"Male Identity Development for Canadian Chinese Male Immigrants"

by

Koon Ming Ho

Associateship, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 1982
M.Sc., University of Hong Kong, 1991
Diploma in Guidance Studies, University of British Columbia, 2001

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
In
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATES STUDIES

(Counselling Psychology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

March 2005

© Koon Ming Ho, 2005
Abstract

A qualitative research design based on Giorgi’s (1975a, 1975b) phenomenological methodology was used to investigate and describe the male identity development experiences of Chinese Canadian adult male immigrants. Seven men volunteered to participate in this research study. They were recruited from university family housing and community agencies serving Chinese immigrants in the Vancouver area of Canada. Data were collected through personal interviews conducted in English that were audio taped and transcribed.

The interview data yielded five common themes across the participants that described an experience of male identity development for these Canadian Chinese male immigrants. These five themes were: (1) Feeling a deep sense of responsibility; that they felt deeply responsible towards others as a husband and a father, for both the present and the future. (2) Accepting gender equity with willingness to compromise; as these Chinese Canadian immigrant men learned to balance between power and harmony in a more gender equity culture. (3) Learning to be a man by searching; as these men actively searched and developed their male identities. (4) Familial events influenced male identity development in adulthood; as they indicated that influence from their families often changed their male identities in adulthood. (5) Looking forward to personal growth; as these men often wanted more personal development and fulfillment.

These five themes described a common male experience of Chinese Canadian male immigrants. They emphasized mastery of their responsibilities and roles as men. Immigration to Canada brought threats and challenges to their
male identities. Both the micro-familial dynamics and the macro-societal context influenced development of their male identity. Familial interactions and events were the main reasons that influenced them to reconstruct more egalitarian male identities, while the social context set the boundary for individual choices. Their original male identities were developed through long term childhood and adolescent socialization under the strong influences of Chinese values. Yet they were searching for better definitions of male identity during adulthood in their adopted country, as their male identities were still fluid and dynamic during adulthood.
Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Table of Contents iv
Acknowledgements vi

Chapter 1 Introduction 1
Background 1
Rationale of the Study 2
Purpose of the Study 4
Definition of Terms 4
Approach of the Study 6
Assumptions 7
Chapter Summary 7

Chapter 2 Literature Review 8
Introduction 8
The Study of Masculinity 8
Gender Identity Development 10
   The Psychoanalytic Perspective 10
   The Socialization Perspective 11
   The Cognitive Perspective and the Gender Schema Theory 12
Gender Segregation 13
Gender Identity Development during Adolescence 14
   Negotiating Gender Identity in Adulthood 15
Studying Men’s Experience 17
The Notion of Culture 20
Experiences of Chinese Canadian Men 22
Chapter Summary 25

Chapter 3 Methodology 26
Phenomenological Research Approach 26
Participants 28
Interview Questions 29
Data Collection 29
Data Analysis 31
Socio-demographic and Personal Background Variables 33
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my appreciation to my dissertation committee members. I thank my supervisor, Dr. William A. Borgen for his support and close direction during the development of this thesis; to Dr. Marvin Westwood for his suggestions and encouragement even before the formation of the committee; and to Dr. Norman Amundson for his support and insightful ideas.

A special thanks goes to Dick Williams who gave me feedback during my pilot study. I thank the participants for sharing their experiences and very much appreciate their willingness to participate in this research.

I must gratefully acknowledge my wife, Yuk Shuen for giving me all the freedom needed to explore my own male identity so that this study became my own passion. I thank my parents especially my father for showing me everything they knew about the world. I also thank my children, Jessica and Jonathan for giving me so much trust and admiration.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

My interest in studying male identity started two years ago when I had a discussion with a male friend about how hard we thought it was to be men. He expressed frustration that he thought men in the present generation were expected to do too much redemption for gender inequity that happened in the previous generations. Intellectually, he recognized that men had done wrongs to women in the past, but practically he was unable to respond and negotiate his own identity with significant people around him. So on one hand he wanted to be more pro-feminism; on the other hand he felt pressurized by the dominant, patriarchal expectations on males. Although he wanted to relate to his spouse in a way that was different from a traditional restricted affective, authoritative, aggressive, and critical role, he felt confused about how to be a more holistic person that both met his own needs and expectations of others. He might be in a crisis that Levant (1997) described as the masculinity crisis.

I negotiated my male identity in another way. When I immigrated to Canada, I found out that my job expertise was not in demand in the job market; on the other hand, it was easier for my wife to find a job. She was doing better than me in the Canadian job market, and contributed more to supporting the family financially. Eventually I shifted my role to gradually take up more non-traditional roles in cleaning, cooking and caring for the kids; and at the same time going back to school to learn something new and useful here. Most of the time, I
enjoyed myself because I saw my roles expanded and was satisfied with learning new things from the roles, and I felt competent at these roles too. I reflected that I became a more caring, expressive, understanding person. Nevertheless, I also felt bad for myself because these were supposed to be feminine roles in my Chinese culture. Slowly and consciously I was re-negotiating my male role to something new and more meaningful to me.

Both my friend and I had experienced some awareness of our crisis in our male identities, under pressure emanating from other men and women, from the conflicts between our internalized code of masculinity and the external expectations of the world, and from the changing roles of women and changing societal structures.

Rationale of the Study

Nowadays, men hear lots of negative connotations attached to their gender, such as perpetrator in spousal violence, child abuser and aggressor in rape cases (O’Neil, 1999); and men are labelled with their aggression, violence, non-affectionate, and non-involvement in family (Levant & Pollack, 1995). Men are being challenged to find ways to remake their masculinity in a more positive light. There are many men who want to change, not only because of being forced by external factors, but also they are aware that traditional masculinity is often unhealthy for them. The over-emphasis on competition, toughness, restrictive emotionality to others can be very problematic for men. Such masculinity often results in detached fatherhood, neglect of health, abuse and family violence (Levant & Pollack, 1995). Today men are less certain of their
own identities than ever before because their traditional roles are not taken positively by society. More and more men are being challenged to re-negotiate their roles in adulthood under changing expectations of the world. Starting from the past decade, the study of men's issues has shifted from simply deconstructing traditional masculinity to the development of a possible new psychology of men (Levant & Pollack, 1995). Researchers have started to report a new generation of more caring men and fathers. This study intends to investigate men's experiences in male identity development that can contribute to a healthier identity for being male and healthier psychology of men.

This study of masculinity is both timely and necessary. More discussion and understanding of man as a gendered being can help to change attitudes, validate new experiences, and find new solutions to the problem of defining male identity. Most of us need to deal with the gender issues of men. Every woman connects to at least one man, either as her father, or partner, lover, husband, or father of her child. Many women suffer abuse. One in every three women in Canada who had ever been married or lived in common-law relationship reported being physically, emotionally, or sexually abused by men during a five year time frame from 1994 to 1999 (Statistics Canada, 2001). Research on masculinity does not only benefit men. It also helps women and children through alleviating negative impacts of some problematic aspects of traditional masculinity for the wellness of women and children, the family and society.
Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to contribute to the construction of more psychologically and socially adaptive male behaviour through a better understanding how men learn gender roles from early experiences and how they negotiate their gender identity in adulthood. The study asked about and discussed participants’ life experiences in unstructured interviews. The primary research purpose was to explore how Chinese immigrant males made sense of their past and current experiences of learning about gender roles and being men. These experiences included how they were taught about being men in the past, their journey to become their current persons, and what they wanted to change in the future. I chose to focus on Chinese Canadian male immigrants, who have experiences of growing up in a male dominated culture and have lived in a more gender equal Canadian culture during their adulthood. Such intercultural gender developmental experience has not been properly investigated in previous counselling psychology research literature.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definition of a number of key terms including masculinity, gender identity, culture, Chinese Canadian immigrant that have been mentioned in this study. The definitions can give the reader a clearer sense of how these terms are being used in the current study.

Masculinity is used to characterize the societal and psychologically based conceptions of being men and is different from maleness that is sex-based (Good, Borst & Wallace; 1994). Some researchers argue that masculinity is not
unchanging but depends on cultural, political, social and historical determinants and is socially constructed (Buchbinder, 1994; Ferree, 1990; Kim, Laroche & Timiuk, 2004, Zuo, 1997).

Traditional masculinity refers to gender behaviours and expectations in a male dominated society that characterizes men in the good provider role with dominance over women (Buchbinder, 1994; Levant, 1997); or characterized by physical strength and aggression (Pleck, 1981).

Gender identity is defined as an individual's secure sense of one’s gender described by masculinity or femininity (Pleck, 1981); or the personal understanding of one’s gender and the incorporation of this understanding into the one's self-concept (Maccoby, 1998). Gender identity development refers to the whole developmental process from infancy into adulthood that one is affected by one’s gender or sex role identity. While females and males go through many similar developmental paths of gender identity development, their paths diverge in some important aspects (Maccoby, 1998). So male and female gender identity development are sometimes discussed independently. The term gender role or sex role is often used to describe the typically culturally constructed expectations about behaviours related to one’s gender (Pleck, 1981; Thompson & Pleck, 1986).

As culture plays one of the key roles in gender identity development, the classic definition of culture comes from Tylor (1871) who states that “culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities
and habits acquired by man as a member of society (p.1). So Tylor (1871) equated the two terms 'culture' and 'civilization'; and the whole spectrum of human activities were taken into account. Culture can also be defined as a set of collective norms (Taft, 1977), and is a dynamic construct that includes the values, beliefs, and behaviours of people who have lived together in a particular geographic area for generations (Hofstede, 1990; Wagner, 1981). Also, individual differences such as age, lifestyle, socioeconomic status, gender are aspects of diversity that impact the uniqueness of each individual's culture.

Chinese Canadian male immigrant refers to a man who has immigrated to Canada from Mainland China, Taiwan or Hong Kong. They were born outside Canada and had experienced the Chinese culture as they spent time living in those countries.

Approach of the Study

This study adopted a qualitative methodology using the phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was selected because it is concerned with the exploration of lived experiences of a phenomenon for people. It is a direct investigation and description of the phenomenon as consciously experienced without theoretical assumptions of the researchers. Participants' viewpoints and reality are sought to be understood and described. The current study did not rely on a particular theoretical framework of gender identity development or intercultural adjustment theory to guide data collection and analysis. Rather the participants' viewpoints and subjective experiences of being men in various life stages provide the data for understanding the phenomenon.
Assumptions

The study was based on two major assumptions. First, it was assumed that participants who agreed to be interviewed would be able to recall significant early childhood experiences, and described subsequent changes or impact happened in adolescence and adulthood. Secondly, it was assumed that participants were willing to self-report this information in an unstructured interview.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided some personal experience, the rationale, and the background information to demonstrate that research on developing and construction of men's gender identity is worthwhile. It was my interest and objective that the present study would increase understanding of the development of the male identity. The ultimate aim was to contribute to the search for a new psychology of man, which is both more fulfilling to men themselves, and also promotes healthier relationships with women and children.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction

The proposed research was intended to explore male identity of Chinese male immigrants in Canada. This chapter conducted a literature review to summarize our current knowledge on men as gender being, and our understanding on how gender identity developed from childhood and might change across the life span. The literature review addresses previous research in masculinity, different theories that describe the development of gender identity, various influences that were proposed to affect the development of male identity, and other related research in the area.

The Study of Masculinity

The study of masculinity is a key component in the study of the psychology of men. "Masculinity" is the term given to male gender characteristics and was originally conceived as a bipolar opposite to femininity (Constantine, 1973; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Masculinity and femininity were long regarded as being important aspects of human personalities (Terman & Miles, 1936). In this dichotomy of masculinity and femininity, individuals who possessed masculine characteristics were likely to be relatively deficient in femininity, and the masculine was considered as the negation of the feminine.

