person gets a private delivery room, with a tub in bathroom. In China, it was a big room shared by three expectant mothers. No male are allowed to enter into the ward. Only yourself. Family members just wait outside until being informed. Here, husband is encouraged to accompany the new mother inside. It is very convenient. My husband can stay with me all the time. That made me feel less anxious. Kids were not allowed to stay inside. When the moment came, he sent my daughter out to watch TV. After birth, I visited my family doctor every month to weigh and measure the baby. She gave me some suggestions on nursing, breastfeeding, sleeping, etc. Everything was going smooth and easy. I think [in Canada] everything the doctor does is for your benefit not on their own behalf.

Similarly, Darren’s account of giving birth in Beijing and then in Vancouver reflected key differences between the two healthcare systems in terms of access, recourse, quality of services, and costs. Regarding her first child’s birth in China she said:

When I planned to have a child, my sister who works in a hospital referred a doctor to me. But she was too popular to be reached. Many people see her. Waiting hours just talk to her for 3 to 4 minutes. She didn’t help me well. Then I decided to see another doctor
who was also in high demand but luckily I used my network to get a reference letter, and finally made it to bypass the long waiting line at reception in the lobby and see her in the office. The first time there, I registered as a VIP patient, which cost me an extra RMB 150 for each appointment. Luckily she was nice, patient, and pro skilled. She read the exam report carefully and answered my questions and concerns. I did have good experience with prenatal checkups. But, you know, it is different doctors who take care of you when you deliver. I wasn’t lucky to get a nice doctor for birth. Nobody told me what to do. I stayed in bed for 7 or 8 hours with a drip on. It was so painful. I couldn’t wait for a cesarean delivery. The nurses just ignored my request. They called the doctor when they thought I was ready. That was suffering.

Of her second birth, in Vancouver, she said:

The experience of my second birth here was much better. I found a family doctor in a health clinic nearby home and have all my prenatal checkups there. The doctor asked my health and medical history, habit and lifestyle. She answered questions and gave me suggestions on do’s and don’ts. She explained the available birth options. I’ve got plenty of time to discuss things with her. I took less ultrasound scans than I did in China. There is no lineup for checking in and paying for a prescription. I had a warm bath before labor. Doctors and nurses were very patient. They let you know what’s ahead and keep asking if you are okay. Juice and meal were provided after labor. They also helped me with breastfeeding. The MSP [Medical Services Plan] covers maternity care. I didn’t pay anything except $9 for a overnight parking at the hospital.
Yun’s experience with midwife in Canada was also positive. She said,

Through word-of-mouth I found a Chinese midwife. I was very lucky because she is the only Chinese midwife in Greater Vancouver. She was with me from pregnancy to birth. She provided suggestions on how to eat well, sleep well, take prenatal vitamins, avoid weight gain. After I was discharged from the hospital, she visited us at home for a few weeks. I feel like they took the utmost care of me.

These cases suggest that Canada provides women with easier access, more comprehensive medical insurance, and an easy bureaucratic procedure compared to China. Further, participants did not generally feel the need for supplemental private health insurance and they did not have significant out of pocket costs to access high-quality maternity healthcare.

However, there were three respondents whose childbearing experiences in Canada were less positive. Zoe emphasized the cultural differences between Chinese doctors and Canadian doctors:

As a woman in her 40s, I know the risk of miscarriage for me is 25%. But Canadian doctors don’t have the idea of “Fetus Protection”. If a pregnancy ends in a miscarriage, they think that is just bad luck. On the contrary, Chinese doctors would suggest herbs or tell you practical strategies to prevent miscarriage in the first trimester of pregnancy if you ask. “Fetus Protection” is popular in China. They would help you to avoid
miscarriage and improve the chance for a successful pregnancy. Canadian doctors don’t do that.

Other critics of Canadian health care described a long waiting time, inefficient scheduling, and useless tests. For instance, Iona complained about the efficiency of the medical systems. She said,

I am not satisfied with the health care system here. The waiting time is too long. For example, it takes two weeks to make an appointment with a family doctor for regular checkup, two or three weeks for an ultrasound, and then another two weeks to review the result with the doctor. They even scheduled an abortion appointment three months later. That doesn’t make sense at all. In China, such a long wait can be shortened into just one day.

Another woman Monica, who had a child in Saint John before moving to Vancouver, attributed her painful birth experiences to being attended by an unqualified obstetrician. She said:

The doctors and nurses are very nice, patient, and humane. They treat you like a god, but they just don’t have enough expertise and experiences. My doctor didn’t even notice that my placenta hadn’t fully delivered [during] labor. I was still bleeding when I arrived home with my newborn. Then we had to return to the hospital. She examined and did a surgery of detachment of the placenta. That was [a] nightmare, terrible experience, like giving birth twice. That made me not trust their skills anymore. Probably Canadian
doctors don’t have enough population to practice, unlike that in China, [where] even doctors in a small town are very experienced.

This counterexample notwithstanding, giving birth in Canada did not require a sustained engagement with bureaucracy as it does in China, and while the care and procedures in Canada were hardly perfect, for most respondents they were far superior in accessibility, convenience, and quality than they had been in China.

After birth, Chinese immigrants still practice the postpartum custom of “zuo yue zi” (“doing-the-month”, holding a month recovery). However, they cannot afford a “yue sao” (maternity matron) to take care of themselves and the newborn in the month of maternity confinement in Canada as that in China. Neither can they easily invite extended family members to come over for help due to the visa issue. But participants did not complain much and felt that they were fine doing-the-month on their own since they didn’t have to worry about getting back to work very soon.

*Family friendly policy*

When asked about their experiences with Canadian welfare programs, a lot of immigrant mothers mentioned that they benefited from universal programs such as Child Tax Credits and Benefits, Universal Child Care Benefits, and Child Care Subsides provided by the government. Women who had a full-time job also mentioned Maternity and Parental Benefits offered by their employers. Yet these benefits work differently for immigrant mothers under different socioeconomic conditions.
Hanna had stayed at home taking care of her daughter since she came to Canada, while her husband worked for a construction and decoration company. She expressed her feeling about what respondents called “formula money” (‘牛奶金 niu nai jin’, Child Tax Benefits).

We received about $400 each month. It is not much, but something is better than nothing. At least it can cover her swimming class. We are not yet in the worst situation depending on three or four children tax benefits to get by.

In fact, immigrant families of low and modest income receive far more generous benefits in Canada than their higher income counterparts. Yun works as a physiotherapist and received a much smaller benefit. She said,

The Child Tax Benefits program doesn’t make sense if you are not low-income family. Because my husband and I both work, we are just above the minimum line. We only get the universal $100 each month. That cannot cover baby formula at all. One good thing here is that I can have one year for maternal leave. I heard it is just 6 months in China.

Yun is in the most vulnerable position in a sense as she is just rich enough not to qualify for a larger benefit. Chloe, who is self-employed, said that Canada’s benefits have little impact on her childbearing decisions and she thinks it has little impact on other Chinese immigrants:
[The benefits are] not useful to me. I think most Chinese don't really care about that small money when they think about having children. The rich have as many children as they want, especially sons. The poor just cannot afford having too many children even with assistance from the government. Childrearing costs a lot.

Indeed, positioned differently in socioeconomic situation, immigrants perceive assistance from the government variously. They also have different opinions on how children should be raised. Despite these differences, many participants expressed concerns about expenses of childrearing.

*Inaccessible and unaffordable daycare*

The majority of participants in my study thought that daycare fees are too expensive. Yan explained why she now stays at home instead of using daycare for her son:

> When I was in Montreal, I sent my son to daycare. We had childcare subsidy to cover that. But here in Vancouver, we are not eligible for subsidy anymore. The cost gap is huge between Vancouver ($1,600 per month) and Montreal ($150 per month). It’s rational for me to stay at home until he goes to school. It is expensive to bring up a child in Vancouver, compared to other provinces like Ontario or Quebec.

Living in Vancouver, many Chinese immigrant mothers stay at home at least 3 years to look after kids because of the unaffordable daycare for children under the age of 3. For example, Sue described her agonizing dilemma:
If I go to work, what kind of jobs I can find? An income of $2000, or 3000 working from 9 to 5 not even cover daycare fee. So what is the point to work? But if I stay at home to care for baby, I sacrifice 3 or 5 years for my career. I don’t know what kind of job I can find after that.

Indeed, participants described a vicious circle of competing demands from work and family. The work of mothering constrains immigrant women’s participation in the labor market, which in turn limits their ability to afford to have more children. The two options of taking either an “immigrant job” that is low-paying and time-consuming or a full-time mothering job sorts immigrant women into two reproductive trajectories. Since the responsibilities of childcare conventionally fall on mothers, many immigrant women choose to stay at home. As a consequence, they have difficulty competing in the labor market after years out, and prejudice against immigrants compounds their difficulties.

Even those who can afford the expensive fee may not be able to send children to daycare easily due to long waiting lists. The care crises in Canada even inspired a few immigrant women to think about starting their own childcare business. For example, Qin, who worked as a substitute teacher at daycare centers, said that she was planning to use her Early Childhood Education certificate to open a family daycare. She said,
It generally takes two or three years to wait for a spot in high-demanding daycares.

People have to look for other alternatives. I saw this as an opportunity. Why don't I start a home care?

Qin will not have difficulty finding families to send her their children. My research suggests some participants send their children to unlicensed private homes where Chinese immigrant mothers provide flexible services.

In addition to costs and difficult access, participants indicated that daily practices at child care centers in Canada add much more mothering work such as cooking, cleaning, and volunteering than their counterparts in China. The daycares in China provide three hot meals daily, whereas in Canada, parents are expected to pack up lunch for their children. Most daycares don’t heat up lunch for safety reasons. Seeing this as a health concern, a lot of mothers cook in the morning and put hot food in an insulated container for their children to take to daycare in the hopes that it will still be hot when they eat it, and some reheat food in the morning for this purpose. A few mothers who live close to their children’s daycare centers actually deliver lunch every day because they do not want their children to eat cold lunches. The mothers also said that the fact that their kids go outside even in the rain created a lot more laundry than Chinese daycare practices. Thus, Canadian day care is not only expensive and difficult to access; respondents also faced cultural disconnects that created excess labor they would not have had to perform in China.

*Accessible education system*
As children reach school age, the Canadian education system structures the work of mothering. Most women in my study thought quality education is easy to access in Canada compared to that in China. Post-secondary education in Canada was seen as less burdensome since the government provides student loans for this purpose. However, a few women raised concerns about the quality of public education and thus sent their kids to private schools. Canada’s public schools did not meet their expectations for children’s educational achievement, and thus they faced burdensome expenses to provide their children with an education.

For example, Hua, a skilled immigrant, who lived in a suburban neighborhood, enrolled her two sons in a private school that charges about $16,000 a year. She compared two education systems in China and Canada to justify her choice of private secondary school for her sons:

- Canada’s education is free and accessible. But people just compare apples to oranges. They try their best to send their kids to premiere schools in China, but they don’t do so in Canada. You can’t compare public schools here in Canada with premier schools there in China. Chinese education is elite oriented and knowledge-based, whereas Canadian education is geared toward ordinary people. Kids don’t learn much in public school.
- Student and teachers are distracted and interrupted by disengaged students. Private schools have much better educational environment. Every student is working hard there. Teachers are more engaging. Teachers give more discipline. They use different textbooks, have more useful activities, take more field trips. Sixteen thousand dollars per year is expensive. But [private school is] worth that, thinking about the expensive School Selection Fee we need to pay [in China] if we didn’t come here.
Two other women enrolled their children in schools run by churches, which cost about $3000 to $4000 per year. Both felt that religious school offers stronger moral values, higher standards of discipline, and fewer worries than public schools. Yan explained her concerns and critiques of Canadian education:

I think the Canadian curriculum emphasizes too much on literacy [and not enough emphasis] on numeracy. The elementary teachers give pupils a lot of readings. But their math is too bad. The math textbooks are too easy. Abstract mathematic concepts are not covered. Kids won’t learn solid math skills as [they do] in China. There are no exams, no homework, no ranking. So you don’t know how your kids are doing at school. Parents have to take more effort assisting kids at home. People always say that Chinese and Korean students are doing better than other kids at school. Because [their parents] care about academic pursuits and emphasize hardworking ethic. Teachers don’t put much effort. Yet they threaten strike over workload almost every year!

Most participants oversee their children’s academic work much as Yan describes; they also determine whether their children need extra tutoring, which extracurricular classes are useful, and what activities and events should they attend. They also need to learn social skills such as communicating with teachers, setting up play dates and sleepovers with other kids on weekends, organizing birthday parties, and registering for activities during school breaks.