Recently, the terms "male role norms" and "masculinity ideology" (Pleck, Sonenstein & Ku, 1993) were the two other more specific terms researchers used to discuss masculinity. Male role norms were defined as the widely shared
culturally constructed expectations about behaviour and traits considered appropriate for men (Pleck, Sonenstein & Ku, 1993). Masculinity ideology was derived from a constructionist view of gender roles, defined as a set of beliefs and expectations about what men were like and should do. (Pleck, Sonenstein & Ku, 1993). The two concepts of male role norms and masculinity ideology offer different interpretations and used different instruments for assessment, but both assume that socially desirable male roles exist that are distinct from desirable female roles (Thompson, Pleck & Ferrera, 1992).

Instruments were developed to study and understand different aspects of masculinity, such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974); Male Sex Role Identity Paradigm and Sex Role Strain Paradigm (Pleck, 1981), Gender Role Conflict Paradigm (O’Neil, 1981) and Masculine Gender Role Stress (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). The accumulating quantitative research regarding masculinity using these instruments has identified that traditional male role norms and higher male role conflict are associated with depression and anxiety (Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995), low self-esteem and negative well-being (Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995), perceived physical strain (Stillson, O’Neil, Owen, 1991), problems in relationships (Campbell & Snow, 1992), and psychological distress (Good, Robertson, Fitzgerald, Stevens, & Bartels, 1996). These results confirm the overwhelming need for men to develop healthier alternatives other than traditional male identity. However, these quantitative studies do not help to understand the actual experience men encountered in their gender identity development; and how they could develop healthier male identities. Qualitative
study and a developmental approach on masculinity appear to be more valuable to better understand the actual experiences of developing male identity.

Gender Identity Development

Starting from the middle of the twentieth century, theories were put forward to explain how children took on attributes that were typical of their own gender and saw themselves as boys and girls. Researchers put forward three important perspectives on gender identity development – the psychoanalytic perspective, the socialization perspective and the cognitive perspective (Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Maccoby, 2000).

The Psychoanalytic Perspective

Psychoanalytic theory, as proposed by Freud, sees the development of gender identity of a child as part of the individual's psychosexual development in the context of parent-child relationship. A boy needs to break his initial identification with the mother. He identifies with his same sex parent with the resolution of the Oedipal Complex, and then took on the appropriate sex-typed characteristics. The psychoanalytic perspective has been criticized and not being supported in some research (Reid, Haritos, & Kelly, 1995; Sears, Rau, & Alpert, 1965). Still the theory highlights three important aspects of gender development for further research: the affective component of how men feel about who they are as men; the process of internationalization of identity; and the relationship between sexuality and identity.
The Socialization Perspective

The socialization perspective includes both the direct and the indirect aspects of socialization (Maccoby, 2000). The direct socialization perspective relates gender development within the context of stimulus-response principle of reinforcement learning, being executed by socialization agents such as parents, teachers, and older children. Maccoby (2000) summarized evidence that boys and girls were shaped towards the version of gender behaviour and ideology deemed proper in the culture where they were growing up. Boys and girls were being socialized differently through sex-typed names. They were dressed differently and experienced other subtle differences in parental treatment such as encouragement of gender-typed activities.

The indirect socialization perspective further expands the direct socialization perspective, with the introduction of social learning theory. This perspective argues that children do not simply imitate their same-sex parent, but rather they also learn vicariously from observing how other children's gender-appropriate or inappropriate behaviours being received by others (Bandura, 1977; Bussey & Bandura, 1992). As children grow older, their gender development shifts from socially guided control mode to a more self-regulatory control mode through self-evaluative reactions (Bussey & Bandura, 1992). The theory can be used to explain how gender messages from mass media, stories, and other observational learning opportunities shaped children's gender behaviour. The theory suggests that when children know their own gender, they start selectively imitating gender-appropriate behaviours.
Studies have investigated how socialization agents of family, peers, and school influence male gender development. These studies suggest factors such as parental models with differential attitudes to women and men; punishment of feminine behaviour among boys, influences of absent fathers, problematic modelling of extreme aspects of masculinity by the father, and a negative sense of identity between mother and son, are some of the more powerful socialization influences in male gender development (Blee & Tickamyer, 1997; Cunningham, 2001; Lynch & Kilmartin, 1999; McCreary, 1994; Snyder, Velasquez, Clark, & Means-Christensen, 1997).

The Cognitive Perspective and the Gender Schema Theory

The cognitive perspective does not see children as passive receivers of gender messages, but emphasizes that they are active agents of selecting and assimilating gender related information into gender categories in their cognition. These sets of expectations about gender then guide and organize gender behaviours. From this perspective, once children have established a firm gender identity, they socialize themselves to adapt and conform to these stereotypes. This cognitive perspective was first articulated by Kohlberg (1966), who suggested that children grew through stages of gender identity and gender stability, onto gender constancy by about the age of 5.

Gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) is a variation of the cognitive perspective. According to Bem (1981), gender was a catalyst for children’s cognitive organization of their experiences and the resulting structure was called a schema, which was “a network of associations that organizes an individual’s
perception (p. 355). Bem (1981) argued that "the phenomenon of sex-typing derives, in part, from gender-based schematic processing, from a generalized readiness to process information on the base of sex-linked associations that constitute the schema. ... As children learn the contents of the society's gender schema, they learn which attributes are to be linked to their own sex, and hence, with themselves (p. 355)." The theory is useful to explain how children contribute to their own gender identity development in concert with the environmental forces of socialization.

Despite the broad framework of the cognitive perspective, some researchers reported some shortcomings. They suggested that it did not help to explain connections between individual variations along the dimension of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny with the individual's behavioural outcome (Bussey & Bandura, 1992; Maccoby, 2000). Maccoby (2000) observed that in Western society, the similarities in the ways socialization agents treated boys and girls far outweighed the differences, so that socialization could not fully explain the gender differences. She proposed that further research should turn to studies of moderating contexts and group effects that attenuated gender-related phenomena.

Gender Segregation

The study of gender segregation in children's play is an effort to study how contextual factors might influence children's gender behaviour. Maccoby (1998) reported that when children were observed individually, differentiation of the sexes was minimal; and sex differences emerged primarily in social
situations and varied according to the composition of the group. Maccoby (1998) observed that girls in a group tended to emphasize cooperation and sensitivity to others while boys tended to emphasize dominance and enjoy rough play; and children of the same sex learnt to subordinate individual needs to group needs. Studies found that often a different set of gender messages and different expectations were encouraged towards boys and men (Cornish, 1999; Olrich, 1996). Shaming of feminine behaviour using a negative reinforcement approach was observed by some researchers as another powerful group socialization process in male gender role formation (Cornish, 1999; Olrich, 1996). Maccoby (1998) proposed that these different styles of the two sexes were subsequently manifested in roles and relationships in adulthood.

**Gender Identity Development during Adolescence**

While the socialization and cognitive perspectives are widely accepted to explain the acquiring of sex-typing behaviour in childhood (Maccoby, 2000), some researchers have pointed out identity formation is a complex interaction of personal, social, historical and contextual factors in a continual process (Dien, 2000; Phinney, 2000). Early adolescence is a period of time in which the socialization and cognitive factors such as parents, school, peers, and television continue to contribute to one's gender identity. The understanding and the experiences of what it means to be a male or female also undergoes considerable change, due to the biological and physical changes of puberty. Adolescents of minority ethnic groups in a dominant mainstream culture often
model after attractive powerful models and identify strongly with the dominant culture through group identity formation (Phinney, 2000).

For girls, it is observed that they have to face a number of unique messages that boys do not come across, such as the negative message of a female being the less competent sex, the value attributed to physical attractiveness, and awareness of themselves as sexual beings (Reid, Haritos, & Kelly, 1995). For boys, the concept of masculinity is manifested in many ways with sport being a prime area for the display of masculinity. It was suggested that the negotiation of gender identity during adolescence perhaps went in the direction of intensified adherence to socially defined stereotypes (McNeil, 1985).

**Negotiating Gender Identity in Adulthood**

Some researchers were interested in knowing whether gender identity developed during childhood and adolescence would remain unchanged in adulthood, but there seemed to be no clear answer. Anderson and Hayes (1996) proposed that it was difficult to predict how male identity might change as men seek to frame their identities within the larger context of their adult life experiences. Belsky (1992) suggested that in later years our general pre-dispositions such as value, expectations, and ways of reacting to the world was as firmly determined by our gender as in younger years. Gutmann (1994) proposed that as parenting responsibilities decreased, men and women were less tied to the usual rigid gender roles; and men became more contemplative and expressive. Other research found that adult men had increasingly experienced gender role conflict in balancing home and work (Moore, 1995;
There are two perspectives on the status of male identity in adulthood. A static perspective views gender identity as being internalized during childhood and adolescent socialization, and suggests that it is susceptible to only limited change in adulthood (Gerson & Peiss, 1985). Another dynamic perspective views gender boundaries as being subjected to challenge and re-negotiation, even in adulthood. Bussey and Bandura (1992) argued that gender-related conduct and behavioural standards did not remain static, especially when people grew into adulthood and moved into a larger community, they became aware of the diverse gender-related practices (Bussey & Bandura, 1992). Therefore, gender identity represents a set of socially constructed relationships that is continuously reassessed and redefined through ongoing interaction between oneself and the social structures (Dien, 2000; Ferree, 1990; Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk, 2004; Phinney, 2000).

Ego development theory is one developmental model that conceptualized gender identity development in adulthood. The theory is rooted in Erikson's (1968) theory of ego identity development. Ego identity development theory proposes that gender identity formation progresses through stages from pre-conforming, conforming, post-conforming to conscious integration (Costos, 1990; Erikson, 1968). The model suggests that more mature ego development is related to a less gender stereotyped definition of self, and an integration of both...
masculine and feminine aspects of self (Bursik, 1995; Wade, 1998). Therefore, negotiation and integration of gender identity can be regarded as a more mature stage of adulthood. A number of studies had been conducted to investigate a new generation of adult men, who were more caring fathers (Duindam & Spruijt, 1997), and more involved parents (Berry & Rao, 1997). These researchers find few negative impacts among these men who reconstruct their male identities. Their nontraditional gender role and increased participation in family are related to higher self-esteem and feelings of competence. However, these studies did not look into the developmental experiences of how these men developed their non-traditional gender roles, which was the purpose of this study.

Studying Men's Experience

None of the three perspectives on gender identity development just mentioned suggests any conclusive perspective of male gender identity development during adulthood. It will be necessary to further our understanding of male identity through more studies on men's life history, experiences, and the context of these experiences as Maccoby (2000) proposed. Positive male identity development experiences that resolve male identity crisis during adulthood will have very useful counselling implications. However there were only a few studies that investigated experiences of heterosexual men, and this section was going to review some of their findings. Cornish (1999) studied a small sample of pro-feminist Canadian men and asked them to recount their experiences involving gender issues. The study illustrated that there were different life paths and influences for different individuals to navigate through
gender-based conflicts. The impact of feminism seemed to challenge all of the men being interviewed. From Cornish's (1999) interviews, whether men were influenced to maintain their dominating traditional role or being transcended from it depended on a number of factors. These included family context, social institutions, gender-role conflict encountered, and chances to engage in social dialogue. Different men had different paths in their social interactions and their subsequent transformations were different. Cornish (1999) observed that they were able to reconstruct their less rigid male gender roles through a complex developmental process of personal change and social transformation; and eventually they enjoyed more healthy male identity that was characterized by balance and equity. While his study was inspirational, it focused on how men resolve conflict towards feminism, rather than the more central question of finding the meaning to be men and negotiating identity as their lives unfolded.

In another study, Robertson and Verschelden (1993) studied voluntary male homemakers who had female providers, and studied the nontraditional role reversal experiences of these men. The experiences of these men reflected that they were making conscious choices that were beneficial for themselves and their families, such as having the opportunity to develop their relationships with their children, having time for personal activities, and being self-directed. The study found that these voluntary male homemakers were psychologically healthy, without symptoms of low self-esteem, lower marital satisfaction or higher levels of depression. These men seemed to be relatively happy with their lives, were
active in the community; and did not perceive such role reversal as equivalent to
gender role reversal (Robertson & Verschelden, 1993).

Duindam and Spruijt (1997) interviewed some caring fathers in an attempt
to shed light on their background. The study found that these caring fathers did
not see their own father as their positive models, but their present social context
such as flexible working hours, more egalitarian gender role belief, belief of being
responsible for the domain inside the household, were positive factors that
enabled them to be more caring fathers. In another study exploring the feelings
of Chinese father’s experiences in fatherhood, Li, Huang and Lee (1997) found
having a child created positive experiences for men. There were eight core
experiences such as a self-value of being needed, fulfillment, intimacy with
children, continuity of their lives; and negative experiences of feeling trapped,
worried as well as tiredness and frustration (Li, Huang & Lee, 1997). These two
studies demonstrated that some men no longer confined themselves to
traditional gender roles, and were able to reconstruct their gender identities in
adulthood in the midst of life transitions. However, these studies also did not
directly address the central question of what it meant to be men and the
development of male identity from childhood to adulthood. The goal of the
current study was to shed light on areas not covered by previous research.
Further, it was hope that it would provide some understanding of events and
factors that influenced male gender identity development, and the subsequent
reconstruction of male gender identities in adulthood.
Da (2004) interviewed 34 Chinese migrants of which 15 were males in Sydney, Australia to examine the division of labour in family. Da reported that the participation of housework of Chinese men in these families showed a regional pattern according to their home origin in China. Da (2004) observed that there was a culture of gender equity among these men from Shanghai, probably due to the early industrialization, association of Western influences, and the presence of advocacy of gender equity due to various political movements in the region. Da (2004) concluded that it was their different, self-perceived gender-role contributed to their higher participation in housework than other Chinese male immigrants.

The Notion of Culture

A recent mainstream theoretical perspective on masculinity is that there are many masculinities, that vary from culture to culture and change over time (Buchbinder, 1994; Wade, 1998). Researchers reported divergent, different experiences of masculinity among groups of men such as caring and involved fathers (Duindam & Spruijt, 1997; Palm, 1993), pro-feminist men (Cornish, 1999), voluntary male homemakers (Robertson & Verschelden, 1993). Different cultural backgrounds of men are considered to be an influential factor in the experiences of how men live their roles as men. Researchers agree that the norms of the culture define masculinity, and each culture has its own set of beliefs that develop its male gender role through socialization processes (Harris et. al., 1994; Wade, 1998).
A large-scale cross-cultural study (Williams & Best, 1990) reported pan-cultural similarities in sex type stereotypes and traits of men. The multi-nation sex stereotype study involved over 30 countries, including Canada, the US and Taiwan (Republic of China) done in the period of 1975-1980. Using an adjective checklist the study found men were identified as active, strong, critical parents, who exhibit dominance, autonomy, aggression, achievement and endurance; while women were characterized as passive, weak, nurturing parents, characterized by abasement, deference, succorance, nurturance, and affiliation (William, 1999; William & Best, 1990).

Twenge (1997) did a meta-analysis to review available research to study trends of masculinity and femininity. The study found that while women had a significant increase in the endorsement of masculine traits in the past twenty years, men's endorsement of masculine and feminine traits had no significant change over time, from 1974 to 1995 (Twenge, 1997). Twenge (1997) suggested that while cultural and societal changes might affect women's personality change in that period, it had not significantly affected attitude changes in men. While both studies suggested stable and a pan-cultural male identity, there might still be subtle differences among cultures. I believe that it is important to have more qualitative research to investigate experiences of men from different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Ethnic groups and immigrants are interesting groups to explore these notions of the multiplicity of masculinity and pan-cultural male identity because of their exposure to cross-cultural experiences (Harris et. al., 1994).
Experiences of Chinese Canadian Men

For many Chinese Canadian immigrants, cross cultural adjustment means more than general and career issues; it also means to be self-accepting, developing new identity and meaning in life as they strive to integrate into Canadian society (Lee & Westwood, 1996). If immigrants have proper cognition of both the self and the world, they can make better acculturation adjustment through the transition (Bridges, 2001; Hopson & Scally, 1993; Schlossberg, Waters & Goodman; 1995). Amundson (1994) used the term "negotiating identity" to characterize people in transition who were testing and striking bargains between self and world. Kim, Larche and Tomiuk (2004) also mentioned the need for reassessment of immigrants' roles and identity as they face a new host culture that has very different attitudes and values towards gender than their original culture. The Chinese culture is a more traditional and male-dominated culture. Traditionally, men are expected to behave as males, and women as females; with well-defined roles (Goodwin & Tang, 1996, p.305). The five traditional cardinal relationships: between emperor and minister, father and son, husband and wife, brother and brother, and friend and friend mark unequal and hierarchical status that helps perpetuated male dominance. The strong sex-role differentiation is backed by strong social expectations and sanctions. Men are expected to be highly achievement-motivated, and women are good wives and mothers, submissive to their husbands and other members higher in the family hierarchy (Cheng, 1996; Goodwin & Tang, 1996). Husbands have dominant power over wives; fathers have the unquestioned right to be head
of the family. Men often provide the financial resources for the family, and they also have authority over the ideology and rules of the family (Cheung, 1996; Goodwin & Tang, 1996, Lau & Yeung, 1996). In the last two decades, unlike Canada the pace of the feminist movement in Chinese society had been slow. Men still enjoy power and privileges both inside and outside home. For example in dual-earner families, while wives contribute financially to support the family, husbands do neither housework nor childcare. In marital relationships, there are double standards for husbands to be permitted to engage in extra-marital affairs but not wives. On the whole, it is observed that both Chinese men and women endorse a more traditional masculine norm that is maintained through the socialization practices of parents and the educational system (Cheung, 1996; Lau & Yeung, 1996; Levant, Wu, & Fisher, 1996; Liu, 2002).

As Chinese Canadian families from China, Hong Kong or Taiwan acculturate into the more gender equity conscious North American culture, conflict within the families may happen due to different expectations and roles of men endorsed by the Canadian society. Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2004) studied Chinese Canadian in Toronto, and found that more acculturated Chinese Canadian immigrant women tended to be more gender-role modern and perceived their husband should contribute more to the performance of traditionally wife-responsible tasks. However, they found that more acculturation had an effect on neither the gender-role attitude of Chinese Canadian men nor their perceptions of more contributions to household tasks. For these Chinese immigrant men, they were used to having the benefits and privileges from the
inequities in traditional gender-role definition and they seemed very reluctant to relinquish the traditional male identity for a more egalitarian status with women (Kim, Laroche, & Tomiuk, 2004). For immigrant communities with a male dominant cultural heritage, immigrant men often uphold their male identity within a cultural continuity in which values are shared and cultural traditions continue in the families and the community despite influences from the mainstream culture (Da, 2004; Dasgupta, 1998; Kim, Laroche, & Tomiuk, 2004). Chinese Canadian men that are more acculturated do not necessarily have a gender-role modern attitude (Kim, Laroche, & Tomiuk; 2004). However, constrained by economic roadblocks, societal discrimination and racial stereotypes, North American Chinese men have difficulties in maintaining their usual gender role of being successful, highly achieving and as the good provider of the family (Lazur & Majors, 1995; Levant, 1996; Liu, 2002). Chinese American men were found to have significantly higher gender role conflict over success, power, and competition issues, while reporting significantly less conflict with restrictive emotionality (Kim, 1990; Liu, 2002). Racism and racial identity crises add to the confusion of being a minority in America (Chiu & Fujino, 1999; Liu, 2002). Asian Americans might also carry stereotypes of being effeminate and non-masculine from the perspective of a white masculinity norm (Chiu & Fujino, 1999; Liu, 2002). Chua & Fujino (1999) reported Chinese and Japanese Americans seemed to have opposing strategies to develop male identity. While some embraced feminine traits such as being caring and sensitive, others continued with a traditional male identity that emphasized independence and economic
power. Chinese immigrant men have their challenges in negotiating new roles, but little is known about their lived experiences of the development of male identity in the midst of a western culture. The current study investigated the experiences of Chinese Canadian male immigrants as they interacted with the Canadian culture that had very different social constructions of gender role identity from their country of origin.

Summary

Based on a review on previous research regarding male identity development, men’s experience, and the research on gender roles among overseas Chinese in North America, this study addressed an important gap that previous research had not explored. This study looked at the overall developmental aspect of male gender identity from the perspective of men’s lived experiences from childhood to adulthood, using a qualitative approach, among a group of Chinese Canadian immigrants who experienced cross-cultural influences in the area of gender issues.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Phenomenological Research Approach

This study examined the personal learning experiences of men regarding their gender during early childhood, and any subsequent construction or negotiating of their gender roles and identities in adulthood. As the purpose was to explore and described the personal experiences, the study adopted a qualitative methodology. Giorgi (1975a, p.73) stated that "it was meaningful within the context of scientific psychology to ask the question dealing with the meaning of the phenomena, but that what was needed was a rigorous but strictly qualitative procedure to help one answer the question of meaning". Also it was understood that self identity development was a process of continual change that took place in complex personal and societal dimensions, and qualitative studies were the better methods to grasp how individuals make sense of their lives within a changing socio-historical context (Dien, 2000; Phinney, 2000). The phenomenological approach was selected for this study. Polkinghorne (1989) indicated that phenomenologists explore the structures of consciousness in human experiences and a phenomenological study describes the lived experiences of a phenomenon. In this study the phenomenon was how men interpret and make meaning out of their experiences of learning about being men. The lived experiences consisted of structures of consciousness about past learning about gender roles, current meanings and future yearnings. There was no intention to inject any hypothesis, explanation, or the researcher's own
personal experiences into the study. Participants’ own frame of reference and their view of reality were described and understood (Sandelowski, 1986).

The history of phenomenology started with Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy that emphasized the search for the essence or the central underlying meaning of experience (Creswell, 1997). The phenomenological method attempted to contact “phenomenon as people experience it “ (Colaizzi, 1978, p.57). Giorgi (1975b, p.83) defined phenomenology as “the study of the structure, and the variations of the structure, of the consciousness to which any thing, event, or person appears; it was interested in elucidating both that which appeared and the manner in which it appeared, as well as in the overall structure that related the ‘that which’ with its mode or manner”. Polkinghorne (1989) stated, “the aim of the phenomenological research approach was to produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience (p.44).” The phenomenological approach is based on the assumption that reality was multi-layered, as it was ultimately subjective, and that human experience was meaningful and comprehensible to those who lived it without external theorizing (Dukes, 1984). The approach attempts to shed light on themes and processes and to gain a deeper understanding of the experience itself (Dukes, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The phenomenological approach enabled the current study to observe common experiences among participants. The common experiences were presented in themes or a common story of how Chinese Canadian men developed their gender identity.
Participants

Chinese Canadian volunteers were recruited from a university campus, social and immigrant service agencies, through advertisement (Appendix A) placed in community agencies or at university housing. The multiple channels of recruitment gave a diverse sample of Chinese Canadian men. The initial contact was made by telephone when the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the expectations on participants. Participants understood that participation was voluntary, and informed consent was explained and obtained from them. They were all assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their identity; and understood their right to withdraw at any time without any consequence. They were heterosexual adult men who were age over 25 and preferably to have family and children. They were Chinese male immigrants who had spent their young developmental years in Chinese culture before emigrating to Canada. All interviews were conducted in English.