When asked about how they hope their children grow up, participants spoke in contradictions: on
the one hand, they were willing to invest in children’ education as much as they can; on the other hand, they wanted their children to be free from fierce competition and to develop individuality and independence. They wanted their children to retain Chinese culture while adapting to Canadian culture. For example, Iona, who came to Canada for the sake of her children’s education, described a particular manifestation of this:

When we were in China, my daughter took private classes with a native English tutor. After we moved here, she took Chinese class. I hope when she grow up, she will be a cosmopolitan, competent to her white classmates here as well as counterparts back in China.

Participants’ ideas about childrearing strategies reference other co-ethnic groups and natives. Also, they draw on their own past education experiences to create a future plan for their children. For example, Ann described her ideas about her daughter’s life chances thus:

I don’t expect my daughter go to those Ivy colleague universities like Harvard. My bottom line is University of Toronto or somewhere else of that caliber. The education quality in eastern Canada is higher than here. Also, it’s easier to find jobs there. I might have a better career with my MBA earned from U.S. if I was in Toronto. But I can only work as a real estate broker in Vancouver. I hope my daughter will live a different life. When she is young she should venture into the world in big cities. She can return home anytime.
Ann thought that her daughter, as a second-generation immigrant would be able to access greater life chances than she herself, as a first-generation immigrant, but she did not believe second generation immigrants can achieve as much as natives. Some immigrant mothers, like Ann, were pragmatic. They hoped their children would choose majors such as science, engineering, computer science, or business rather than arts or social science. Indeed, Canadian reproductive contexts structure immigrants’ perceptions and practices with regard to childrearing.

5.2 Relational Circumstance

In addition to national context, having children is perceived and practiced within participants’ intimate relations. Couples need to reach consensus on the timing and the number of children they will have. They also need to plan child rearing together and negotiate the division of labor. In addition, generation dynamics can affect childbearing and childrearing through normative socializations and practical assistances. Moving from China to Canada, gender and generation dynamics may shift in accordance to new life circumstances. Because of this immigrants may think about and act on having and bringing up children differently.

5.2.1 Relational Circumstance in China

When in China, the women’s discussions with their partners about childbearing mainly focused on the timing of their single pregnancy rather than the desired number of children due to the presence of the so-called “one-child policy”. Participants differed from their husbands with respect to what were required for having children: financial circumstance, biological condition,
psychological readiness, work-family balance, and the division of labor. Although they, like most couples in China, shared the role of breadwinner, women were responsible for homemaking and taking care of children.

Gloria provided a typical example. She said,

I actually wanted to have a second child. But my husband didn’t. He thinks it will bring much more financial burden and emotional obligations. But he actually doesn’t do anything at home.

Lin also complained about gender inequality, but in a reversed way:

I didn’t want an extra child. My husband wanted one. He was eager to have a daughter. He expected that a daughter would be more close to dad. He even wanted more than two children. But he did not even lift a finger in the kitchen. How can I handle this?

These two cases suggest that gendered divisions of labor depress fertility. Participants typically resolved the problem of husbands’ indolence by outsourcing childcare to unpaid grandparents or paid babysitters. Many women in my study had lived in a multigenerational household since they got married because they depended on parents or parents-in-law for babysitting and domestic chores. However, this created conflicts over the ways of raising children. For example, Janine revealed her ambivalence about her parents’ help:
Definitely living with parents has both pros and cons. The good thing is I don’t have to worry about trivial things such as picking up and dropping off my daughter, babysitting, cooking, doing laundry and the like. But in the meantime, I have to deal with other issues. For example, my mom gives my daughter too many candies. I don’t like her old way of childrearing, dressing rustically, spoiling, bad manner, etc. But what I can do? I don’t have alternatives. My husband and I work full-time jobs. But we can’t afford to hire a nanny. Most importantly, it is unsafe to hire a nanny. I often heard news children got trafficked. Of course, hired nannies just want to make money. They don’t really care about your children. It’s normal they just let kids watch TV all the day.

Indeed, financial and security concerns constrain dual-earner families’ arrangement with regard to childbearing and childrearing. A lot of women described it as difficult to have children without help from grandparents. As one example of a source of generational disconnect, research finds that Chinese grandparents are extremely happy when boys are born and are more willing to provide postnatal care for a baby boy than a baby girl (Wu, et al., 2014). Such issues can complicate interactions between the generations.

Only a few participants in my study lived in a nuclear family household in China. For example, Mia, who has stayed at home since her son was born, said that this was important to her to not rely on grandparents but on her husband and herself. She criticized the popular practice in which grandparents look after children and may even live with them without their parents. She said,
Parents who just leave children to grandparents do not take up their responsibilities. I think it is a big problem for the majority of Chinese. There is no boundary between nuclear and extended family. The family is distorted in this sense. In the residential compound where we live, you can see it is all grandmas who care for children. I’m the only mother who does that myself. They think I am strange. They questioned to me: don’t you have a job? They didn’t understand why I didn’t ask my parents or parents-in-law to come over, but quit my job for childcare instead. Nowadays young couples don’t think they should bring up children on their own. They just depend on grandparents to purchase a home and raise their children.

In keeping with Mia’s impressions, most respondents had grandparents living under the same roof who helped them with childcare. Also, this addressed the strain of having life partners who failed to do childcare or household tasks. Min’s husband had taken significant responsibility for her son from the beginning. As she said, “When I was doing-the-month, no matter how hard the baby was crying, I could always fall asleep. My husband took care of our son throughout the night.” Rather than outsourcing childcare, Mia negotiated the division of labor with her husband. They also had a child after they moved to Canada without assistance from their extended families. Their success in dividing child caring labor made this decision easier.

In addition to childcare issues, participants mentioned that their first children had an impact on their decision to have a second. Dan described her preschool-aged son’s reluctance to have a sibling:
My son told me he would commit suicide if I give birth to an additional child because he thought a sibling would take away his things. He said his friend at daycare was very upset about getting a little brother. He even jumped on my belly and warned me not to get pregnant. I was shocked by his behavior. Where did he learn this from at all?

Dan was eligible to have an extra child in China according to the policy, since neither she nor her husband had a sibling, but she decided not to because of her son’s resistance. Indeed, women’s relations with their spouses, parents or parents-in-laws, and children all affect their reproductive perceptions and practices. These relational dynamics may change after immigration to a new country where they rebuilt and renegotiated social roles and relations in response to new life situations.

5.2.2 Relational Circumstance In Canada

Upon arriving in Canada, immigrants not only reestablish new daily life routines as individuals but also reconstitute gender and generation relations since each family member may experience relocation differently. Changing relational dynamics in turn affect perceptions and practices with respect to having children within Canadian reproductive contexts.

A lot of women in the sample gave birth to and raised children in Canada while their husbands worked in China. Other studies have described such “astronaut” and “pragmatic cosmopolitan” Chinese immigrant families: husbands remain working in China while wives and children settle in a new country and visit China regularly (Ong, 1999; Wong, 1998; Waters, 2002). Most
women in my study perceived lengthy periods of time living apart from their spouses as natural, normal, and inevitable. For example, Darren, who had her second child in Canada, referenced the “astronaut” family phenomenon:

There are so many Chinese Astronaut families here in Canada. It’s normal that husbands stay back in China, making money there to support wives and children to live here. Chinese men don’t want to take up jobs that are not equivalent like before. Why should men come here if they cannot earn as much as that in China? We have to balance between living standard and arrangement. We’d rather live separately but decently. Despite the long-term separation, the majority of immigrant families still have children. I hate to say that but I think Chinese prefer profit to companionship.

Constrained by limited economic opportunities in Canada, Chinese couples sought to establish a foothold in Canada by living apart, such that the whole family could get ahead. Participants did not put fertility decisions on hold because of such arrangements, although to the extent that these arrangements imperiled partnership stability they sometimes altered their plans. Husbands typically visited their wives and any older children at the time of each child’s birth. It is also not uncommon for expectant women to give birth at a private maternity home (the so called “yue zi zhong xin” 月子中心). In the absence of husbands, some of the women have grown more independent and accustomed to solving problems on their own. Nonetheless, as research on immigrant families has noted, spouse separation either due to a sequential migration process or family strategy for speeding up successful settlement depresses immigrant fertility.
In fact, 23 out of 42 participants in my study maintained family relationships routinely through telephone, video talk, email, and social media such as wechat and QQ to China. However, the advancing communication technology hasn’t eliminated the constraints of distance on intimate relationships. Is difficult for immigrants to foresee the emotional costs of family separations, separations that seem so practical and rational initially. For example, Dan, who lived with her son aged 7, talked about her unhappy life after immigration.

My husband returned to China two weeks after landing. I set up everything at home here by myself: electricity account, telephone and cable service, electronic appliance. I even put together IKEA pieces into furniture. I enrolled my son in school. Can you imagine how I survived? Although I don’t have to work to make a living, the household work and childcare are exhausting. But the key problem is that I can’t stand such long separation. My husband might have affairs with other women in China while I was not with him. Is that what I come to Canada for? I experienced hard time trying to emotionally settle down when I first came. I still feel depressed now, especially in winter. I always want to go back. Others persuaded me to stay one more year for Canadian citizenship. But I don’t want to stay here even one day more. I cannot live like this anymore. How is it possible even having another child? If I knew life would be like this, I would have not immigrated at all.

Loneliness, boredom, depression, and financial dependency may destroy Dan’s marriage. This case illustrates that although class privilege makes Chinese men’s move to Canada less appealing, gender privilege plays a crucial role too. It seems common that while Chinese wives...
worry about their husbands’ fidelity back in China, husbands do not worry about their wives’ fidelity here in Canada.

Sylvia, who worked as a part-time interpreter, indicated that she was not afraid of divorcing her husband and raising her daughter by herself. She said,

In China, we stayed at my parents-in-laws’ home. My husband worked in another city. I work, cook, clean, and take care of our daughter. Although I worked as Chinese teacher in an international school, my husband and his parents saw me [as] dependent on them. After I came to Canada, I sensed an opportunity to become independent. I took an Interpretation and Translation program and turned this into my new career. But my husband failed the exam for a MBA program. He had to depend on me now. He often wished to return to China. I don’t care too much about him as before. I am not afraid of divorce. I can make a living here on my own. At least I can survive with the social assistance for single mom. It is not like China, where single moms are looked down on by the society.

Sylvia felt empowered through immigration to a country where the social welfare system alleviates gender inequality. This liberation and status improvement may affect fertility positively or negatively, depending on how immigrant women fit childbearing into their new careers in Canada.
Participants like Sylvia whose husbands were present had to renegotiate partner relations and the division of labor as they adapted to life in Canada. Some felt empowered by living in Canada, but others were struggling more than they had in China. Those who, like Mia, share childcare and housework with their husbands more equally in Canada seem more likely to have more children. Madelyn described her husband’s change after immigration to Canada:

Before, he didn’t do anything, because either his parents or my parents help us with domestic work. After we came here, we both have to work. We cannot depend on our parents anymore. They are too old to come over. He is forced to share household chores and babysitting. I think he changed because the environment where we live changed. Before, like other husbands, he just works, works, works, without knowing they need to share the work at home. Now, all his colleagues, off work on time, pick up kids, do dishes, do laundry, play with kids. He came to know he needed to do these things.

This case illustrates how new reproductive environments can shape perceptions and practices. For others, however, any shift that took place in the gender division of labor failed to make up for the loss of generational division of labor. For example, Lin complained:

Before [immigration], I worked full time. It was my parents who cared for my son. We also had a nanny help us with household chores such as cooking and cleaning. When I came here, it suddenly became me who does all these things. I was so frustrated. I had to prepare a lunch box for my son to bring to school. But I hadn’t cooked before. I seldom even entered the kitchen when I was in China. I tried to invite my parents to come over to
give me a hand. But their visa applications were rejected. Just one child is enormous labor for me. I can’t imagine if I have an extra child.

These examples show that how in China, parental labour together with hired labour effectively mask a gender conflict that then could express itself in Canada. A lack of help from extended families can be constraining on settlement. Those who were successful in bringing grandparents to Canada felt differently. Some participants’ parents and parents-in-laws rotate throughout the year since the visitor visa only allows for a maximum of 6 months’ stay in Canada, although some participants won extensions for their parents’ stays. A few had applied for permanent residency for their parents. Given the unaffordable and inadequate childcare services in Canada, Chinese grandparents contribute to easing homemaking, thereby speeding up resettlement.