Seven participants were interviewed. In phenomenological research, the number of participants selected for study varies considerably, from 3 to 325 as reported by Polkinghorne (1989) and Creswell (1997) recommend from 5 to 25. In this study, the sample size was deliberately kept small due to the breadth of the time frame and richness of the experiences that would be collected from each participant. The participants became the informants of the study and it was important for them to have the capacity to provide full and sensitive descriptions of the experiences and to have the skills to express, feel, and communicate their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989).
Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed through a pilot study. Participants were interviewed individually in a private setting. Each participant was interviewed with open-ended questions to examine their current experiences of being a man in adulthood, and then they were invited to recall childhood influences and incidents regarding their development of the male identity. Finally, they were asked about how they looked toward to the future and what they would like to be different. The researcher interacted with participants in an "active engagement" interview using a lifeline technique (Amundson, 1998) to help participants to recall complex life experiences. The interview questions are listed in the appendix C.

Data Collection

Interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods of gathering information in phenomenological research (Creswell, 1997; Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1989). In this study, interviews were scheduled at locations and time that were mutually convenient for the researcher and participants. Locations were chosen for privacy and convenience (e.g., a room in researcher’s or participant’s home, interview room in a community agency). The researcher established rapport with participants through some exchange around the topic of the study. The researcher first explained the procedure of the study and confidentiality, and obtained written informed consent (Appendix B) from participants before any interview began. All the interviews were conducted in person and were audiotape recorded and later transcribed. The interviews were
open-ended and unstructured, giving participants enough time to explore the topic in depth (Polkinghorne, 1989). The interview usually lasted one hour to one and a half-hours.

I began the interview giving participants an overall introduction about the study, indicating that it was about talking about their experiences of becoming a man. I first asked participants their impression or definition of a man. I used communication skills like clarifying, paraphrasing, prompting, summarizing, and non-verbal body gestures to express my interest and attention, to help participants elaborate on their experiences. The first stage of the interview focused on their current experiences of being men. There was a list of sample questions but I did not follow it rigidly in the same order. If the participants had already talked about experiences in a particular area, I would not ask the questions in that area to hinder the flow of the interview. After going through the current experiences, I invited them to move onto the second stage of talking about their childhood and developmental experiences of learning to be men. Again there was a list of sample questions but I did not follow the list rigidly. After the second stage of talking about the past was explored, I invited them to talk about how they would like to be a man in the future and how they would like to be different from now. I maintained my attention, empathy and suspended any value judgement towards the participants so that they could tell me their experiences instead of telling me what I liked to hear. My responses and behaviour were individualized to every interview, but my conversation strictly focused on the research question (Polkinghorne, 1989). At the end of the
interview, the participants completed a questionnaire (Appendix D) that provided some personal and demographic information.

Data Analysis

I transcribed all of the seven audiotaped interviews myself and kept anonymity of the participants in the transcription. After I finished transcribing each interview, I read the transcript or protocol, as it was called (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975b), and listened to the tape simultaneously to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. I also marked places that I was not sure in the protocols and then I gave one copy of the protocol back to the participant to check for accuracy and asked for clarification regarding whether or not it was what the participants really meant to say. I made corrections according to participants' feedback, to prepare for the final protocol for data analysis.

To Giorgi and many other phenomenological researchers, phenomenological data analysis is not a straightforward linear process (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975b; Polkinghorne, 1989). It is a complex and difficult back and forth process that is needed to reveal the structure, logic and inter-relationships of the data without losing the sense of the whole (Giorgi, 1975b; Polkinghorne, 1989). Data analysis is the one of the core stages of qualitative research. The goal is to derive from the protocols of the participants' experiences, a descriptive statement of the essential, non-redundant features of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 1975b; Polkinghorne, 1989). As a researcher, I read the protocols without prejudice and tried to thematize them from my viewpoint (Giorgi, 1975b). The
data were analyzed basically using the four step procedure of data analysis proposed by Giorgi (1975b, 1985).

First, I read through the protocols to get a general sense from the collection of experiences with openness and without reference to the specific objective of the study. Then I tried to understand the natural meaning units as expressed by the participants, according to the context or topics being discussed at that point (Giorgi, 1975b). I rewrote and simplified each individual meaning unit to capture the meaning I thought the participants tried to convey (Giorgi, 1975b). It was a very precarious step as the researcher tried to move beyond the protocols to uncover meaning hidden in the context but without formulating meanings that had no connection to the protocols (Colaizzi, 1978).

Second, I went back to the natural meaning units and examined them according to the specific purpose of the study (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975b). Those meaning units had nothing explicit about the topic being investigated were discarded. At the same time, the protocols with the meaning units were sent to a second person, who was a graduate in counselling psychology. The written protocols were examined independently to extract meaning units according to the purpose of the study - development of male identity. Only natural meaning units that were agreed by both the researcher and the second person were extracted and allowed to become part of our findings for the next step of data analysis. The third step was to tie together related natural meaning units into descriptive statements of non-redundant clusters of themes (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975b). I grouped together extracted meaning units of the seven
participants under the areas or context of the experiences that were disclosed. I then worked out the general headings that could possibly cover and describe the content of each cluster of themes as they consistently represented participants' experiences. The general headings were the themes that left out particulars of the situation and centered on aspects of development of male identity (Giorgi, 1975b). It took time to work out, rework, rephrase, and reformulate these general headings.

Finally, those themes that were valid across all participants were reported as a common structure (Giorgi, 1975b) that addressed the phenomenon of the Chinese Canadian immigrant men's identity development experiences. I validated these common themes by bringing them back to the original protocols (Colaizzi, 1978). I went back to ask whether the original protocols carried the meaning of the themes and re-examined those themes critically. There were five common themes found in this study at this stage. Other themes that were common only to some of the participants are also reported in the discussion section of the thesis.

Socio-demographic and Personal Background Variables

Participants were asked to report some demographic information including their current age, religion, occupation, family structure, household responsibility, languages spoken, level of education, years residing in Canada or other English speaking country, the level of education attained inside and outside Canada, citizenship status and their country of origin. The demographic questionnaire sample is attached in appendix D.
Chapter 4

Results

Description of the Results

This chapter describes the results of the current research study. First, there is an overall profile of the participants as a group; and then there are individual profiles of the personal and demographic background of each man keeping in mind the need for confidentiality. The next section presents the common structure or general themes of the men's male identity development experiences that were identified during the data analysis. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

Participants

General Profile of Participants

Seven Chinese Canadian immigrant men volunteered to participate in this study. Two came from Hong Kong, five were from Mainland China, but there was no participant from Taiwan. Their ages ranged from 31 to 57, with five participants were in their thirties. They all came to Canada after growing up in a Chinese culture. They immigrated to Canada at ages ranging from 18 to 33, and the mean age of their arrival in Canada was 27. At the time of study, they had been in Canada for at least five years, across a range of 5 to 34 years. All participants were university graduates; four had post-graduate degree. Six participants had some further studies in North America after leaving Hong Kong or China. They were all Canadian citizens at the time of the study. Their average period of residing in Canada was 12 years. All men identified
themselves as adult heterosexual men. Six participants were married and one was single. All their spouses were ethnically Chinese women. Two couples married in Canada, while others married in China or Hong Kong before immigration. They were all in their first marriage without any previous divorce. All married participants were fathers having one or two children. The age of their children ranged from two to twenty-eight, and most of them were young children, under ten years of age. Two participants lived with parents while others were independent nuclear families. Five participants were working full-time, one was studying, and one was working part time at the time of the study. Regarding the participants' spouses, three of them were full time housewives, one was working full time and two were full time students. Two participants indicated they were Christians, and the other five reported no religious affiliation.

**Individual Profile of Participants**

Mr. A was age 39. He grew up in China with well-educated parents, and was the eldest child among three siblings. He described his father as his role model that taught all his siblings the same principles of being a person, even when the family suffered during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. He had secondary and university education away from his hometown, when he was become more influenced by his peers and the society. He was very active in student and political circles during his university studies. He excelled in his education and obtained his master's degree and taught in university in China. He married in China, came to Canada on a work permit six years ago and later immigrated to Canada. He did some further study in Canada so that he could
find a better job and worked full time in a technical profession in Canada. His nuclear family has two young children at age of 5 and 13. His wife got her first job this year after giving birth to a child five years ago. Mr. A described having no differences with his wife in gender role issues. He thought that he was still quite a traditional man but stated that every couple should find their unique match in the gender role issue. He reported that he did half of the housework including tutoring, shopping, driving and picking up children.

Mr. B was age 36. He grew up in China with working class parents. He described himself building up his masculine personality since age 10, learning to be tough and strong. He had secondary and university education away from his hometown. He had very good male friends that he could discuss male issues in China, but felt distant within the Canadian society and people here. He married in China with his current wife, and came to Canada ten years ago with a student permit to study for his master's degree. Later he immigrated and his wife joined him later. He finished his master degree in Canada and wanted to pursue a doctoral degree in the future. He was very competitive in his career in an educational institution and he reported having stress in attempting to balance work and family. He was married with one young toddler and he enjoyed being with his young son. His wife was also a full-time post-graduate student at the time of research. Mr. A described having some conflict with his wife over some general issues but he has learnt to compromise. He saw himself being strong and leading and protecting his family. Mr. A lived with his parents
and they did half of the housework. He and his wife shared the remaining half and he did most of the shopping tasks.

Mr. C was age 39. He grew up in Hong Kong with busy but basically caring parents. He finished his high school in Hong Kong and left Hong Kong to pursue his university education in Canada. He came to Canada with a student permit and he quickly adjusted to the language and life in Canada. He decided to immigrate to Canada after completing his study. His parents later joined him here. He met and later married his current ethnically Chinese wife, who was an immigrant from China and grew up here in Canada. They had two young children. He worked full time in a technical profession. His wife became a full time mother after giving birth to their children. Mr. C reported his family was still pretty traditional and his wife did not complain about gender role issues in the family. He emphasized his male identity as being a father and a husband, and he compromised his career so that he could be more involved in his family. Mr. C reported he did one-quarter of the housework including gardening, vacuuming and cleaning.

Mr. D was age 37. He grew up in China with well-educated parents and a sister. He remembered being described by his parents as not having personality like a boy. It made him very aware of his male identity during adolescence. He had secondary and university education away from his hometown. He worked and married his university girlfriend in China. He immigrated to Canada six years ago, and his wife was pregnant in their first year in Canada. He pursued his interest and studied art and his wife also did her post-graduate study here in
Canada, while they were rearing a young child. Mr. D tried to take into account balancing the raising of a child and achieving his individual potential together. He took all these together as one huge on-going family project. He described himself having a flexible attitude and engaged in family roles without major argument with his wife. He did not consider his gender as being very influential to his life issues, but he did find his own unique masculinity. Mr. D reported he did half of the housework including cleaning, cooking, dishwashing, laundry, and childcare.

Mr. E was age 31 and was single. He had a sister and they grew up in China with working class parents. He described his parents as wanting obedience rather than teaching and communicating with him. He described having few influences from his parents regarding his development of male identity, as he quickly surpassed his parents' experiences and expectations. Still he reported that he learnt from his father's responsible and hard-working attitude as a person. He had university education in China and then immigrated to Canada four years ago. He felt that he had settled down and overcome socio-cultural barriers in Canada in the past four years. He is still single, and he describes that he has no problem to be with egalitarian Canadian women. He described that he respected women and he enjoyed learning from strong and capable women. He worked full time and also started his own business.