Nonetheless, the generational relationships are reconstituted and renegotiated under new life circumstances. The changing generational dynamics in turn influence immigrant women’s reproduction. On the one hand, childcare help, financial supports, and cultural influences may contribute to immigrant fertility (Lai, 2011; Teo, 2007; Zhou, 2013; Zhang, 2015). On the other hand, generational conflicts resulting from living together may lead immigrant women to wish to limit their dependence on the older generation and therefore to limit the number of children they have.

In addition, children born in China then brought to Canada, where somewhat larger families are more the norm, may influence women’s fertility decisions. For example, Chloe said:
I didn’t want to have a second child. But my son was eager for a sibling. You know, every kid in his class has siblings. Everyday he sees other parents pick up kids together with their sisters or brothers. One day, he got so upset when he was drawing a family tree, he said, ‘all kids have sisters or brothers, except me’. At that moment, I made up my mind to give him a sibling for company.

This case illustrates that, socialized in Canadian reproductive environments, immigrant children construct different perceptions on family structures and relationships different from those in China. Children’s family ideas in turn affect parents’ fertility perceptions and practices. Indeed, shifts in social relationships with partners, parents, and children affect post-immigration life in different ways. How immigrants cooperate with these significant others affects how they experience childbearing and childrearing and the decisions they make. Nevertheless, reproduction as a transition process needs to be synchronized with other tasks respondents juggle as their life course unfolds.

5.3 Biographic Situation

Whether or not, when, and where to have children and how many children to have involves both desires and plans that are connected to how individuals see a life path ahead and how they fit childbearing into the bigger picture of the whole life course. As I argued in Chapter 2, reproduction is a dynamic process that unfolds over time and across space. Individuals perceive and practice childbearing and childrearing based on their biographic situations: current positions in life stages, previous life experiences, and future life orientations. Positioned differently in the
home and host country, immigrants think about and act on reproduction in accordance with their long-term plans as well as their daily routine in different ways.

5.3.1 Biographic Situation in China

When asked about what is important to consider about having children in China, most women mentioned “age”, “timing”, and “readiness”. Given the state’s birth control policies, a lot of Chinese women did not bother to think about how many children they want. Rather than formulating a particular fertility desire, most women consider the question of “when” to have children more important. Participants in my study generally wanted to have their children by the age of 30. They also felt they should have a stable marital relationship and steady career. Indeed, their perceptions of the proper time to become a mother are shaped by the broader reproductive institutions as well as their own timeline of life stage.

For example, Fen perceived having children as a natural life stage following marriage. She explained, “I got married at 24. When I was 26, I thought I was not young any more. I know I shouldn’t keep postponing baby plan. Otherwise I will be too old to have a child.”

Hanna’s timeline is a little further out. She said, “Definitely no later than 30. Everyone becomes a mother before 30.”

Madelyn gave birth at age of 30 due to biological concerns. As she explained,
I didn’t want to have children at the point when I was 30. The pregnancy was totally unplanned. I felt it was occurring too soon. I just got married. I was not ready for a newborn yet. I was so struggling. But the doctor warned me that if I did an abortion for the first pregnancy I might end up with recurrent miscarriage. So I followed her suggestion. She’s right. That’s by no means biological thing. I still want to have a child. It just happened earlier than I expected.

In addition to age, Linda mentioned that she thought about the zodiac year when planning the birth of her baby. She wanted her child to be born in the year of the pig, which she said was the luckiest sign.

In addition to biological conditions and cultural norms, women’s considerations on timing of childbirth are also shaped by the societal institutions such as schools and workplaces. For example, Jane said,

In Beijing, there is a timetable for school enrolment. Children born before the 1st of September are fine. In contrast, children born after Sept 1st or even right on 1st September have to go to school one year later. I don’t want my child to fall behind. I am not saying that there is one year physical and intellectual gap. My concern is that you don’t know whether the enrolment policy or curriculum will change a year later. So I planned birth before 1st September.
Other women sought to give birth at a good time for their workplace’s schedule. Lily provided an example. She described the negotiation between her and her boss:

Our company requires us to report baby plan every year. When I thought about having children, our department already had three pregnant women. So my boss asked me to postpone baby plan one year later.

These cases illustrate that the biographic situations under which Chinese women think about timing their pregnancies shape their actions. In addition to the timing issue, a few women mentioned they needed to take into consideration factors such as balancing their financial situation and the costs of childbearing and childrearing. Indeed, reproduction is a life transition process that requires individuals to juggle multiple priorities and competing responsibilities. As individuals move to a country with different reproductive contexts with a different set of constraints and opportunities, they think about and act on having children differently in response to their new biographic situations as their new lives unfold over time.

5.3.2 Biographic situation in Canada

After arriving in Canada, immigrant women need to deal with resettlement tasks and establish new daily routines embedded in new institutional environments. While adapting to life in Canada, their perceptions and practices with regard to childbearing and childrearing are influenced by new encounters within Canadian reproductive contexts. To a greater or lesser
extent, observations of native Canadian women influence immigrants’ understanding of their biographic situations.

For example, Fen summarized Canadian fertility norms.

Two is the normative target here in Canada, isn’t it? You will feel awkward for having only one. After the first birth, Canadian women usually have another one in 2 to 3 years. I seldom see people have just one child like us Chinese.

Monica noticed as well that Canadian women reproduce later. She said,

I was so surprised that some Canadian women have first child around 40. I thought it’s too late to have children even at 30 before I came here.

Through comparing their own reproductive practice to that of the native women, immigrants may understand and interpret the biological ability to be fertile and the sociocultural norms differently than before. Nonetheless, they need to fit childbearing and childrearing into their new lives. Participants indicated that economic conditions, career development, and childcare availability are key factors that affect their family plans.

In fact, many Chinese immigrant women tried to have a second child right after arrival in Canada to compensate for the years they wasted before. Unfortunately, due to the long migration procedure, women who immigrated in their late 30s often found themselves too old to conceive.
additional children they yearned to have. Indeed, the timing of moving across the borders has significant consequence on the timing of having children. For example, Winnie, who had four children (one in China, one in Japan, and the final two in Canada), emphasized the time issue as a common determinant. She said,

There is no perfect time for having children. I just have when I have. It could be the case that when you feel ready, settled, you are reaching the biological point when the thing becomes harder. It depends on how old you are when you immigrate. It is often the case that most women are already in the 30s when arriving. How much time can they wait? Usually people postpone childbearing for getting settled down first. But the later they try the littler chances they have.

Winnie reflected on her reproductive history, which involved bearing children into her 40s:

I gave up my PhD program when I found I got pregnant when I was in Japan. That was my second child. After coming to Canada, luckily I don’t have to work. My husband finished a JD [Jurist Doctor] and became a lawyer after a couple years of study. His work keeps him very busy. But even that, he is not as hectic as he was in China. He helps with childcare as much as he can. We just, not like other extraordinary Chinese parents who expect kid go to Ivy colleges. We just want to live a normal life like Canadian natives.

Indeed, in addition to the biological time line, immigrant fertility is also shaped by the embodied situation of reconciling of multiple settlement tasks such as employment, education, and
obtaining housing. Not everyone is as lucky as Winnie, whose husband’s work as a lawyer enables her housewifery choice. Average immigrant women have to deal with competing priorities. For example, Flora explained why she put off having children until the whole family got established:

“I had my son when me and my husband are both ready in terms of relatively stable career and have our own house. Relocation to a new land is not easy. I don’t think it is good for new immigrants to have children during the initial settlement stage. If that happens, they have two options: first, raising children themselves. This definitely constrains their chances of upward mobility. Second, sending children to grandparents back in China for one or two years if they want to speed up settlement. I have friends who chose the second way. That is the [option] we want least. If you don’t bring up your children yourself, why on earth did you have them? I would not want to have children but leave them to grandparents.

As the literature on immigrant fertility has shown, the disruption of migration and settlement constrains childbearing. While Canada offers an easy-to-access healthcare system and comprehensive family policies, but immigrants still need to fit having children into intersecting settlement tasks. Thanks to assistance from extended families, some Chinese women can balance career and family. Many others struggle to juggle conflicting demands. The unfriendly labor markets receiving immigrants and the care crisis in the daycare system in Canada make situations harder and more complex for immigrants. As a result, women may upgrade or downgrade fertility desires as the life course unfolds in Canada.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I compare immigrant women’s reproduction experiences in China and in Canada. The analyses show differences in the constellation of embodied dynamics before and after immigration. First, compared to China’s strict birth control policy, complicated bureaucratic systems, difficult to access maternity health care, and rigorous education system, Canada has more comprehensive maternal care, generous friendly family policies, and easy to access education. Second, immigrants reconstitute and renegotiate gender and generational dynamics after immigration. The shifts in relational circumstances in turn affect immigrant women’s reproductive perceptions and practices. Third, immigrants understand and strategize biographic situations as they fit reproduction into instant multiple daily life tasks as well as long-term life plans. Immigrants draw on previous lived reproduction experiences to interpret their current reproduction situations and construct future reproduction plans. As the life course unfolds over time and across space, positioned differently in biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts, immigrants must deal simultaneously with the intersecting intertwining migration and reproduction processes, but how they do so varies. The transformations of fertility perceptions and practices are derived from changing migration status. In the next chapter, I will examine how migration interacts with reproduction to shape immigrant fertility. I will show how the ongoing interplay of institutional, relational, and biographic dynamics leads to diverse migratory paths and reproduction trajectories. I will argue that the timing and processes of migration and settlement affect the timing of childbearing and thereby the total number of children immigrants would have.
Chapter 6: The Interaction Between Migration and Reproduction

This chapter examines how the migration process and the reproduction process intersect with each other to shape immigrant fertility. I begin with examining how reproductive dynamics and experiences affect migration motivations and paths. Then I explore how immigration and settlement processes affect childbearing and childrearing. My analyses show that moving at different stages of reproduction leads to heterogeneous patterns of migration to Canada: temporary stay, permanent settlement, circulation, or springboard to other places. At the same time, varying experiences of navigating immigration regimes and reception contexts account for divergent reproduction trajectories. My across-group comparisons between immigrants who had children in China and those who had children in Canada, as well as within-group comparisons between people who had more children and those who had fewer show that each group exhibits distinctive reproduction and migration processes. Bringing embodiment, temporality, and dynamism into explaining immigrant fertility, I show that immigrants need to deal with the two joint life transitions of immigration and childbearing simultaneously. I argue that immigrant fertility is best understood as a social reproduction process that embodies an individual life course that unfolds across space and over time. How immigrants navigate the institutional regimes of immigration and reproduction, coordinate with significant others, and make sense of their own biographic situations shapes the timing and the spacing of childbirths, and, therefore, the total number of children they would have.

6.1 How Reproductive Dynamics Shape Migration Trajectories
As I discussed in Chapter 2, the literature of immigrant fertility mostly focuses on post-migration childbearing, without taking into consideration how pre-migration life experiences affect an individual’s reproductive life trajectory. In fact, individuals’ perceptions and practices regarding when to have children, how many children to have, and how to bring up children shape where they have children. Therefore, reproductive needs shape migration motivations. Having and bringing up children in more desirable physical and social environments may motivate people to move across borders. Indeed, demographic behaviors and migration motivations are related to each other. Demography scholarship has indicated that overpopulation pressure in sending countries, as well as the labor demands in receiving countries, drive migration flows from high fertility countries to low fertility countries (Coleman, 2006; Fargues, 2011; Zelinsky, 1971). Therefore, the picture of immigrant fertility would not be complete if we miss immigrants’ pre-migration reproductive experiences. How people navigate reproductive environments, deal with reproductive relationships, and make sense of biographic situations affect their immigration motivations and procedures as well as settlement encounters and trajectories.

6.1.1 Moving To A Fertility Enabling Environment

As I have examined in Chapter 5, Chinese reproductive regimes constrain individuals’ childbearing. First of all, in the period when participants in this study lived in China, the state was regulating the size of the population through a birth control policy, the quality of the population through the cultivating educational system, and the location of the population through the household registration system. Prospective mothers have to deal with fertility control, cumbersome baby bureaucracies, and rigid schools. Second, undesirable environmental issues
such as air pollution and food safety concerns constrain individuals’ willingness to have children in China. Third, the increasing costs of childrearing constrain individuals’ willingness to raise children in China. As a result, the reproductive dynamics in terms of having more children, raising quality children, and gaining membership in developed countries drive many Chinese parents to emigrate. In fact, my study finds that clean air, safe food, rich natural resources, quality education, generous welfare systems, family friendly policies, and easy lifestyles are key features of Canadian reproductive environments that attract Chinese immigrants.