Mr. F was age 57. He grew up in Hong Kong with well-educated parents. He grew up being almost the youngest child among a large group of siblings. His father was a busy businessman and her mother helped the business and also
did the parenting. He had secondary education in Hong Kong and then went overseas to study in the US for his degree. He later studied in Canada for his master's degree and then immigrated and settled down here. He married in Canada with an ethnically Chinese Canadian immigrant who came here at her teenage. He worked for a long time in a technical profession but had returned to school to study another major at the time of research. He was married with two adult children. His wife was a housewife but also worked part time occasionally. Mr. F described himself being complementary in his roles to his wife. He described that he had never taken the male as a dominant role, but he always tried to fit into the society and family. He reported that he did half of the housework including vacuuming, dishwashing, and gardening.

Mr. G was age 40. He grew up in China with well-educated parents. He described his father as his role model who taught him the characters of being a person. His father gave him an education and single-handedly provided for the whole family when they had to relocate to a poor rural area during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. He had his university education away from his hometown and got in touch with Western values at that time. He excelled in his education and obtained a master's degree in China. He did further study in US to obtain another master's and a doctoral degree in a period of seven years. He also got married with a Chinese immigrant woman and had two children. Later he immigrated to Canada seven years ago. He worked overseas in recent years but visited the family in Canada regularly. His wife was a full time housewife. He emphasized his responsibility in his various family roles and his professionalism
in career as his main identity of being a man. Both career and family were equally important to him. Familial relationships helped him to appreciate humanity and career achievement and self-realization gave him satisfaction.

Themes

The general structure (comprehensive narrative) of the development of male identity for Canadian Chinese male immigrants is comprised of five common themes that were identified among participants during the phenomenological data analysis. These five themes exemplify the essence of the male identity development experiences common across seven participants who had diverse different individual background and profile. These five themes were: (1) Feeling a deep sense of responsibility; (2) Accepting gender equity with a willingness to compromise; (3) Learning to be a man by searching; (4) Familial events influenced male identity development in adulthood; (5) Looking forward to personal growth. This section provides a detailed description of these five themes. Quotations from the original transcripts are woven through the descriptive introduction of the themes to substantiate the understanding of the logic of the lived experiences.

Feeling a Deep Sense of Responsibility

There was a deep sense of responsibility that echoed through all seven participants in their definition of being a man. They perceived themselves as being personally responsible to family and social groups connected to them, their children and wife, the extended family, the workplace and the wider community and society. Hence they described themselves as the protector, the leader or
team player, and the ultimate person to make things better and happen. As fathers or husbands, they were responsible for the present and future well being of the home, to bring home an income, to provide a better future for the family like education and security, to be the leader in the family, to maximize the career and the potential of both husband and wife, and to make decisions that can make everybody happy. In the workplace and social groups, they were expected to be responsible and competent in their jobs, either taking a leadership role or be a cooperative team player. All these men had a deep sense of being personally held responsible for these roles and the duties associated with them.

Mr. A talked about this responsibility, "As a man, if I don't take care of my children and if they became a burden or a danger to the society when they grow up, that's my failure and responsibility." He felt that he shouldered the ultimate responsibility in his family when he said that, "As a man, if I don't do it, who would do it?" Mr. B said that, "A man will be willing to take his own responsibility, the man should have wisdom to handle his responsibilities for his family, his work and his friends." Mr. C reflected the reason he had a deeper sense of responsibility than his spouse, "For a woman, you can sit back and relax and it's not a big deal; but for a man, I guess there is a lot more pressure on a man to achieve something, and to be responsible." For Mr. D, the participant who did not try to define a man by certain role also talked about his responsibility being a big part of his role, "Even as I said, as the family grows I have more responsibilities. Because that's how I see my wife's career and my career; our possibilities. It is not the difference of man and woman; it's her career
and my career, and how to achieve and maximize both of our career while we are bearing a family." Mr. D assumed the equal amount of responsibility as his wife towards the family, unlike other participants. Mr. D expressed his opinion.

We still have pressure, let's say financial pressure, it is the same on both of us. When it comes to that of supporting the family, say the basic living; both of us have to consider to balance what you want to do, and what you can do, what you should do for the family. Yeah, it is the same issue as even if I am living alone, I still have that problem. Whether to go doing whatever I like to do and go starving, or doing something to support myself first as a human being and then to start to pursue your dream. That's still the problem but put it in the family context, it is just enlarged, it is bigger than I am alone. So I don't see it as a typical man's responsibility, it is more like a person that as a person, that's what I am facing.

Mr. E also defined himself through responsibility, "Be a responsible person, be brave to face any challenge. It is my idea to be a good man." Mr. F reflected, "As a man, he should still be the breadwinner and the main decision maker, the final decision maker, some kind of a leader in the family." Mr. G summarized his expectation on himself.

Overall speaking, we are talking about a man should be responsible, should be with professional knowledge; so probably, that's the way or the definition we can see as a man. He is responsible to the family, to the career, with a high value, high standard of professional level. That's on my mind of a man. It depends on what scenario you are in right. Overall speaking that's my idea, responsibility and professionalism are two parts of the combination of a man.

All participants recognized that significant persons around them had expectation on them to deliver their responsibilities in actual performance. This sense of responsibility became their drive towards achieving the better outcomes. Some participants indicated this sense came from the moral value of being a person learnt through childhood. Others reflected that fulfilling these responsibilities was part of their completion of self-realization, so that it was not
only about fulfilling expectations but was also responding to their inner selves. Some described this sense of responsibility came from past experience of being treated with privileges as male in education and career, to have greater freedom to concentrate on tasks other than household duties.

While all these men reported having a great sense of responsibility in being a man, they also reported experiencing stress and difficulty in accomplishing their responsibilities. They reported having worry, stress, and a helpless feeling. They could not balance their career and family, or health and work; although they felt both were really important to them. They found it hard to deal with the stress of work. They worried about job security, appraisal from superiors, and the need to constantly upgrade themselves. For example, Mr. A felt helpless in getting good university education for his children as he is unable to save up money for their future education. And the more he cared, the more difficult was his task as a man to meet his responsibility towards the family. Mr. B had said that he enjoyed the societal endorsement of male competitiveness but also acknowledged that it was actually very stressful for him to compete with others at work. Mr. C enjoyed his technical work as it's never boring but he also complained it was stressful to continuously upgrade himself and he often worried about being evaluated at work. Mr. D agreed his responsibility led to stress and he had to balance pursuing his dream in art and to dealing with familial needs. Mr. E felt external factors such as job insecurity made it hard for him to fulfill his responsibilities. Mr. F found it satisfying to solve problems both at work and at home, but he revealed that to make everybody happy at home was not easy.
Mr. G acknowledged that he had stress although he had coped with positive thinking and not complaining.

More than half of the participants indicated that they had questioned societal expectations and some problematic definitions of being a man, when they deal this sense of personal responsibility. For example, some of them complained about the narrow definition of success according to how much money a man earned. Mr. A said that, “you can’t judge that he isn’t a good man because he can’t financially provide for the family, a man could have worked hard but was unlucky to be financially successful.” Mr. C tried to redefine what it meant to be successful by pointing to other things besides money such as his relationship with people, contribution to the society, his family and children. Some of them also went on to suggest that certain things might help men to deal with the hardship of being a man such as adopting a less rigid personality that accepted new ideas, having mutual respect with the female gender, and a facilitating leadership. Mr. D thought that the society was more open.

My previous neighbour, basically it’s the husband staying at home while the wife is working in a company as some kind of manager. That’s not problem for me, I don’t say, “Oh, what a shame for a man, he should go out to work, keep his wife at home.” May be we are a more open society now, and especially I am an open person. In general, because of education, our society not just the Canadian but I think elsewhere too, that’s it is more open and man has less rigid roles.

The fact that they were immigrants did not make accomplishing this sense of responsibility any easier. Five out of seven participants regarded migration to Canada as an important life event but it was not necessarily a positive event for them. Four out of seven participants found it difficult to adjust to life in Canada. They found it tough to lose their social network and resources, and difficult to
cope with language and social barriers. As immigrants, they became withdrawn from their social involvement to become more focused on the needs of their own family. They described feeling distant and isolated from the Canadian society, and seldom would have a personal conversation with people other than those from their own cultural background. Some have given up past ideal and life ambition and have lived with a more realistic attitude. The immigration experiences made it a lot harder for many of the immigrant men to fulfill their sense of responsibility, as they were often struggling to provide for the family.

Mr. A summed up his experience:

After I immigrated here, the social environment was different, and my resourcefulness and capability were restricted, and so it restricted me. I don’t feel as free as before to do whatever I formulate in my mind. The main barrier is my language; I could not get deep into issues and fully express myself.

Mr. B shared his experience:

Here in Canada, I had too much to handle and to live a life to support the family. So I spend most time on study or work. If I go to school, I just go on my own to study or go to swimming. I seldom meet other people. If I meet other people, I just talk something about work; we do not have much time to talk about these things. We only talk about how to support the family well, how to buy a new house, how to make good investment, where is the good place to travel, but not about personal thing. I don’t really get in touch with the society a lot.

Yet there were immigrants who drew positive experiences from the immigration. Two participants had studied in North America or Canada, saw their education and career experiences here as eye-opening and very positive experiences that had built up their efficacy and personality. The education experience enabled them to have a deeper personal encounter with the
humanity and core values of the western culture that they eventually had integrated part of it into their Chinese culture.

While all participants described this sense of responsibility, they did not all associate strength and leadership to being a man as frequently as responsibility. Slightly more than half of the participants described “man is a leader” and less than half of the participants described strength and a hardworking attitude as characteristics that defined a man. Half of the participants still portrayed themselves as leaders in their families and they had submission of their wife, some preferred other leadership styles that facilitated consensus and compromising regarding differences.

Accepting Gender Equity with a Willingness to Compromise

All participants were aware of the issue of gender equity and reported feeling at peace with the female gender and accepting the prevailing gender equity social norm. Five out of seven had demonstrated certain attitudes and behaviours that showed them getting along comfortably with the female gender. Mr. A shared that, “I understand that there is the issue of gender equity. For me, it means that man and woman should have the same right and are equal in status. It does not mean man and woman are doing the same thing or sharing duties by half and half.” Mr. C respected achievement of women.

We see lots of woman, they are very successful in business, they have a very good job and they make a lot of money, ... Well, I think it is hard to be a man nowadays, but it’s not any easier to being a woman in this society. This is how I see it, there are advantages of being a man in some areas but there are also disadvantages too. I haven’t really thought about that deeply, who is got the advantage, but as far as I concern, I think it is not fair to say it is harder to be a man or to be a woman. They both face different difficulties.
Mr. D was aware of not stereotyping gender and he explained, “Now I am more emphasized on one's intellectual or career pursuit, and I don’t link those things with one's gender.” He showed his respect for his wife through his action.

I've been doing a lot of things trying to support her. But this past half year, because I am doing my graduate project, I am the busier person; so basically I gave up all the housework and child-care duties, and it is her taking over ever since. Even she is still very busy herself, but I just can’t take it anymore. It’s mutual negotiation instead of fighting for our rights. But there are struggles, trying to compete for the time, it is more on an equal negotiation rather than a gender based that woman you should do this and as a man I don’t want to do that.

Experiences in the workplace made Mr. F to recognize that women can be capable, intellectual, and strong too.