*Quantity: having more children*

Four out of forty two participants explicitly stated the intention of having a second child as the main reason they immigrated to Canada. For example, Hua described how an unplanned pregnancy of second child resolved her decision to come to Canada:

I was thinking about having a second child when I was 35. My husband wanted to have a second child too. But I was struggling. My career was sort of got stuck at that point. I worked as an anchor of a news program at television station. I sensed change that female anchors usually turn from front stage to backstage in late 30s. I wanted to break the career bottle. But it was also not easy to let go of childbearing at age of 35. That would be my last chance to have an additional child. Then my husband said: you make a decision, if you are not happy, what is the point of having another child? So I tossed a coin: career or child. I ended up choosing my career. But when I turned to 39, my mind changed. I was excited the day I found out I got pregnant. I made it my last chance. Due
to the birth control policy, I had two options: give birth in Hong Kong or somewhere abroad. Finally, I resolved to immigrate to Canada. I came to Vancouver because this is the best place for bringing up children.

Hua prioritized her career when she was 35 but decided to prioritize having a child when she was 39, and this made leaving China necessary. As her description of Vancouver suggests, not only does the constraining reproductive environment in China act as a push factor, the enabling reproductive environment in Canada acts as a pull factor.

Yun, a physiotherapist, described being attracted by Canada’s pro-childbearing policies more specifically, but ultimately being disappointed in them. She said:

I heard about the child milk money [universal child tax benefits] from many others. It sounded attractive…. After arriving [in Canada] for four years, I finally had my daughter. I first reeducated myself to land a job. Then I had a child. But then I found out that milk money was not as useful as I imagined since we are just above the cutoff line of the low-income family.

Thus Yun’s understanding of child tax benefits in Canada was incomplete. China’s healthcare system also played a role in her decision to emigrate:

I was so frustrated with the health care system. When I planned to have children, I first went to the doctor for a prenatal check up. The staffs were perfunctory. They didn’t care
about your privacy. There were a few patients waiting in the room to see the two doctors. I heard them chatting about another women’s vaginitis just on the other side of folding door. They were so mean. At that moment, I decided to put off having children until landing in Canada.

Yun planned the timing and place for childbearing based on her comparisons of reproductive environments in China and those in Canada. Indeed, specific biographic situations under which individuals deal with intersectional life tasks such as work and childbearing shape their migration motivations and paths. As for Yun, immigrating in her earlier 20s, she had enough time to plan her reproductive path around immigration. In contrast, Hua, immigrated in her late 30s, had to make urgent decisions and precisely fit her timetable of childbirth into the migration process. Nonetheless, moving to a place where one can have as many children as one wants is a key embodied dynamic that drives migration.

*Cultivating quality children*

In addition to the desired total number of children, Chinese immigrant women’s reproductive needs and goals also include raising “quality” children in desirable educational environments. In China, the national propaganda that promotes “producing a quality person” and “cultivating global citizens” as well as the prevalence of only children leads Chinese parents to feel that their one child deserves the best (Kuan, 2015; Fong, 2004; Greenhalgh, 2003). Parents do all they can to provide “the only one child” with high living standards and superior educational opportunities. Quality childrearing not only includes heavy investment in products they expect children to
enjoy but also on talent cultivations. As discussed in Chapter 5, when in China, Chinese mothers enroll their children in premier schools through purchasing housing in premier school districts or paying school-selection fees. They buy children nutritional supplements and clothes imported from developed countries. They spend a lot on children’s extracurricular classes, entertainment, and travel. As globalization has influenced Chinese society, the meaning of quality children has shifted its scope from domestic to international. Mothers with high socioeconomic status thought activities at local schools and degrees earned from domestic universities were not prestigious enough to make children competitive in a global society. Many move across borders to access higher quality childrearing resources than China offers.

For example, Gloria, who first immigrated from China to Canada, then immigrated to Hong Kong, and finally moved back to Canada, revealed that her children’s education determined this mobility trajectory. Gloria left China because she felt its school system was too competitive and the pressure it placed on her twin sons to achieve was unreasonable. For two years Gloria and her preschool-aged sons lived in Vancouver while her husband continued to work in China. Later, the family made trips back and forth during school breaks. Gloria decided the Canadian educational system was cursory and decided to move to Hong Kong where Gloria and her husband hoped the school system would offer more knowledge and skills. But the same competition and pressure that led them to leave mainland China led them to leave Hong Kong again two years later and return to Vancouver. Gloria said that she adjusted her expectations:

We moved back because my sons were not happy living in Hong Kong, too much homework to do, not different from the rigid system in the mainland. I learned a lesson
from the back and forth moving twists. Children’s wellbeing is more important than education. I want my sons to be happy. Now I am okay that they don’t speak Chinese, can’t read and write in Chinese.

Gloria reasoned that her sons could take over her husband’s business when they grew up and that this would not be the worst thing in the world. She had undertaken migration in the hopes of producing quality children. However, the lived experiences of moving and childrearing led her to develop new ideas about education and changed her understanding of quality education for children.

Indeed, while seeking better reproductive environments, the migration process can veer away in directions that individual immigrants could not have foreseen. In keeping with Gloria’s experience, some women in the study worried that their children would not be able to adapt to China’s demanding schools if they ever decided to return. A lot of women in my study mentioned that they ended up staying in Canada for the sake of their children’s education even though they themselves had to accept a downward social status. For example, Madelyn, whose jobs were all informal, described her immigration to Canada because of her daughter.

The first time we came to Canada was just for sightseeing. We spent about one month traveling around from west to east. My daughter likes it here very much. So we decided to immigrate. But when we actually landed as immigrants, things became totally different. It’s not like travel. Starting from scratch to make a living in a new place was so difficult. My husband and I wanted to return [to China] after living here for a couple of
months because none of us can find a job that was equal to before. But my daughter wanted to stay. She enjoyed going to school here. We were struggling but finally decided to stay here because of her. At least staying here would give her a domestic student status in college. Otherwise, we have to pay much more if we go back and she later came as an international student.

This case illustrates that parents weigh their own life chances against those of their children’s. When there is conflict, parents may sacrifice their careers in return for perceived better childhoods and future life chances for children. Both present needs and future possibilities shape their thinking about migration. Madelyn was not unusual in perceiving obtaining permanent resident status in Canada as a rational choice to eventually save on post-secondary education, even though she has had difficulty making ends meet in Canada. However, many participants found a gap between perceived opportunity and the situation they confront in Canada.

For example, Sue, who worked as a senior interpreter before immigration, then worked as part-time ESL teacher in Vancouver, expressed disappointment in her life in Canada. She said,

If I hadn’t come to Canada, I would live a more privileged life in China. Both my husband and I had high-income jobs that we would never make it here. My husband ended up taking precarious low-skilled jobs because his English is poor. He now works in a supermarket. I just work part-time because I have to take care of our daughter. We were so struggling. We always think about returning home. We immigrated to Canada because we thought it was good for our daughter. We wanted out daughter to have the best
childhood. She deserves what other kids all have regardless Chinese or Canadian children. She told us her classmate went to Disneyland in spring break. We wanted to take her there too. But we had to think about economic conditions, going to Disneyland or visiting my parents back in China. I didn’t have to worry about money when I was in China. If we were in China, we could afford decent toys, clothes, trips. But here is different. Now we just get by with the minimum living standard. Then what is the point to come here?

Sue felt her family would have a better life in China, comparing her life in Canada with her friends who stayed in China. This feeling engenders in Sue and some others a feeling of not being at home in Canada. While it was common to come to Canada for a better life for their children, they felt it did not offer themselves a better life because of the disadvantages they faced in the Canadian labor market. In this sense, children’s needs dominate parents’ decision-making on immigration and settlement.

In contrast, Sylvia, who worked as an English teacher before immigration, felt that immigration had provided advantages to both her children and herself.

I feel like coming to Canada is the thing that makes a difference. If I were in China, my daughter would have to enroll at the catchment school. I didn’t have the privilege to get her into a premier school. Neither could I afford that. I didn’t have any advantages, compared to my better-off friends back in China. But here in Canada, there are no big gaps between public schools. I don’t worry too much about the school ranking as before.
Through immigration to Canada, I made it to provide my daughter with better education opportunities. My friends are now jealous of that.

As the contrast between Sue and Sylvia suggests, an immigrant’s status in China before immigration had an impact on how they view immigration could improve their lives. Sue would have been able to afford a premier school in China, and she was unable to earn as much in Canada as she had before. Sylvia could not afford such advantages in China, so a similar income to Sue’s in Canada seemed luxurious to her. More importantly, she could benefit more from Canada’s reproductive environment than from China’s.

*Birthplace: Canadian citizenship*

Some women in my study indicated that they preferred giving birth in Canada to giving birth in China because they saw Canadian birthright citizenship as an advantage for their children. They saw this as a way to, in a common Chinese phrase, avoid having their children be “left behind the start line.” They perceived the acquisition of Canadian citizenship the best possible starting point of life for their children. They understood a Canadian passport as a means to move around the global world and citizenship a secure ticket to upward social mobility in the global society.

For example, Ann explained:

> When I found out I got pregnant, I was thinking about where to give birth. My friend told me, if you want to become a US citizen, you’d better have a child in Canada, because
how the US immigration system works is that, they draw the stick according to the birth place. If you were born in China, your chances are much lower than those born in Canada because the quota is assigned by the population size. That makes me decide to give birth in Canada although it would be more convenient for me to do that in China. I always want to return to the States after I finished my MBA there.

Ann saw Canada as a transition stop to moving to the United States, but nonetheless saw Canadian citizenship as a prize that would help her produce cosmopolitan elites. However, since China doesn’t allow dual citizenships, participants did not necessarily want to be citizens themselves. For example, Cui, whose son was born in Canada while she worked as a post-doctoral researcher, said,

For me, becoming a Canadian citizen just means that I don’t need to renew my work permit every year. I didn’t give birth here to get Canadian citizenship. I didn’t take any advantages of Canadian identity like others. When my son was a toddler, I invited my parents to come over to help me rather than sending him to daycare because I was not eligible for childcare subsidy. Then I sent him back to China for primary education. I am afraid he would not speak Chinese if he went to elementary school here. I made it to enroll him in a public school in China. But I am not sure whether I can get him a hukou [household registration]. The elementary schools in China changed and developed a lot nowadays. He seems adapt to Chinese schools already. But who knows. Maybe he will come back for secondary education or university here.
Thus Cui’s son was a Canadian citizen but was living in China with his father and Cui’s parents, whereas Cui was a Chinese citizen, but was living in Canada. Much as Madelyn saw living in Canada as practical because she expected to save money on her daughter’s college, Cui described the advantage of Canadian citizenship in terms of the future:

Getting a Canadian passport is like buying an insurance. It makes sense only if anything went wrong. All it is about is just in case. You never want it to happen that your kids are doing poorly at school in China, then you have to send him abroad. Only in that case immigration can save you money on tuition. If kids did well, they could get a scholarship even if they came as an international student.

Cui’s future plans were uncertain, but the fact that she could send her son to a premiere school in China gave her flexibility. Participants with fewer resources had fewer options. As Linda mentioned,

Once your children become Canadian citizens, you will get into trouble if you end up returning to China. They will not be eligible for public education. You will have to pay a lot more if they go to private international schools. They will pay more on other things too, like buying a home, using the healthcare services.

Indeed, participants’ cultural logics of childrearing shaped their decisions. The reproductive dynamics of childbearing and childrearing lead to divergent migration motivations and trajectories. China’s reproductive environment drove people to Canada if they wanted a second child, to realize their ideal of cultivating quality children, and to gain Canadian citizenship for practical reasons. As a result, immigrants’ everyday life activities in Canada as well as their
future life plans are organized by taking consideration of the reproductive dynamics and experiences as the individual life course unfolds over time. Reproduction and migration are both epistemic life transformation events, and they are inextricably intertwined.

6.1.2 Settling In Accordance With Reproductive Needs And Circumstances

Immigrant women’s plans regarding when and where to have children and how many to have were not always realized. When plans go awry, they may adjust their migration patterns. For example, Judy described how an accidental pregnancy changed her life plans:

I didn’t plan to settle permanently when I first came here because my husband and I had good careers in China. My original plan was first landing briefly, just to give it a try, see what living in Canada is like. I didn’t quit my job when landing. I planned to continue work in China for about 2 years. Come back to Canada before the permanent status expires. Then stay here for 3 years to get a Canadian passport. After that I can either return home or stay here. Had I not gotten pregnant accidentally, I would not steel the resolution to settlement. I didn’t plan to have a second child at that point. But the accidental pregnancy ruined my plan. We had to stay here to give birth because we were not allowed to have an extra child in China.