I find there are some colleagues that I work with, some females who can make a sharp decision, and they can have a lot of drive and motivation. So it is not a male or female issue, it’s character and the way people operate. ...Yeah given that all the feminine movement and the issue of gender equity, it’s still good to be a man nowadays. We still have the upper hand. Well the main thing it’s the perception right, I think somehow the other gender think they are still unequal or whatever, right or behind that they had more or less yielded the upper hand to us. I think in actuality, they have gained a lot, well from my perception, the sexes are pretty well equal. From my point of view, I don’t think there’s too much problem with equality. But I still read a lot of those inequalities, people complaining. So sometimes I will take an effort to try to listen to find out where the problems are coming from, I guess there are still situations where are injustice and inequality are still happening, but I don’t think it is in general in the society, that has so much of a problem. I don’t feel it is too hard with the other gender gaining ground, I don’t feel threatened or discomfort. It's like a win-win situation for both genders.

Mr. G described his change of attitude in male dominance.

We gave up something, totally give up some directions certainly. Maybe like the dictatorship, the idea from traditional Chinese society, that something we, from my point of view; as I got into the Western world, and I learnt lot of the things here. Then we felt OK the man, the man, the human race should be given more respectful, more protection to individuals, and more development. Certainly this is different from the society traditionally we’re growing up.
Mr. E also put himself in the camp that embraced gender harmony, “For someone else who might want to be the boss in the family and everyone else listen to him, it may not be a good time to be a man. But for me, I like to have discussions with a capable woman and learn something from her. It is not hard for me at all.”

Their sense of being at peace with the female gender was accompanied with their attitude to compromise and negotiate if any differences existed. Although most participants reported that they followed a rather common traditional gender norm and indicated their spouses agreed with their traditional orientated gender role norms in the families. However, none reported any major disagreement or conflict with their spouse on the more traditional definition of man; and only one participant reported having minor conflict with his spouse. While some might take the wife’s “no-complaint” to mean no conflict, other described that they liked to receive positive criticism from their spouse and were ready to compromise. Therefore traditional definition of gender roles did not necessarily mean hegemonic masculinity. All participants had an accepting attitude towards the current gender equity orientation; and were willing to take a negotiating, compromising, consensus building, problem-solving approach to settle differences with women. They reported consensus usually could be reached and they were quite happy about it. For example, Mr. B described his experience in compromising.

With my wife, we have conflict, but not mainly due to perception about a man. She has a different point of view on work and I have a different point of view on work; she has a different point of view on life, and I have a different point of view on life. So, I mention that my wife probably wants me to be less serious about
everything. Probably due to my nature, I don't know how I get this habit of being serious. To be serious about everything sometimes is not good because you have to focus on several important things, not just be serious to everything. Probably that is the difference between my wife and me in terms of the perception of being a man. Recently I tried to correct myself each time. ...Before marriage I had no idea of the art of "compromising". I always do what I want, if not, let's fight. I am my own boss and I just do whatever I want. But I find that in marriage, you can't always fight, you won't get what you want by fighting, you have to compromise. So basically, marriage changes my point of view. Before, I thought man had to be strong, now as a man, I have to learn to compromise, need to have skills to deal with people, to compromise. You have to be flexible, learn to give up something. It is not just in the family, it is also important to compromise in work for less important things.

Mr. C described how he appreciated his wife's role and volunteered himself to help her out.

When I do the housework, it is not due to my wife voices out and asks me to. When I go home after a long day, I usually feel pretty tired, ...but when I see that it is not easy for my wife to handle the two kids, it's almost bigger than a full time job nowadays: taking them to school and them after school, take them to various lessons and you know all the other activities and also plus doing the housework.”

Mr. F also talked about adjusting his role and compromising with his wife.

With my wife, I guess we learn to adjust to each other. She would come to a certain kind of preference for action, much sooner than I would, and at least she would bring that up with me and suggests that we come to some kind of action, so I guess I play the procrastinator, and she would be doing moving the motion and I would be seconding it. Yes we would come to some kind of an agreement on that kind of role.

All participants except one described their current household arrangement in the family as still pretty traditional, characterized by the fact that either the wives were full time housewives, or the family agreed on the a man's place is outside the home and the woman's place is inside the home. However, over half of the participants allowed themselves some flexibility on male gender identity. For example, Mr. A said that, “The definition of a man should be done according to one's individual character and his own family context. Every person can have
their style and this is normal and acceptable.” Mr. B said himself, “Before, I thought man had to be strong, now as a man, I have to learn to compromise. You have to be flexible, learn to give up something.” Mr. C was willing to help even if his wife had not complained, “You know one person just cannot handle that, and I can see that in my house, so I would help her as much as I could, but she hasn’t said about it yet, she hasn’t complained.” Mr. D said that he had given up on traditional masculine identity such that he completely embraced flexibility in gender roles in his family. Their gender-role boundaries were flexible and negotiable. Mr. D described his experience.

In our household, work is really shared and depends on your skills or availability, your time, energy level, who can do this better and who has time to do this. It's like negotiation, whoever will have the time, whoever will enjoy or do the job better. ... So it is going back to the principle of who would do it better.

All participants expressed feeling positive about being man in the current time despite recognizing the need from them to compromise some male privileges. Each participant found and mentioned something for him to celebrate about being a man nowadays. Two participants recalled positive experience related to family: one felt satisfied through his involvement in his children’s education and development, another was satisfied with his experience of balancing career and family, enjoying his job in the daytime and then looking forward to see his family in the evening. Another two participants described experiences in the workplace as very satisfying: one felt he fitted well with the norm of male competitiveness in the workplace, another found job satisfaction. Two more participants found positive experiences related to their self-development. One man was satisfied with having the capabilities and the
confidence that would enable him to accomplish something and to achieve self-realization; another felt satisfied that with the open-minded society that allowed his family to be flexible in achieving their goals.

While all participants were very respectful and compromising towards the female gender and their spouses, most of the marriage couples still lived very much under the traditional definition of maleness and femaleness. Only one participant described familial roles and relationship that gender had no important bearing on. Mr. D talked about the insignificance of their gender with reference to their tasks in the family, "We never think in this way that because you are a woman you should do this. Or because I am a man, I don't want to do this."

Learning to Be a Man by Searching

All participants described experiences that characterized their own searching in the journey to becoming a man. Some of them could trace back some learning and the laying of the foundation of their current male identity to their formative years as teenagers or even children. Some mentioned learning some values taught by their families and schools that had become part of their current view of male identity. However, the process of their male identity development was most characterized by their own search for manhood when they were growing up.

During childhood, there was very little direct teaching about being a boy or a man given to these participants by their parents. Half of the participants recalled that their mothers were more occupied with their obedience rather than having a dialogue or exchange. Some mothers might explain some underlying
meaning of life and personal events in some detail. Only two fathers involved themselves directly in parenting the participants. Others described their fathers as busy in making a living for the family, or as not having the necessary education, and usually not talking to their children. Often the participants learnt through their own trial and error. Family was more a place for some observational learning to take place, and they still regarded their fathers as their most important role models. All of them remembered the character of their fathers being hardworking, persistent, responsible, self-reliant and thought and deduced about the image of being a man. It was this kind of observational learning and self-searching that characterized these participants’ early journey to be men.

Mr. C talked about this experience of searching.

When I was small, my parents, they don’t have a very high education. My father is a workaholic; he left for work before I woke up. Sometimes he didn’t come home until dinnertime or even past dinnertime. And a lot of times he worked seven days a week, I didn’t have much to look up to my father when I was small. He didn’t have much time to talk to us, partly because he is very busy trying to make a living, and also he didn’t have a very high education. So he didn’t really talk to us that much at all. So I don’t think he taught us to become what I have become today. It’s probably my own searching and my own observation, and my own development. Probably the people around me, my teachers, my friends, and possibly from different media like TV and radio. And I started to go to church when I was very small, so the people that I have met in church, like in Sunday school, or in church and I think that influenced me a lot.

Mr. E had similar experience of searching for himself as he quickly surpassed his parents’ expertise. He recalled his experience.

The model of being a man came from my parents. My father did a good job to be a good father in my family, and he always worked hard and takes care of us. It’s my first image of a man, to be responsible, keeps the family healthy. When I grew older, then I had more chance to think about it myself. My parents and I
are in different generation right. So they get less opportunity to go to different
cities, they were less educated. And I have more chance to go to different
places to meet more people. I think it is also personality because my father is
not a very out-going person, quite a conservative person. He doesn’t want to talk
too much to other people. For me, I went to different cities to study universities,
and also worked in different places. So I experience more things and meet more
people than my parents. When I meet other people, I also compare to them
right. In this case, I got a higher standard for myself than my parents do. To be
frank, honestly my father is not a talkative person; he just influenced me by doing
things. What I get influenced from him was from watching what he did. In my
impression, he always works overtime, even in the weekend; and also he
sacrificed for the family. So what he did gradually influenced me. He didn’t really
talk too much, and he didn’t have too much expectation on me.

Mr. D described how he passed his childhood years pondering with his
less than masculine personality.

During my childhood, I have described by my parents as a weak will person,
sentimental. I wasn’t like a boy or a man; I am too easy to cry. That’s not the
image of man, being not physically active, as opposite to my sister who was
always jumping around. But I was quiet, and I am always that, my sister always
got outside and disappeared. Yes, so she is like a boy. There was such a big
contrast. … My parents did not try to change me, they just said that was my
type, my personality. Sometimes they would blame me for being not successful
because my personality. That type of person, who is sentimental, always
hesitating can’t decide on anything, it’s weak will not strong will. Yeah, but
they never tried to change me, they just explained or criticized, not really
criticized but gave me feedback. They accepted that, they knew that’s me.

Mr. F described his observational learning during childhood.

Well, it was mainly from my observation, especially my mother, she teaches
more by example. She would point out especially like when there are major
events in the family say wedding, funeral things like that; she would explain
some of those the meaning behind some of those practice. So yeah she would
give more direct instructions, whereas my father would be the example, just
observe how he does things, how he works things out, how to talk with people.

There were two participants out of the total seven who reported having
spent significant time with their father. For them, gender messages were not
obvious and might be incorporated into the more general teaching of how to be a
person. They were taught be a person in general rather than specifically a boy
or a man. Mr. A talked about his learning experience with his father, when the virtue of his father as a hard-working, persistent, and responsible person had been passed onto him to be taken as being a man. Such values were still recalled and embraced.

No, my father did not directly teach me that. I learn my role as a man in the family by myself. My father just taught me how to be a person and it was understood that he and I were men, needless to mention. My father’s top priority is to teach me about coping with my life, have social responsibility, respect others and to get respect, deal with adversity, and attitudes towards life. I just take it for grant that these messages are applicable to me as a man. My father did not directly teach me how to be a man as it is so obvious that we are male. I learn how to be a man by myself. He also taught my siblings including my sister the same thing. My siblings were all good considerate persons. We might have different achievements because of our different talents and abilities; we are all nice and responsible persons.

Mr. G was another participant who had a significant amount of time spent with his father. He learned from him knowledge about life and how to be a person as a whole. This was his experience.

And when you said the first role model, there’s no doubt it’s my parents, my father. And he taught me, as he had nothing to do, just sitting there, doing some labour work. His whole schedule everyday was just reading some books, and did some physical work in the morning, and in the afternoon, to do some newspaper reading. So he got a lot of time to spend with me. And he spent with me to teach me Chinese history, he majored in philosophy but he taught anything that came to his mind, traditional Chinese philosophy, history, and literature are his specialties. Yes I grew up in hardship but my parents were our models because even today I am thinking about it. So I can see my parents, particularly my father was so strong, made everybody happy, made everyone’s life meaningful, the reading, even the lot of articles to learn, copied from his memory or from whatever he found out, the classical Chinese. So that’s the kind of role model to teach us, to set up, to let us to see how you deal with the hardship, how you deal with the problem lifelong whatever happens.