Judy indicated that she suffered prenatal and postnatal depression because of the change of plans. The unexpected childbirth and the fact that she had no support from extended family in Canada made her life in Canada harder than she anticipated.
For another participant, Yan, the birth of her son hindered her settlement in Canada too because she had not planned or prepared for it. She described,

I got pregnant when I just started taking ESL class for a few months. My reeducation was disrupted. Originally, I planned to learn English first, then take a diploma program, and finally land a professional job as health assistant or office secretary. But my son’s birth changed my life. I ended up giving birth first and going back to English class at an adult high school until my son got a spot in daycare when he was two and half.

Yan attributed her difficulties in establishing her life in Canada to poor timing of childbirth. She thought if she reeducated first she would get a better job. Having a child before landing a job made work and childcare incompatible. Low-skilled jobs that she considered undesirable were all that were available to her. A pregnancy earlier than she planned exacerbated the opportunity costs of years staying at home for childcare that many participants faced.

In contrast, others felt that having and raising children had contributed to their settlement in Canada. For example, Yari described how having children in Canada pushed her to participate in local communities:

Since I got pregnant, I joined this new mom community. It made me feel that I actively connected with native mothers. I met people at maternity class and workshops such as No Parent is Perfect. I leaned about parenting in the Canadian way, how to communicate with children. I asked other mothers about their kids’ extracurricular activities. Later I
also joined the parent committee and volunteered at school as much as I can, such as field trips, BBQ events. I wouldn’t have learned about the local communities so quickly if I had not had children here and had not participated in these activities.

Another woman, Hong, had a similar experience:

Although I am a stay-at-home mom, I reach out to learn new things as much as I can. The Canadian education system is totally different from the Chinese one. It emphasizes much more on reading. Everyday my daughter takes home books from school. We read together. I went to adult high school on weekends to improve my English. I really learned a lot. I read Shakespeare now. Some immigrant parents just push their children to study hard, but they themselves have no ideas what kids are reading and doing. But I want to get involved in my daughter’s activities. More than just accompany, I wanted to also improve myself so that I can follow and communicate with my daughter.

In these two cases, childbearing and childrearing intensify immigrant women’s social interaction with the host society. Through continuous exposure to and participation in local events and activities, their social circles expand, and their understandings of local institutions and cultures improve over time.

More importantly, regardless of parents’ reproductive perceptions and practices, children’s presence plays a crucial role in shaping immigration and settlement. As Orellana, et al. (2001) have argued, immigrant children do not move across borders like luggage. Rather, they often
take the lead in settlement as language and cultural brokers and advance their families’ social mobility. My study finds that children of different ages play different roles in immigration and settlement. For example, Hanna compared her experience of having and raising a child in Canada with other immigrant mothers who came to Canada accompanied by older children.

My situation is different from those immigrant mothers who had children in China and came to Canada when their child was ready for high school. They don’t need to be fluent in English because their children can do translation and search information themselves. But for me, I don’t have a big kid to depend on. I have to improve my English because I need to figure out things by myself. I start from the beginning to learn how to see a doctor, find a daycare, enroll in school, and communicate with teachers.

In this case, becoming a new mom after immigration to Canada, Hanna had to learn new things in Canadian society on her own. Settlement tasks may be easier for women who had children in China and came to Canada when children became teenagers who are equipped with social skills and English language proficiency. Indeed, settling into new environments is different for people in different reproductive situations and at different reproductive stages in life course. First of all, daily settlement tasks are different for women with children of different ages. Children’s needs dominate parents’ settlement tasks. Second, immigrant women’s reproductive dynamics and trajectories shape their future life plans for staying in Canada, returning to China, or going to other countries.
For example, Iona, whose daughter is grown, described how she selected her residence based on her daughter’s life situation and housing need:

When we first came to Vancouver, we decided to buy a townhouse in Coquitlam because we thought it would just be temporary housing for me to accompany my daughter for 4 years of College there. We were not sure about whether we would stay in Canada or not. It all depends on life situation in the future. My daughter is 24 now. If she marries a guy who has a house, she will move out. Then maybe we [me and my husband] will stay in this townhouse. If the guy doesn’t own a house, we will give them this one. Then we will probably buy a house or condominium if we stay in Canada. Otherwise we will return to China.

In this case, Iona’s future life plan is linked to her daughter’s. Indeed, immigrants’ different understandings of the relationship between their own life course and that of children’s may result in divergent migration trajectories. Bringing time and embodiment into understanding of how reproduction affect migration, my findings suggest that immigration at different reproductive stages shapes the ways Chinese immigrant women perceive coming to Canada as a temporary stay, permanent settlement, circulation, or springboard to other places.

Nonetheless, women’s social role and responsibility as mothers lead them to adopt immigration as a strategy aiming for the best environment for childbearing and childrearing. Across different socioeconomic status, reproductive perceptions and practices influence immigrant mothers’ migration motivations and settlement paths. Moreover, moving at different reproductive stages,
immigrant women experience immigration and settlement differently. While childbearing and childrearing drive Chinese immigrant women to immigrate, it may hinder or contribute to their settlement in Canada. Women who had children in Canada and those who had children in China confront different daily life tasks to juggle. As a result, some immigrant women made it a priority to reproduce or recoup previous social status and privilege after immigration, whereas others experience difficult life transitions. The lived immigration and settlement experiences in turn influence immigrant women’s reproductive perceptions and practices in Canada. In the following section, I show how migration dynamics shape reproduction trajectories.

6.2 How The Migration Dynamics Affect The Reproduction Processes

Conventional theoretical frameworks such as Rational Choice Theory (Becker, 1981), Preference Theory (Hakim, 2000), the Proximate Determinants Model (Bongaarts and Potter, 1983), and Intention-Behavior Disjunction Model (Morgan, 2001) explain fertility in terms of individuals’ biological conditions, socioeconomic situations, and cultural perceptions. Guided by these approaches, studies of immigrant fertility emphasize factors such as assimilation, disruption, discrimination, and insecurity that affect immigrants’ choices for having or not having children after immigration. However, these explanations ignore the simultaneous interaction between migration and reproduction. In Chapter 2, I proposed an embodied dynamics model to conceptualize immigrant fertility as a process that is driven by a constellation of dynamics generated from changing biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts. In this section, through cross-group comparisons between immigrants who had children in China and those who had children in Canada, as well as within-group comparisons between
people who had more children and those who had less, I show how migration dynamics affect reproduction in three dimensions: fertility intention, the timing of childbirth, and the sequencing of childbearing and other competing life tasks.

The evolution of fertility intention

When asked about how many children they wanted to have when in China, half of participants said two was ideal. Eleven wanted to have just one child. Three wanted more than two children. Two said they did not want to have a child at all and another six were uncertain and had no concrete plans to become parents. They just took life as it came to them. 8 out of 11 who wanted only one child before immigration ended up having one child. Of the 20 who wanted two children, only 12 did: 4 who had their first child in China and a second in Canada, and 8 who had two children in Canada.

Table 6-1 Fertility Intentions Before Immigration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth country and number of children</th>
<th>Number of children wanted before immigration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. China 1, Canada 0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. China 0, Canada 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. China 1, Canada 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. China 0, Canada 2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. China 0, Canada 0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>
As immigrants gradually adapt to new environments in Canada, they may modify their initial fertility intentions since the Canadian reproductive contexts are different from that in China. As Table 6-2 shows, when asked about whether they think about having children differently after immigration to Canada, 24 women said no but 12 said yes, among them 10 wanted to have more children than they had before, and 2 wanted fewer.

**Table 6-2 Evolution of Fertility Intentions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth country and number of children</th>
<th>Changes in the number of children wanted</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
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<td>A. China 1, Canada 0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>B. China 0, Canada 1</td>
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<td>C. China 1, Canada 1</td>
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<td>D. China 0, Canada 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. China 0, Canada 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>6</td>
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Modifications of fertility intentions occur across all four groups. However, across-group differences do exist: immigrant women with all children born in Canada were more likely to maintain stable fertility expectations throughout the immigration process. In contrast, migrants who had one child born in China and one child born in Canada were likely to have upward fertility intentions after immigration. In fact, the life changes following immigration are a key factor...
factor accounting for thinking about having children differently. Two participants indicated they would not like to have more children as they had planned before immigration because they chose career over motherhood due to economic insecurity given the harsh labor market in Canada.

Those who wanted more children than they had desired in China cited a number of reasons. Some said that observing that Canadian women had two or more children and had children at much later ages than they were accustomed to led them to want more children. They also provided reasons such as positive experiences with healthcare systems, easier ways of childrearing, accessible public resources, and generous welfare policies in Canada. In addition, husbands’ fertility desires and first child’s opinions about having siblings also played an important role in the formation of new fertility desires of immigrant women. As I have discussed in Chapter 5, re-embedded and socialized in Canadian reproductive contexts, Chinese husbands and children may also think about family differently than before. As a result, their desires for more children or siblings play an important role in shaping the increase of women’s fertility desires.

*Fertility intention-behavior disjuncture*

Although the majority of immigrant women met their fertility expectations, the intention-behavior disjuncture occurs across groups. My comparative analyses show that migrants with two Canadian-born children were more likely to indicate they had realized their fertility intentions than those who had one only child born in China.
Then why do some immigrant women carry out their childbearing intentions, but others fail to do so? In line with previous literature on immigrant fertility, my study finds that constraints that prevent immigrants from realizing fertility desires include family-work conflict, lack of childcare assistance, economic insecurity, spousal separation, divergent fertility ideas between partners, health conditions, etc. Indeed, institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations create intersecting barriers that can lead to a discrepancy between fertility intention and behavior.

For example, Sue described her dilemma situation and the feeling of ambivalence within herself.
Working as a part time instructor in this language training institution, my income is not enough to cover the expenses of afterschool program for my daughter. But if I stay at home, looking after her myself, I am unhappy because I sacrifice my career. I feel that don’t have a life anymore. My ideal is working as a private tutor from 10 am to 2 pm. But there is no such thing. Students are at school from 9am to 3pm. I need to pick up my daughter from school before 3pm and stay at home with her until my husband comes back from work at 8 pm. If I work after 3pm, I have to find a babysitter for my daughter. But who else is more qualified than me given that I had a degree in education? What is the point to let go caring for my own daughter and tutor other kids? I was so struggling and depressed.

Like Sue, many participants were unhappy about their inability to generate high income given the unwelcoming labor market in Canada. They found trying to raise their first child decently very stressful, and they saw a second child as an extra mouth to feed. They also felt that mothering work was overwhelming and that a second child would inevitably add to that work. In fact, institutional barriers such as precarious jobs, low wages, and long work hours depress immigrant fertility. Many women indicated they would delay childbearing until they, their partners, or both had a stable job.

Yet not all women felt that securing a professional job equivalent to the one they had in China was a prerequisite for childbearing. In fact, some women had a second child shortly after arriving in Canada without participating in the labor market at all. They were more or less dependent on their husbands’ incomes and savings they brought from China to Canada. They indicated that an
“immigrant job” that pays little and would constrain their schedule is not worth it. They’d rather downgrade their consumption standards and spend their energy to have one more child.

Compared to their counterparts who had children right after crossing the border, immigrant women who had children after establishing careers in Canada felt more able to shoulder childbirth responsibility since most of them were entitled to maternity leave in Canada. Having come to Canada at an earlier age than those who had children in China, these participants had attended university or worked in Canada before becoming permanent residents. This made it easier for them to fit into Canadian society economically and socially and thereby made it easier for them to fit childbirth into multiple life tasks. Nonetheless, working mothers often confront conflicting demands between career and childcare. The arrangement of childcare depended on how participants cooperated with their partners and extended families as well as how they navigated childcare systems.

In addition, the difficulty of completely controlling one’s reproduction trajectory complicated life tasks. Women who got pregnant by accident and did not wish to continue the pregnancy found that abortion was tacitly discouraged in Canada. For example, Janine described her experience of trying to get an abortion.

I asked my family doctor to schedule an appointment for abortion. But my doctor told me she needed to refer me to an obstetrician, and the appointment would be three month later. I didn’t know why it has to be that long. My pregnancy will be too far to be terminated at that point. I did think about going back to China to do abortion. That would
be easier. But I need to look after my older son here too. I don’t have time to go back. So I finally gave up.

Janine thus had an unplanned, second child. Other women, especially those in their late 30s, felt differently about unexpected pregnancies, as they felt it was their last chance to have another child.

For example, Iona described her reaction to an unexpected pregnancy:

I felt strange when I found out about the pregnancy. I think I am too old to conceive. I did not anticipate that. My husband didn’t want an extra child either. But I was hesitating. That would be my last chance to have another child. I thought it maybe a gift from god. But I also understood that my husband did not feel ready. We just started from scratch for a new life in Canada. I was so struggling to make a decision about whether to continue my pregnancy or not. I even thought about consulting a master in temple. I finally made decision on abortion. It drove me nuts when I was told to wait for the result of a blood test. Then I went to the temple to pray. One day I had some bleeding, the miscarriage made me suddenly feel relieved.

This case reveals that women at different reproductive stages may experience the same problem differently. Indeed, timing is an important dimension of immigrant fertility. The timelines scheduled by the maternity health care institutions structure the personal timetable of childbearing. Despite individual differences in timing and spacing of childbirth, the lengthy
immigration procedures temporalize the reproductive behaviors of immigrants. Emphasizing the effects of time and embodiment, in the next section I show how the two life transition processes of immigration and childbearing intertwine to shape immigrant fertility.

6.3 How Migration And Reproduction Interact To Shape Immigrant Fertility Process

As I discussed in Chapter 2, sociological theories on time emphasize that women’s life activities are subject to their bodily reproductive cycles (Adam, 1990; Schilling, 2005; Oakley, 1972). Individuals have to organize their life activities sequentially based on both personal biography and institutional timetables. In this sense, moving across borders and having children interact temporally to shape women’s life trajectories. The reproduction process and immigration process complicate each other. Diverse migration trajectories and reproduction trajectories emerge from how immigrant women deal with the two life transition events of migration and reproduction: when they are to take place, how long they are to take, and in what order of priority they are to be planned and enacted. In other words, how relocating and childbearing are timed, sequenced, and paced have consequences for mobility and fertility. Among my study participants, this interaction shapes four dimensions of immigrant fertility: the timing of childbirth: before or after immigration; the location of childbirth: China or Canada; the citizenship of children: Chinese or Canadian; and the consequent total number of children.

Timing
While individuals make plans about when to relocate to another country and when to have children, their actual trajectory of moving across borders and having children is structured by the timeline of migration and reproduction institutions. Immigrant women not only need to work out their personal timetables of immigration and childbearing simultaneously, they also need to fit personal timetables into institutional timetables of the immigration and reproduction healthcare bureaucracies.

*Working out biographical timetables*

Due to the health risks for both expecting mother and fetus, modern medical regimes generally view the age of 35 as biographic point at which women’s reproductive ability starts to decline (te Velde& Pearson, 2002). Given this notion of a biological clock, women often use time as reference for understanding their “reproductive self” and making childbearing plans. Immigrant women decide at what age to move across borders and at what age to have children around this aspect of their biological clocks, because their bodies age and reproductive abilities decline over time. Yet fertility is not their only concern; immigrant women need time to accumulate human capital in terms of English/French language proficiency, education attainment, and working experiences if they are to meet the requirements of immigration and to establish a stable life in the host country. These concerns may overlap in ways that complicate them both.

Using the Federal Skilled Worker Program as an example, Dan provided a calculation of the likely age for immigration:
To obtain a total point of 67 points out of 100, you want to get maximum points for each criteria. First, education. Let’s say you graduate from college at age 22. You need 2 more years to get a Master degree. Second, you need 5 or 6 years for working experiences, improving language and passing the test. Third, adaptability. You’d better also find a partner to gain 5 points for this. Adding all these up, see how old you will be then? 35! You know what, according to the policy, each year above 35 will reduce 1 point! So [I] just handed in application as soon as possible.

Dan criticized age bias in Canadian immigration screening policies. Indeed, the point system adopted since 1967 places more emphasis on language ability, adaptation skills, educational attainment, and occupational qualification. Despite modifications to the selection grid, Canadian immigration regimes prefer economic immigrants to family reunification immigrants. The priority for admitting independent skilled immigrants may in the first place select immigrants with low fertility, the group of highly educated women who tend to have fewer children and have them later. In fact, even if a woman meets the entry criteria earlier, the cumbersome bureaucratic procedures may take years. Prospective immigrants need to plan a timeline of moving based on their biographical situations. Moreover, they need to figure out the institutional timetable of the immigration regime and adjust their personal timetable of relocation accordingly.

_Fitting into the bureaucratic timetable_

The individual timetabling of moving across borders: planning, deciding, applying, preparing, moving, landing, settling, maintaining PR status, and acquiring citizenship is structured by the
institutional timetabling of bureaucratic immigration systems: application processing, background checking, medical examination, approving, visa issuing, border checking, residence status checking, etc. The birthplace and the consequent citizenship status of children was a matter of some concern because of this timetabling. At the same time, the bureaucratic timetabling of reproductive healthcare institutions structures the individual timetabling of childbearing. As a result, immigrant women’s plans about moving and having children may not always work out because of the uncertainties of institutional procedures that they could not have foreseen.

For example, Chloe described how the uncertain immigration process interacted with her changing reproductive situation.

I first came to Vancouver to do my internship because my boyfriend was studying here. At that point, I was in the last term of my MBA program in France. We lived together for a couple of months and wanted to marry. But we had no ideas whether international students could get married and how. So we posted the question on an online discussion forum. A girl responded immediately, telling us all we need to do. She and her boyfriend got married when they were both college students. The procedure seemed so easy, providing passport, finding two witnesses on the street, then registering at the city hall. As a result, it took just a few minutes to get married. After the internship ended, I went back to Paris to finish my program. I handed in my immigration application there at CIC [Citizenship and Immigration Canada] in Paris. At that point I found out I was two months pregnant. I already got an admission to another program. But I gave up because
of the pregnancy. After obtaining my MBA diploma, I returned to China. Since I anticipated that the immigration application would be approved soon, I planned to give birth after landing in Canada. I didn’t know my application had not been processed until the due date. I actually could give birth wherever I wanted, Paris, Vancouver, or Guangzhou. My student visa to France and work visa to Canada were both valid. But I was just waiting for immigration visa in China. You can’t believe I waited for 4 years! How ridiculous! My class fellow who applied for immigration in France started new life in Canada after one year. But I didn’t hear anything about my application. As a result, I had my son in China. Then I started to work in China. My husband returned after he got his degree. We both had a high-income job. We were happy about living in Guangzhou. But, then the turning point came. My son got asthma. His health condition did not even allow him to go outside. The only thing we could do to improve his health situation was leaving the polluted environment.

As described in Chapter 4, Chloe learned that her file had been lost. The fact that the standard procedures and timelines of immigration shown on the official website of Citizenship and Immigration Canada do not always hold further complicated her timelines. Chloe has wondered if choosing Vancouver as a landing city obstructed her application, since her friends who chose Quebec City, Calgary, and Toronto all got approval within six months. The ways in which individual immigrants navigate immigration regimes affects their interpretation of migration situations and the subsequent responses. Chloe’s case speaks to immigration experiences of international students who applied for immigration in their 20s. Yet she was not as lucky as
others who worked out everything as planned and had their children in Canada as they desired.

Chloe was not able to do this because of the years of waiting she experienced.

Women who wanted a second child and who felt their biological clock was ticking also felt at the mercy of the bureaucracy, like Lily, who said:

I didn’t care about the immigration application too much in the beginning. If it worked out, then we will go to Canada. If not, we didn’t mind to stay in China. Then I waited for three years. But this year my thinking changed. I am turning 33. I am considering having a second child. I don’t want to give birth later than 35. With that said, if my application is not approved in 2 years, I would need to give birth in China. That means I have to quit my job because I work for a state-owned work unit. I am not allowed to have an additional child. My work fellows suggest that I wait until the one-child policy relaxes or I immigrate to Canada. But I can’t wait longer than two years. I hope I can make it [to Canada] before 35.

Lily’s case illustrates that the women organize actions of childbearing and immigration based their perceptions of the right time to bear children and to immigrate. Age at which immigration happens has sequential effects on the timing of giving birth and thereby the total numbers of children immigrant women can have.

Group differences in the ages of immigration and childbirth across the study sample show that women who had first child born in China and then a second in Canada all immigrated after age
In contrast, women who had one or two Canadian-born children came to Canada in their 20s. In other words, immigrating at different stages of reproduction has crucial effects on fertility experiences and outcomes. To make up time lost in the long moving process, women who immigrated at a later reproductive period were more likely to have children sooner after immigrating. In particular, those who immigrated around the age of 40 tended to have children as soon as they landed in Canada. For example, Hua, who was 39 when she came to Vancouver, was in her third trimester of pregnancy at the time of relocation. Due to the three months’ waiting period for the approval of the Medical Service Plan, she ended up paying for prenatal care from her own pocket. Participants who had immigrated at around the same age tended to say they would have had more children in Canada if they had been able to come when they were younger. Indeed, the actions of moving across borders and the process of having children interact temporally and simultaneously influence each other. The scheduling of migration and reproduction has crucial consequences on immigrant fertility.

**Sequence**

Different sequences of migration and reproduction channel people into different life trajectories. This not only refers to the sequencing of immigration and childbearing, but also the sequencing of dealing with multiple settlement life tasks such as seeking to establish a career, participating in local communities, and having children.

*Childbearing before immigration, vs, immigration before childbearing*
Positioned differently, participants view the sequencing of immigration and childbearing differently. Immigrants who moved across borders before having children had the economic, social, and cultural resources to pursue education and work experiences abroad at a younger age. This finding is in keeping with Fargue’s (2011) finding that a growing number of young adults were autonomously migrating at around the age of 25 to gain human capital as a way to become competitive in the labour market before building a family. Looking beyond the individual characteristics, the transformation of societies and the increasing economic uncertainties accompanying globalization have led young adults to postpone family formation (Blossfeld et al, 2005). In other words, while the globalization process provides an institutional context in which life transitions such as education, employment, and family formation are under negotiation, only people with adequate resources can coordinate these life activities strategically.

As Table 6.4 shows, thirty three out of the forty two women in my study came to Canada under the skilled independent program, while five came under the category of family reunification. Within the category of skilled independent, seven participants with children born in Canada first came in as international students or workers then applied for Permanent Residency inside Canada. Among them, three had children under a temporary resident status and four had children after attaining a permanent status. The years of temporary residence as international students, workers, and visitors in Canada not only gave them more time to have children in Canada but also provided them with better opportunities to adapt to local institutions, build up social networks, and cope with work-family balance. As a result, they were more familiar with and more able to navigate Canadian reproductive contexts to realize their fertility desires.
Working first vs. childbearing first

For the group of women who first had one child in China and then immigrated to Canada, some participated in labor market immediately and then had an additional child, and others had children before landing a job. However, women who delayed childbearing because they perceived employment stability and entitlement for maternity benefits as prerequisites to parenthood risked facing difficulties in conceiving as they grew older. In contrast, women who didn’t have economic concerns or did not care much about career were more likely to stay at home and continue childbearing until a later reproductive period. In this case, they could depend on their husbands’ income in Canada or remittances from China to get by. Some women had children right away and delayed entering the Canadian labor market until their children started
school. Some made this choice even though they would have preferred to start working sooner because they could not find employment that paid enough to cover the cost of childcare. Indeed, the different ways in which people schedule work and family shape divergent reproduction trajectories.

Table 6-5 Timing of Immigration and Childbearing

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<th>A. China 1, Canada 0</th>
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<th>C. China 1, Canada 1</th>
<th>D. China 0, Canada 2</th>
<th>E. China 0, Canada 0</th>
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Nonetheless, immigrants need to simultaneously deal with the intertwining migration and reproduction processes as the individual life course unfolds over time and across space. They need not only to coordinate multiple daily activities but also to work out long-term life plans with regard to moving and childbearing. More importantly, how individuals can plan ahead and solve the problems they confront depends upon the situations in which they find themselves and the contexts they encounter. People’s experiences of medical and immigration bureaucracies can be both strategic and capricious. Their circumstances of gender and generational relationships can change. Indeed, migration and reproduction are dynamic processes that involve ongoing triadic interplays between institutional opportunities and constraints, relational enablement and limitations, and biographic anticipations and conditions. Positioned variably in biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts, individual immigrants differ in temporal arrangements of orderly steps of moving and childbearing, thereby experiencing divergent fertility processes.

Conclusion

Migration and reproduction processes interact with each other to shape immigrant fertility. Reproductive dynamics of having and raising children in desirable environments act as key forces that lead Chinese immigrants to relocate to Canada. However, moving across borders at different reproductive stages leads to heterogeneous migration patterns among different immigrant women. At the same time, differential experiences of navigating immigration systems
and reception contexts account for divergent reproductive trajectories. Indeed, migration and reproduction, as dual life transition events are intertwined. Individuals need to deal with moving across borders and having children simultaneously. The timing, sequencing, and pacing of relocating and childbearing have significant consequences for mobility and fertility. More importantly, the interaction between migration and reproduction shapes four dimensions of immigrant fertility: the timing of childbirth: before or after immigration; the location of childbirth: China or Canada; the citizenship of children: Chinese or Canadian; and the subsequent fertility outcome: the total number of children immigrants may have.