During their teenage years participants two-thirds of them left home for their secondary education. At this stage, they had chances to travel and saw the world. Many found themselves surpassing their parents’ capabilities and
experiences. Influences other than home education brought stronger and stronger impact, such as teachers, peers, church, television, radio and magazines. From that time onwards, they tried to become the person they wanted themselves to be. Four out of seven participants mentioned some clear and enduring project in exploring male identity or other gender issues during adolescence. Many read the biographies of great people to learn how to be a man, read articles in popular magazine on gender issues and to understand more about the female gender. Dating experiences and sharing with male peers helped to form solid perspective about being a man. Eventually all participants had moved away from their hometown for tertiary education and influences from the family of origin diminished even quicker. Some even went overseas to North America for their university education. They started to make their own choices and decisions in study and life, became involved in social organizations such as student unions and churches, and further absorbed other values of being a man. Here were some of their adolescent gender related experiences.

Mr. B’s experience as a teenager involved a very conscious search for a male character.

By the time I was 14 years old, I felt I’m a man, I should be strong. I changed myself consciously in all aspects. Such as I even took cold showers in winter. My dad one time asked me, ‘Are you using hot water in bathing?’ Because he saw steam coming out from my body. I said, ‘No, that’s cold water.’ I took heroes and other great man such as political figures Chairman Mao, Premier Chou; and scientist like Einstein as my role models. I liked to read their stories and novels about heroes. These novels described the men to be brave, strong and often challenging themselves. ... And I thought a man should be like that. No matter what’s happening, if a man is doing something then he should continue and finish it. These biographies and novels had great influences on my character.
Mr. D shared his adolescent experience.

During adolescence gender identity was a big issue for me, when I was 16 or 17 years old. I really questioned and built up my image, developed my awareness of who I am... I read lots of literature like biographies of great man so that I can learn to be a man. They were great because they had strong heroic characters, with great personalities. I thought I was looking for those things that caused them to be strong mentally, spiritually. Gender identity was a big part of my adolescent project.

Mr. F recalled his adolescent time.

In youth fellowship in church, we discussed about behaviour of boys and girls, how male and female should complement each other, so in that sense we had some kind of instruction on gender. There was more interest in understanding the other gender than my own gender. Basically the complementary principle influenced my idea of man and women fitting each other functionally in a family. I also picked up gender information from magazines and newspapers; it's picked up in general reading. I guess around college age, I learnt about this problem of macho image, the gender image we get in popular film. I got exposure to other different roles or different images of what a male is.

Familial Events Influenced Male Identity Development in Adulthood

Current familial events and interactions were the most important immediate factors that influenced these men to become the persons they are today. Their current particular gender roles and courses of action in gender-related issues were influenced primarily not by factors outside the family but by people and events inside the family. Being a man was found to be particularly meaningful to all these participants in their familial context. All these participants except one defined themselves mainly through their familial roles such as a father, a husband, a breadwinner, a leader, and a decision-maker. All these roles were often referred to in a familial context. Many participants did not think their gender would affect their behaviour or mattered in their lives outside the family such as in the workplace. Instead they thought personality had more
influence than gender on one's behaviour in social situations. Mr. F talked about his opinion.

In the workplace, there are differences with people but I don't think there will be conflict, it's mainly different characters in people that I meet, some who can make a snap decision and go ahead without consultation, knowing that everybody would fall into line kind of thing. Ah, I meet people like that but I don't think it'll cause conflict, as long as you understand the style they're using, and where they come from. As long as I can make my position clear, have a chance to inform him where things are. So it's like doing my work in my profession, different people will have different styles. The differences have nothing to being male or female. I find there are some colleagues that I work with, some female who can make sharp decision, and they can have a lot of drive, motivation. So it is not a male or female issue, it's character and the way people operate.

For these men, male identity related expectations often came from close family members. In considering different possibilities and practices related to being a man, the opinion that mattered most often came from the spouse, the immediate family and extended family. Actually, two thirds of the participants reported not knowing or caring too much about the opinions of their colleagues or other individuals not closed to the family. In reality, these participants never quite knew other men's practice or definition of being a man; and it was seldom a discussion topic in social conversation with others in adulthood. There was very limited input from their social life to enlighten them regarding specifically what a man should be. Mr. B's response was quite typical of other participants; he said that, "Frankly speaking I don't know much about it because we seldom talk about how to be a man, but I do know from the point of view of my wife. ... For other people here in Canada, I don't know much about it because we seldom discuss it." It was quite obvious that most participants did not experience social encounters regarding gender issues that had created personal change. There
was one exception. One participant did report frequent discussions about all kinds of identity issues with friends in social situations, because he studied in a liberal arts school where deconstructing ideas and self-reflection were greatly encouraged and necessary for artist.

All participants mentioned some important things that happened in adulthood that had affected them as being men. These were familial and relational events such as getting married or breaking up with one's girlfriend, having children and fatherhood, the passing away of his own father, family and career choices, and the migration of the family to Canada. All these familial relationships and events exerted immediate impacts and were the greatest influences that have shaped them into the kind of person they are right now. For example, experiences in adulthood influenced them about how to adjust to spouse's or girlfriend's expectations, how to compromise and settle conflict with a spouse, and how to bridge personality or worldview differences. Many participants also said marriage was an important event that helped them to understand females, gave them a new sense of male identity and responsibility, and led them to reflect on their priorities and meaning in life that eventually changed their attitude and behaviour about being a man. Having children and fatherhood were great experiences that gave these men a sense of pride and accomplishment, a new perspective on humanity and relationships, and usually encouraged them to spend more family time by balancing career and family. These events seemed to develop their male gender identity as they encountered
gender role issues on a personal level. Mr. B’s perspective was quite representative of these men.

Getting married and became father made me feel somehow completed and was positive for me. More or less you feel you are completed now you have a family of your own. You taste the other side of life. If you don’t have a family, probably you never taste how to be a husband, how to be a father in a family. So you taste other roles. ... So the first major event is my marriage. Before married, I have no idea of how woman thinks or expects from man. I just read from books that man has to be strong, has to be brave, to be responsible. When I married my wife, and then I knew more about women, and what she expects on me. After marriage, I felt that it was so complicated and complex to be a man. There are also different kinds of men, some are very responsible, and some were really bad. So after marriage, I learn more about women and being a man. Then being a father is a very important thing and is very happy to me. You’ll be responsible for your son for the whole life time. You have to be his role model. So it means I have to be good myself and tried to discipline myself, I don’t want my son to have a bad model. The negative influence is that sometimes you get too much conflict in your marriage, you feel depressed yourself. It affects my work, my study, actually it affects all my aspects.

Mr. A said that family was his first priority.

For me, as a man, I don’t have high ideal of only focus on the collective good of the society. I think I need to start from my own family, and then go onto bigger issues. So for me, the basics are to be responsible for my family so that they can produce positive influences to the society. Then if I have the extra capacity, I would pursue doing some good things to the society.

Mr. C described his gradual change under the influence of familial issues.

It happened very gradually, over the last five or six years and then gradually my focus shifting from my career to my family. Perhaps my children are still too young. You know, they are four and eight right now. And in the last five years, I can see time really flies. You know, it was only liked a year ago when a year ago that they were still tiny babies, and all of a sudden my younger son is going to kindergarten in September. And what happen to my babies, you know they are not babies anymore. And that starts changing my focus. If I still spend that much time on my day job everyday, I am going to miss their childhood. I really want to spend time with them. Perhaps may be ten or fifteen years later, when they are older they could look after themselves, and they don’t spend much time with us anymore. I’ll go back to spending more time on my second career, may be I can come back and start a small business. So that’s what I have in mind.
Mr. G said that fatherhood had influenced him, and he also summed up his developmental experience across cultures.

The kids are so important to me. And you can say they are gifts from God, whatever you say right. That's the most precious gift you can get. That's one thing. And may be make you feel more reflection; more realization on love, on people, on life, on the human side of value. Certainly that part makes me or I believe makes everybody feel more responsible, make contribution make me a better person, better understanding of the human. ... Certainly, the way I am here right now is the combination or combined results of my education and my value. Certainly, the role models from my parents, from the society, from the education I received when I was young. ... Personally you review things and reflect things. Oh, that's probably not the rule, there's something we may have to change, and we review from different angles. Gradually I change a lot actually. Basically, the person I am is the combination of the western culture and the eastern culture. The fundamental thing is there, but again down the road, I line up a lot of western ideas, values; it's a kind of mix. The good or bad, it is hard to say so, that the truth is the fact is, it is a kind of mixture there.

Mr. D described how his more flexible gender identity emerged through the dynamics of interaction with his spouse.

To me having that kind of space to be an more open mind person about my own role as a man or husband or a father is mainly because, my wife. She has already accepted me as a masculine man within herself. Then probably her own education and her own struggle to balance profession and a woman's traditional role helps her to accept me to be a less traditional man. Both of us don't expect the other to be fitting the traditional image, so that gives us room to be ourselves, to be flexible.

Overall, it was a common theme that the participants indicated that their current male identity was a long-term development, a result of a combination of influences from their family of origin, education, and their personality; yet they also reflected that at the same time, they had changed gradually through the adult years through these important familial events and experiences. They acknowledged that their value and behaviour had changed from the occurrences of these familial events. Many of these changes that occurred were related to
their gender identity issues. They included focusing more and more on family relations, giving up authoritative characteristics, widening the once narrow definition of being a man as having a strong will and being masculine, developing other non-typical masculine traits such as understanding, caring, respectfulness, understanding the female gender, further exploring the meaning to be a good man, and becoming richer spiritually or relationally. Some participants described their changes as becoming less traditional or a mixture of east and western culture inside them.

**Looking Forward to Personal Growth**

Looking toward the future, many participants felt strongly that their male identity was pretty much stable and concrete and that a fundamental change seemed impossible. Some felt regret about certain difficult situations they face today, such as migrating to Canada, and certain personal constraints developed in the past; yet their attitude towards the future was basically trying to make the best out of the present. Most participants were looking toward some growth to develop themselves into a fuller person. For many participants it meant to be more understanding, have self-control, be more sociable, more tolerant, have more social skills, and to follow their hearts and personalities in finding personal and interpersonal meaning of existence. Often they addressed those qualities that were their weaknesses in their current personalities. They looked forward for being better men, and all participants liked being men, citing that the male gender gave them advantages and more possibilities to accomplish something
more in their life, liking travelling and being a leader. And being a male person is something they know how to do with some confidence now.

Things that would make them more satisfied were diverse in nature. One participant just wanted to enjoy the current situation and thought things could stay the same as they are. Another participant indicated that it was quite impossible to change the circumstances. To him, he could only change his own thinking and coping mechanisms to make himself happier. Two participants said fatherhood had made them better persons, and helped them to reflect on the human side of values and enjoy their relationships, the future possibility of having his children remember him as good father and be proud of him would also be very satisfying. For another three participants, life would be more satisfying if they could pursue some personal interests that they were not doing now, such as studying history and having a family of their own. Maybe the term self-realization, usually a term in western culture, that was used by two participants, can sum up these participants' desire to be a fuller person.

Mr. G described his drive for personal satisfaction.

There is many things that make you feel satisfied, but probably on the top of my head, that's the way. If you can go ahead to pursue right, if you need to do something, want to do something. I have a plan, I know how to do it, Maybe it's not the best of all plans but I know how to do it. From my way, from my point of view, with the confidence, with the feasible approach, we can finish, we can accomplish. May be you are not the giant to influence so many people, you don't have to right; but somehow you do the things, you satisfy yourself. That's part of the completion of your self-realization.

Mr. D summed up what is important to him.