My analyses of across-group comparisons among participants who had children in China and those who had children in Canada, as well as within-group comparisons on who had more children and those who had fewer, reveal three key patterns. First, the evolution of fertility desires occurs across all groups. The constellation of forces pushing fertility up or down include institutional, relational, and biographic dynamics. Limited access to institutional resources, disagreements between couples on fertility goals, juggling conflicting demands of employment and childcare constrain immigrant fertility. Generous welfare programs, supports from the extended family, and changing cultural logic of childrearing may contribute to higher immigrant fertility. Second, the discrepancy between fertility intention and behavior varies among groups. While some women met their expectation on family size, others failed to do so. Cross-groups comparisons show that participants whose children were all born in Canada were more likely to indicate they had realized their fertility intentions. By contrast, participants who had only one child born in Canada were more likely to think they didn’t have as many children as originally wanted. Within-group comparisons of women who had all children in Canada show that the key
factors drive fertility divergence are education and work experiences. Those who were educated in China, experiencing difficulties in landing a job in Canada, have lower fertility. In contrast, those who were educated or had worked in Canada or other western countries, have higher fertility. By contrast, comparisons of women who had a child in China show that age at migration and employment status account for fertility divergence within this group. Arriving in Canada at a later age, those who experienced intersecting difficulties in securing a job, homemaking, and childrearing, were more likely to end up with the only child born in China. Whereas immigrant women, arriving in Canada at a younger age, not participating in labor market, or working but having the extended family around for help, made it to have additional children in Canada. Third, the differences in the timings and the sequences of immigration and childbearing can account for varying fertility patterns across groups. Women who immigrated at older ages were more likely to experience childbearing more quickly after landing in Canada. In contrast, women who came to Canada at younger ages had more time to realize their fertility desires in Canada. Nevertheless, immigrant women need not only to plan the biographical timetable of childbearing but also to figure out the institutional timetable of immigration bureaucracies and adjust their schedules accordingly.

Indeed, the understanding of immigrant fertility should examine how individuals positioned differently in society deal with the dual trajectories of migration and reproduction similarly or differently. In fact, while the privileged women have sufficient resources to navigate immigration and reproduction regimes and thereby work out immigration and childbearing as planned, the average women may not be able to do so. However, since the reproductive process is complicated by immigration process, the former group may not realize their fertility desires
due to the uncertainties of going through the complex immigration procedures, whereas the later

group may leverage resources through relocation to a fertility enabling country and thereby
realize their fertility desires. More importantly, going beyond individual characteristics, I argue
that the institutional immigration regimes channel women into different reproduction trajectories.
The immigration screening, the bureaucratic procedures, and the reception contexts after arriving
affect immigrant women at different reproductive stages differently. Because it emphasizes
educational attainment and skills, Canadian immigration policies may select applicants with low
fertility. By not recognizing education credentials and work experiences amassed in China, the
Canadian labor market constrains immigrants’ fertility desires. In fact, my study finds that
Chinese women who came to Canada under the category of skilled immigrants were more likely
to have fewer children than those who came under the family reunion category. I argue that the
understanding of immigrant fertility elucidates how immigration policies and reception contexts
sort immigrant groups into different reproduction trajectories.

Indeed, life is uncertain and plans are always tenuous, partial, and changing. Positioned
differently in biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts,
individuals may deal with intertwined migration process and reproduction process differently.
Bringing embodiment, temporality, and dynamics into the analyses, I find that how people
incorporate the dual life transitions immigration and childbearing involves the ongoing dynamics
generated from making sense of biographic situations, negotiating with significant others, and
navigating societal institutions. People draw on previous lived experiences to understand current
life situations as well as make future life plans. In and through the lived experiences of
immigration and childbearing, immigrant women not only juggle multiple daily life tasks
pragmatically but also construct new understandings and form new life goals regarding migration and reproduction. Unlike conventional approaches that view immigrant fertility as a choice of quantity decided upon ideational preferences and socioeconomic conditions, I argue that immigrant fertility is best conceptualized as a process of social reproduction across the borders, driven by the triadic ongoing biographic, relational, and institutional dynamics as the individual life course unfolds over time and across space.
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Discussion

Using Chinese Canadian immigrant women’s fertility processes as a case study, my dissertation shows how migration and reproduction, as dual life transition events, interact to shape immigrant fertility process. Through this investigation of how Chinese immigrant women cope with having children in the course of moving from China to Canada, I have found that while individuals deal with interlocking life transition processes of immigration and childbearing simultaneously, the institutional regimes of migration and reproduction in both countries shape their lived experiences. The various ways, in which people make sense of their own biography, deal with the relational circumstance, and navigate the societal institutions, lead to diverse trajectories of mobility and fertility. I have argued that the embodied dynamic approach provides better guidance to understanding immigrant fertility processes than a decision-making approach.

7.1 The Migration Process

People experience migration as moving through different sets of constraints and opportunities embedded within varying societal contexts. Individual immigrants act reactively and reflectively to deal with anticipated and unanticipated life changes and to solve inconsistencies between life in the home country and life in the host country. Their bodies and minds transform as the embodied migration course unfolds. By presenting the cyclical migratory course from unsettling to moving to settling and/or moving again, I have shown how individual immigrants fit migration into their life course, navigate the immigration regimes, and deal with the consequent life changes.
Indeed, moving across borders involves both selective and selected processes. People need to not only motivate themselves to move across borders but also must fit themselves into the institutional immigration regimes. In fact, having and raising children in a better environment is one of the key impetuses driving participants’ emigration. Applicants strategically present certain attributes to match themselves with proper Canadian immigration categories and programs. Unlike their earlier counterparts who uprooted themselves from places of origin, many recent immigrants move in two phases: short-landing and long-landing. They first visit briefly Canada to try the new life, then return to China and decide whether to come back for permanent settlement. Constant interplays between their own biographic situations, relational circumstances with intimate family members, and institutional opportunities and constraints shape future life plans about staying in Canada and returning to China and whether to circulate back and forth periodically or move to another country.

Through establishing routine interactions with places, things, and people in the new environment, newcomers settle dissimilar lives before and after immigration. My analyses on the residence trajectories find that choosing a quality school district is the most important factor immigrants considered when renting or buying a home. Due to the booming housing market in China, recent immigrants achieve homeownership in Canada quicker than their earlier arrival counterparts. My analyses of participants’ occupation trajectories show that, regardless of their previous skills and positions, immigrants have to adapt themselves to fill in-demand sectors in the Canadian labor market such as healthcare, childcare, real estate, finance, insurance, tourism, banking, etc. Alternatively, they can look for ethnic economy employment within Chinese
communities. A few women set up small businesses with consumers back in China, selling healthy nutritional supplements, maternity and baby stuff, luxury brand products, or providing services to help others apply to immigrate, go to college, plan travel, purchase real estate, etc. No matter whether they work as salaried professionals, waged manual laborers, or self-employed entrepreneurs, immigrants’ economic opportunities reflect the economic environments both in Canada and China.

Surrounded by various social relations, individuals not only need to strategize their own immigration and settlement but also negotiate and cooperate with family members. Relational dynamics may enable or constrain the initial move and shape subsequent moving trajectories. On the one hand, the support people gain from social networks may contribute to individual migration by giving them access to resources and collective strategies. On the other hand, having divergent life goals and conflicts in the division of labor may make it difficult to migrate. Indeed, gender and generational relations go through ups and downs in the course of migration. Immigration to a new society may empower women if it leads them to participate more in employment and public activities. Immigration may also erode immigrant women’s power and status if it leads to more dependence on husbands’ earnings for survival. These changes may weaken or strengthen the partnership between immigrant women and their husbands. Moreover, migration changes immigrant women’s perceptions and practices of motherhood. Many participants indicated that they are doing more intensive mothering than before immigration: doing more household chores, navigating new childcare and educational systems, and dealing with cultural conflicts between children and themselves. At the same time, they are expected to provide nursing care and companionship for their aging parents. Inviting grandparents to come to
Canada may relieve them from household chores and childcare to some degree. It may also lead to generational conflicts at home. Therefore, migration is embodied in the process as immigrants constantly balance their own career, partner’s adaptation, childcare, and eldercare. In other words, individuals’ understanding of the relationship between the life course of their own and that of other family members may result in different migration trajectories.

7.2 The Reproduction Process

As individuals move to a new country, they think about and act on having children differently in response to situations as their new lives unfold. Immigrant women understand new reproductive contexts through reference to their childbearing experiences in previous reproductive contexts. My comparative analyses show that giving birth in Canada did not require a sustained engagement with bureaucracy as it does in China and while the care and procedures in Canada were hardly perfect, for most respondents they were far superior in accessibility, convenience, and quality than they had been in China. Also, encountering native-born Canadian women may change immigrants’ understanding and interpretation of reproductive norms and practices.

After immigration, gender and generation dynamics may shift in accordance to new life circumstances. Immigrants need to cooperate with intimate family members to plan childbearing and negotiate the division of labor. In fact, husbands’ fertility desires and first children’s opinions about having siblings affect Chinese immigrant women’s desire for more children. The ways in which having and bringing up children synchronizes with other life tasks such as education and employment after immigration have an even greater impact. For example, after
immigration to Canada, outsourcing childcare and household chores and obtaining assistance from extended families became more difficult. Many mothers stay at home to take care of small children because of the care crisis in the Canadian daycare system. Thus, they sacrifice their careers to give their children what they perceive as better childhoods and future life chances than they could give them in China. While enjoying quality education in Canada, regardless of socioeconomic conditions Chinese immigrants distribute a large bulk of family resources to children’s extracurricular classes in areas such as Olympic math, arts, music, and sports as well as through sightseeing trips. They reconcile Chinese and Canadian ways of life to raise children as global citizens who have multiple language proficiencies, solid knowledge and skills, diverse cultural understanding, and mobility capital. In this sense, immigrants extend their reproduction across borders through gaining membership in developed countries for themselves and their offspring.

7.3 The Interaction Between Migration And Reproduction

Reproduction and migration are both epistemic life transformation processes. They are inextricably intertwined in ways that complicate each other. Positioned variably in biographic situations, relational circumstances, and institutional contexts, individual immigrants differ in temporal arrangements of orderly steps of moving and childbearing, therefore experiencing divergent fertility processes. People strategize biographic situations and negotiate with intimate family members, as they fit immigration and childbearing into instant multiple daily life tasks as well as long-term life plans. Immigrant women not only need to work out their biographic timetables of immigration and childbearing simultaneously; they also need to fit personal
timetables into institutional timetables of the immigration systems and maternity healthcare bureaucracies. Plans may not always work out because of the uncertainties of institutional procedures that they could not have foreseen. Diverse migration and reproduction processes emerge from how immigrant women deal with these two life transitions: when they are to take place, how long they are to take, and in what order of priority they are to be planned and enacted. In other words, how moving across borders and having children are timed, sequenced, and paced has consequences for mobility and fertility.

Among my study participants, this interaction shapes four dimensions of immigrant fertility: the timing of childbirth before or after immigration; the location of childbirth in China or Canada; whether children will be Chinese or Canadian citizens; and thereby the consequent total number of children. My analyses of across-group comparisons among participants who had children in China and those who had children in Canada, as well as within-group comparisons of who had more children and those who had fewer, reveal that moving across borders at different reproductive stages leads to heterogeneous patterns in their approach to living in Canada: temporary stay, permanent settlement, periodic circulation, and as a springboard to other places. At the same time, variations in how immigrants navigate the immigration regimes account for divergences in timing, spacing, number of childbirths, and citizenship of children. In fact, arriving at a later age due to uncertain and lengthy immigration shaped by the Canadian screening policies and bureaucratic procedures, many Chinese immigrant women end up having fewer children than originally desired. In contrast, realizing fertility desires is easier for those who come to Canada at an earlier age as international students or temporary workers before becoming permanent residents, since they have more time after immigration and fewer
resettlement challenges. Contrary to approaches that treat immigrant fertility as individual decisions, I argue that immigration policies and reception contexts channel immigrants into different reproductive trajectories.

7.4 Conclusion And Discussion

Puzzled by Chinese Canadians’ relative low fertility rate compared to other ethnic groups, my dissertation has set out to investigate how Chinese immigrant women perceive and practice childbearing in the course of immigration to Canada. I have examined a constellation of embodied dynamics that shape how migration and reproduction, as dual life transition processes, interact to shape immigrant fertility process. The analyses of a Chinese Canadian stream presented here suggest two key points about fertility processes of this particular group. First, moving to Canada makes it possible for Chinese immigrant women to have more children and raise children in a better reproductive environment. Second, arriving at older age, experiencing difficulties participating in the labor market, and lacking support from the extended family, place constraints upon the realization of their fertility desires.

Beginning this study with the question asked by the woman I met at the playground, and her interesting assumption that all Chinese women have two children. But it’s not borne out by my research. Often both life circumstances and orientations change as immigrants start life in a new country. In fact, the evolution of fertility desires occurring across four comparison groups of participants who had children in China, who had children in Canada, who had more children, and who had fewer children, illustrates the general point that the embodied experiences of moving
across borders and the subsequent changes in institutional contexts, relational circumstances, and biographic situations all lead to rethinking and rearranging childbearing. Based on these findings, I suggest the following theoretical modifications to the conceptualization of immigrant fertility as well as empirical implications for future research and policy considerations.

Theoretical interventions

Unlike conventional theoretical hypotheses: assimilation, adaptation, disruption, minority status, and selection, which view immigrant fertility as a static decision made under a particular life situation, I argue that immigrant fertility is better understood as a dynamic process through which people jointly deal with moving across borders and having children. This theoretical undertaking, that I call an embodied dynamics model seeks to examine the interaction between the two life transition processes of migration and reproduction. Bringing concepts of embodiment, temporality, and dynamism into investigation, this framework elucidates institutional, relational, and situational dynamics that affect the ways individuals cope with moving and childbearing simultaneously as individual life course unfolds over time and across space. It adds arguments showing clearly how lived experiences condition immigrants’ thinking and acting, addressing the inadequacies of other alternatives that focus on socioeconomic conditions and ideational preferences.

The embodied dynamics model adds arguments emphasizing the embodied, relational, dynamic dimensions of the immigrant fertility processes. In making this point, I’ve emphasized that immigrants plan, prioritize, and strategize moving and childbearing in the context of the
individual biographic life. These two life transitions proceed simultaneously in two divergent but nonetheless corresponding paths. How individuals fit immigration and childbearing into their unique life course involves arranging instant daily activities and working out long-term life plans. I’ve also suggested that the investigation of how people jointly deal with these two life events should be positioned in a broader context of societal transformations. Immigrant fertility processes are structured by the reproductive opportunities and constraints in both host and home countries. I’ve shown that pre-immigration life experiences in the home country affect meanings and practices of immigration and childbearing. Also, how immigrants integrate economically and socially into the host society is related to their economic and social status in the home society. This in turn shapes how they deal with having and raising children in the host country. Carrying previous ideas and practices from the home country while encountering new ideas and practices in the host country, immigrants construct the embodied hybrid habitus by and through which they renegotiate institutional contexts, reconstitute family relationships, and reprioritize multiple social roles and life tasks. The embodied dynamics model adds arguments showing clearly the interaction between individual mobility and fertility and societal structures that are embodied in immigration systems and reproductive institutions.

Future Research

Previous studies have attributed fertility divergences among immigrant subgroups to differences in their cultural norms and economic conditions. However, immigrant fertility is not a once-for-all static decision under a particular life situation, but a dynamic process of fitting childbearing into the course of moving across borders. People don’t always follow the intentions they initially
developed and there’s a lot of give and take, as they negotiate other life factors including relations with their partners and family, and receptions by the education system and the labor market. The lived experiences dependent upon interaction of embodied institutional, relational, and biographic dynamics, rather than economic conditions and cultural norms, shape migration trajectories as well as fertility outcomes.

Comparisons across countries and ethnic groups

Cross-origin comparisons make possible the analysis of how immigrants of different sending countries experience reproductive environments in the home society, understand and deal with immigration and childbearing differently. For example, comparing the fertility processes of visible minority groups in Canada can reveal their mobility and fertility processes. Cross-national comparisons of immigrants of the same origin in different receiving countries can reveal the influences of the host society’s immigration regimes of screening and reception on immigrant fertility processes. For example, comparing the fertility processes of Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans can reveal the contextual differences that help to account for fertility divergence between these two streams. Cross-category comparisons of immigrants documented versus undocumented, temporary versus permanent, economic versus family-reunited would tell how bureaucratically constructed categories sort people into different life paths. Future research might benefit from applicability of the embodied dynamic model to other prominent migration streams such as Filipino immigration to Canada, or Mexican immigration to the US, or Syrian immigration to Europe. These insights can be extended to understand fertility disparities and reproductive inequality among immigrant subgroups.
Restructure quantitative modeling

Methodologically, it would be illuminating if quantitative research could take into consideration the concepts of embodiment, temporality, and dynamism. With the biographic variables, such as the age at time of childbirth; the age at time of each major migration step including application, approval, and landing; the histories of education, employment, and housing; and the histories of family relations, it is possible to piece together and compare immigrants’ embodied experiences so that the connections between changing biographic situations and subsequent migration and reproduction paths become apparent. Future research would benefit from including immigration information such as admission category and program, landing date, and landing place in the Canada Census, and including biographic information such as age, time of marriage/separation/divorce, time of childbirth, and time of education and employment in the Longitudinal Immigration Survey. Future quantitative research should work to discover the effects of timing and sequence of biographic events on fertility processes.

Policy implications

As I established earlier, the Canadian immigration system is a double-selection regime that includes firstly screening before departure, secondly reception of the labour market after arrival. Immigrants’ experiences of getting in and fitting in are shaped by the structural constitutions of immigration policies based on the changing demand for the labour force of the Canadian society. Given this highly selective regime, the processes of navigating immigration system and
reproductive institutions, renegotiating family relationships, and rearranging multiple roles at different biographic stages is not unique to a particular Chinese Canadian stream in this study. Rather, a much more complex ways how immigrants of different origins perceive and practice childbearing share the similar characteristics of embodied dynamics of moving to and settling into Canada. For example, as I have highlighted, arriving at later age due to screening criteria and lengthy bureaucratic processes, many immigrant women end up having fewer children than they originally wanted. Therefore, shortening the application processing time and simplifying the bureaucratic procedures would ease and quicken immigrant women’ moving across borders and give them more time for childbearing. In addition, improving cultural sensitivity of healthcare service provider would help immigrant women adapt to Canadian reproductive environments, smooth their childbearing experiences, and realize their fertility desires which are changing and changeable as they settle into new lives.

Finally, by the selection of working population that is capable of producing and reproducing from other countries, Canada keeps filling gaps in its labor force. Yet real people arrive, under bureaucratically constructed immigration categories, who do not simply produce and reproduce to survive, but to live a meaningful life. Canada can make them feel at home, whether they are migrants dislocated vulnerably or voluntarily by the social transformations of the global world system.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

The Interaction Of Immigration And Reproduction: Fertility Process Of Chinese Immigrants In Canada

Interview Guide

Interviewee ID:

Date:

Location:

We’ll be talking about your experiences immigrating from China to Canada and having children. Let’s start with your story of immigration first.

Immigration

When did you decide to move to Canada?

Why did you decide to immigrate to Canada? Did you consider other countries? Why did you choose Canada over them?

Why did you choose to move to Vancouver rather than other cities in Canada?

Did you immigrate with family?

Under what program did you immigrate to Canada? Did you consider others?

How was the immigration process like? Stage (preparing application package, AR, PER, ME, MER, RBVO, DM)

How long has it taken to get your application approved?

Have you become or do you think you will become a Canadian citizen? Why or why not?
Would you think about returning to China in future?

How did family members influence your immigration decision?

How do you think your immigration influences having children?

**Settlement**

How was your resettlement process like?

What were the biggest challenges?

How did you deal with problems encountered?

What have you liked best about it?

How did other family members influence your settlement experience?

What have helped you to feel more at home here since your arrival in Canada?

Did you receive any help from others when you first arrived?

What information or programs have assisted in your adjustment to life in Canada?

What prevent you from feeling more at home here? why?

How often do you visit China?

Do you have family members living in China? How often do you contact or visit them?

How would you think relocation influences having children?

If you were to imagine your life in 5 or 10 years time, what do you think it would be like?

**Reproduction**

Checking number of children, sex, age

How did you think about having children?

Is the gender of your child important to you?

What sort of things is important to you in preparing to have a child?

Did you ever think about other choices? why or why not?
When did you have first child?
Where were your first child born?
What things were important to you in preparing to have a first child?
How was your experience of having first child like? (pregnancy, childbirth).
What was your experience with the health care that you received like?
How did you arrange childcare for your first child?
What sort of help did you receive in having and raising your first child?
How did your first childbearing relate to your immigration?
How did your first childbearing influence your settlement after arrival in Canada?

When did you have second child?
Where were your second child born?
What things were important to you in preparing to have a second child?
How did the second birth differ from the first one?
What was your experience with the health care that you received like?
How was that different from having the first child?
How did you arrange childcare for your second child?
What sort of help did you receive in having and raising your second child?
How did your second childbirth relate to your immigration?
How did your second childbearing influence your settlement after arrival in Canada?

Repeat questions about reproduction history.
Do you plan to have any more children? If so, when, where, why? Why not?
How do you plan to arrange childcare?
How do you plan to raise your children?

Did you ever think of children differently after immigration?
Do you think it is easier to have a child in China? or in Canada? Why?
How about raising children?
What is different about health care systems, maternity policies, government subsidies, flexibility in work schedules, availability of daycare in China from Canada?
How these differences influence your decisions on having children?
What sort of information and help would you expect to receive in childbearing and childrearing in Canada? Does this differ between China and Canada?
What is different about relationship between you and your husband before and after immigration? How housework distribution and childcare arrangements change?
How did these changes affect having children?
What is different about the relationship between you and your children in China from Canada?
How did these changes affect having children?

Overall, how would you think childbearing and immigration relate to each other?
If you could do it over again, how would you do anything differently in retrospect?
What would be your ideal situations of immigration and having children? why?
Survey questions

**Demographics**

Age

Place of birth

Marital status

Living arrangement

Do you have any children?

Yes. If yes, how many? Age, Gender, Is she/he living with you now?

No.

**Education**

What would you consider your highest completed education?

What was the level of education you completed before coming to Canada?

What additional education have you taken since arrival in Canada?

How would you think education influences having children?

**Employment**

Are you currently employed?

If yes, what kind of work do you do?

If no, were you employed before coming to Canada?

What kind of work did you do in China?

How was that compared to what you do now?

Are you looking for employment? What are your career goals?

Have your career goal changed after coming to Canada?
Is your husband employed? What kind of work does your husband do? What kind of work did he do before coming to Canada?

What is your annual income in the last year?

A. Less than $20,000/year
B. $20,000-$39,999/year
C. $40,000-$59,999/year
D. $60,000-$79,999/year
E. $80,000-$99,999/year
F. $100,000 or more per year

Tell me about your experiences finding employment since you came to Canada?

How would you think your employment influences having children?

**Housing**

Where do you currently live?

How many bedrooms does your home have?

Do you currently own your housing? Or rent?

About how much do you currently pay in rent a month? or about how much did you buy this place for? What do you pay for mortgage costs?

Do you live with anyone else? What relationship are they to you?

How long have you lived there?

Where did you live before?

Why did you move?

What has the experience of finding housing been like since arrival in Canada?

Do you have close family living nearby?
Where did you live in China before coming to Canada?

What was that like, compared to household now?

Do you still have a housing in China?

How do you think your housing there in China influences having children?

How do you think your housing here in Canada influences having children?

**Conclusion**

We’re about to wrap up here for the day. Was there anything you were expecting us to discuss that we didn’t? Or something we should have asked about?

Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

Would you be willing to be contacted regarding any future research?

Those are all the questions we have. Thank you for your participation!
Appendix B : Consent Form

Consent form

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted through the University of British Columbia. The purpose of this study is to understand how immigrants think about and practice childbearing through the course of immigration.

The interview will take about 60-90 minutes and will be audio-recorded. The interviewer will ask you to talk about your immigration and reproduction experiences. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you feel discomfort, you can refuse to answer any questions. You may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Any identifiable information that you provide in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Records and transcripts of the interview will be stored securely at the University of British Columbia. Your name will not be identified in any publications that may result from this study.

You will receive a $20 honorarium gift card for your participation in this study.

Contact for information about the study:

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact

Research Assistant: Jing Zhao, PhD Candidate of Sociology, University of British Columbia,

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the UBC Research Services at (604) 822-8598.
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the above consent form, and you have been given a copy of this form.

________________________________________  _________________________
Printed Name of Participant  

________________________________________  _________________________
Signature of Participant  Date
Appendix C: The Housing Histories of Participants

The Housing Histories Of Participants

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## Appendix D: The Occupation Histories of Participants

The Occupation Histories Of Participants

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