Now I am more emphasized on my own intellectual or career pursuit, and I don't link those things with man's identity. It's about my personal ability or academic or artistic practice. It's not linked to my gender identity so that's not a big issue
to me.... Her (his wife's) career and my career, how to achieve and maximize both of our career while we are bearing a family.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a comprehensive description of five major common themes found across participants. These five themes exemplified the common experiences of the male identity development experiences among these Chinese Canadian male immigrants. The five themes included (1) Feeling a deep sense of responsibility; (2) Accepting gender equity with a willingness to compromise; (3) Learning to be a man by searching; (4) Familial events influenced male identity development in adulthood; (5) Looking forward to personal growth. Each of the themes reveals an important aspect of male identity development for these men. These themes were anchored in the narratives of participants. Individually, each theme describes an essential component of the male experience at one point in their life stage; collectively they produce a holistic picture of the logic and developmental evolution of male identity from childhood to adulthood for these participants.

In chapter five, I will examine these findings in the context of various aspects of research literature on male identity development. The ways in which the findings of this study have contributed to what we have already known about the phenomenon studied are also described.
Chapter 5
Discussion

This chapter provides a comparison of the major findings of the present study with available literature and previous research in the area. The major findings discussed are the five common themes identified among participants on the phenomenon of the development of their male identity were: (1) Feeling a deep sense of responsibility; (2) Accepting gender equity with a willingness to compromise; (3) Learning to be a man by searching; (4) Familial events influenced male identity development in adulthood; (5) Looking forward to personal growth. Other sections discuss limitations of this study, the implications of the findings for counselling practice, and suggestions for further research.

Feeling a Deep Sense of Responsibility

The deep sense of feeling responsible to family can be understood within the context of the Chinese value system that boys are socialized to in their upbringing. Cheung (1996) reported that under Chinese social norms, boys were socialized to take over power and responsibility while girls were subject to subordination to others higher in the family hierarchy. Responsibility towards the family was one of the inner core values of many Chinese, even among Chinese populations across the world (Cheung, 1996; Goodwin & Tang, 1996). This sense of responsibility to the family can be traced back to the traditional Chinese moral value of role obligation in those fundamental interpersonal relationships between husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother. Goodwin & Tang (1996) indicated that this sense of role obligation represented an emphasis
on inter-dependency in the familial roles and relationships in Chinese culture. Such responsibility is very much non-negotiable and comes with the relationship. This is quite different from close relationships in the Western cultures that see responsibility as more equal and gradually deepen in intimacy through a process of personal disclosure and interaction (Goodwin & Tang, 1996). Also this responsibility is part of the greater social role obligation of an individual, taught by the parents towards their children. Often this obligation of responsibility emphasizes socially desirable behaviours and at the same time discourages individualism and independence (Cheung, 1996; Goodwin & Tang, 1996). This deep sense of responsibility and heavy social expectations often make Chinese men feel burdened with stress and role strain, as when they perceive more responsibilities and tasks that fall into their male domain (Kim, Larch, & Tomiuk, 2004). Participants in this study displayed such role strain when they talked about having difficulties in balancing career and family; feeling helpless in reaching expectations, and the loss of their provider role. At the same time these men had also attempted to change the rigidity of this male responsibility. They started questioning the meaning of being a successful man, the identity of mainly being a financial provider, the lack of a male roles in other areas of family life, and how to deal with their own personality style within the context of a narrowly defined male identity. These were positive signs in the development of a more flexible and healthy male identity emerging from the narrowly defined traditional male identity.
The study also found that participants reported experiencing stress, worry, and faced difficulties in balancing career and family, health and work in trying to achieve their perceived responsibilities. This finding agreed with many other studies that reported men in general face gender role strain and stress; and more traditional role norms were related to an increase of these stress and strain reactions (Good, Robertson, O'Neil & Fitzgerald, 1995; Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995). The fact that participants were immigrant men did make them feel more stress, and over half of them found it difficult to adjust to life in Canada. They were attempting to fulfil their responsibility to the family in a state of reduced social networks and resources, with language and social barriers. Other studies of immigrant men reported similar results (Kim, 1990; Lazur & Majors, 1995). So the development of male identity for these Chinese Canadian immigrant men did not just involve the personal level of deeper self-understanding and mastery of previously learned gender identity, it was also about negotiating with changing social contexts and realities. In this study, half of the participants talked about giving up ideals, lowering expectations, putting off career ambitions and changing personality traits. There was a great need for these immigrant men to be able to negotiate healthier gender roles under unfavorable social realities in their new host society. In this study, participants did question some societal expectations, and the rigid, problematic definitions about being a man, for example the meaning of success with money as the sole standard to measure achievement. Such negotiation was positive as long as it
encouraged healthy male identity development that could improve relationships, self-esteem and reduced stress.

Accepting Gender Equity with a Willingness to Compromise

The finding related to participants' attitude of respect for the female gender with the willingness to compromise is another positive finding, as more and more psychologists and counsellors have advocated the need to develop a new healthier male identity (Cornish, 1999; Levant, 1997, Kimmel & Messner, 1992). Earlier literature mainly described men's reluctance or resistance to change their beliefs about gender roles (Pleck, 1981; Thompson & Pleck, 1986). This finding from the current study agreed with some recent studies done on certain particular samples of new generations of non-traditional men, indicating that male identity could be flexible; and they could find new, healthy, egalitarian expressions (Berry & Rao, 1997; Cornish, 1999; Duindam & Spruijt, 1997). This attitude of acceptance and compromise might mean losing some advantages over women, however many participants in the study still felt very positive about being men. Zuo (1997) described a similar male experience. The determined men found out that it might be even more costly and negative for them to return to the traditional male identity in order to keep their privileges; because they needed to be the good provider of the family and shouldered all responsibilities and burden. It might be one of the reasons for these Chinese Canadian men compromised to adapt a more egalitarian gender identity. Some participants indicated that despite the compromise, they still had the upper hands in gender relations, and they recognized this was a win-win situation for both genders.
Phinney (2000) pointed out that despite the endless different ways of constructing a sense of identity, societal norms and historical moments often set the limits for individual choices, and that made certain identity choices easy and others virtually impossible. One important societal influence half of these participants mentioned was that they had more education. Other factors were the more open attitude of the Canadian society towards diverse male identity and the economic disadvantage of being immigrants. For these Chinese Canadian men, they shared similar experiences in that as they chose to come to Canada. Denying gender equity and maintaining all male privileges were very difficult and contradictory choices for them.

Participants also said that very few conflicts had happened in the family. The attitude of harmony and balance is a polar construct against power and control in family dynamics (Breunlin, Schwartz, & Kune-Karrer, 1997). These men seemed willing to negotiate and compromise to preserve harmony before any serious conflict happened or their spouses complained. These participants' attitude of compromising to achieve balance and harmony in their family can be understood from the Chinese culture that values interpersonal harmony (Lau & Yeung, 1996). Chinese people are socialized to learn to sacrifice one's 'smaller self' for the sake of the 'larger self' which meant the society or the collectivity (Wu, 1996). For those Chinese Canadians who had acculturated to the Western values, the 'larger self' for them might be the gender equity culture that they had to live with. Their acculturation had made them consciously agree to a more respectful gender relationship. Such findings agreed with other studies on North
American Chinese immigrants, that the longer the length of residence in North America the more they accepted individualistic and democratic values (Dion & Dion, 1996); although acculturation did not necessarily translate into an egalitarian gender identity and household responsibility (Kim, Laroche, & Tomiuk, 2004). In a study among Chinese and Japanese Asian American immigrants, Chua and Fujino (1999) reported that even though Asian immigrants were still often viewed as more traditional in male identity than local born ethnic Asian or North American men, they definitely began to express new forms of non-hegemonic male identities. North American Asian immigrants showed two opposing strategic directions in developing male identities. First was a more flexible and expanded notion of male identity that contained elements of masculine and feminine characters and behaviours together. Second was the continual construction of a hegemonic male identity through the leverage of economic power (Chua & Fujino, 1999).

Actually, one participant in the study mentioned he got in touch with the western value of humanity and respect for personal value back in his university time before immigration in China. According to the literature, there is some evidence of egalitarianism in family affairs and marital relationships among Chinese families in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, with both men and women now playing a more equal role in key areas of family life. Both parents are involved in making important family decisions. Also, there is an increase in percentage of husbands who reported they shared housework (Da, 2004; Goodwin & Tang, 1996). Da (2004) reported a group of Chinese immigrant men
from Shanghai participated more in housework than other Chinese, and Da observed that their attitude in gender equity was a continuity of what they did before migration.

More than half of the participants possessed gender-role attitudes that emphasized functional, pragmatic, and flexible gender-role boundaries with their spouses. They said that each couple had to develop their unique fit and there was nothing definitely right or wrong in gender-role identities. One participant however claimed that he had given up the traditional masculine identity and gender had very little bearing in defining practical roles for them. However, most of them still admitted they were pretty traditional in family functioning. Such a combination of traditional family functioning and egalitarian attitude among them might also mean that they were 'talking the talk' of feminism (Cornish, 1999). This meant that they were motivated to engage in progressive gender ideas, but their execution of the principles seemed superficial.

In this study, participants actually expressed worry about their male identity for reasons other than women's rights or the feminist movement. They felt more threatened in their male identities by their own failure in maintaining the family provider role rather than being concerned about the rising power of women. The loss of the good provider role is often described as a central factor in the development of the male identity crisis (Levant, 1996; 1997). In this study, five of the participants indicated that they worried about providing for the family, losing their social resources after immigration, being unable to support their family, being unable to fulfil their responsibilities, and being concerned with being
evaluated just by the money they made. It is understood that Asian immigrants often have limited financial resources due to social barriers and restriction against entering various occupations (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Dion & Dion, 1996). It is also found that Asian immigrant men might tend to leverage their economic ability for family power and privileges more than white men (Chua & Fujino, 1999). Therefore, it seemed that these working father participants had chosen not to fight with women within the context of such social realities. They might still want to maintain their male role as a good provider of the family, but they are also trying to search for new pathways in being men.

Learning to be a Man by Searching

The experiences of these participants revealed that they themselves were active agents in their own identity development. They learned to be a man through their own searching. They indicated that often they did not have an active model or mentor for being a man during childhood, and did not have substantial gender education from their parents and schools within the Chinese cultural context. Some of them also reported that learning to be a man was a secondary task. They were taught more to learn to be a person. This finding is contrary to the western popular view that sex type behaviour is primarily shaped by parents at an early age and through socialization during adolescence (Blee & Tickamyer, 1997; Lynch & Kilmartin, 1999; McCreary, 1995; Snyder, Velasquez, Clark, & Means-Christensen, 1997). This theme has not been reported in other qualitative studies. This finding supports the newer social constructive notion that male gender identity is not a rigid entity as a result of socialization in
childhood and adolescence, it is an accomplishment achieved through ongoing interaction between men and his social positions (Ferree, 1990; Kim, Laroche, & Tomiuk, 2004; Zuo, 1997). This observation will be discussed later along with the discussion of the literature regarding Chinese parenting practices, socialization in childhood, adolescent and adulthood.

In this study, two participants who had spent a significant amount of time with their fathers reflected that their parents focused mainly on teaching them to become a better person, and they did not explicitly teach a lot of gender related issues. The general purpose was to learn to become human and what it meant to be men. Other participants did not recall any substantial gender messages or education that had an impact on them. Together with other participants, they had a common experience of learning to become men mostly through their own active searching. This lack of direct gender education in participants’ childhood needs to be understood in the cultural context of Chinese child development philosophy. The main parental responsibility within the Chinese cultural tradition of Confucianism is to instruct the child to become competent human beings or ‘zuoren’ (Lau & Yeung, 1996; Wu, 1996a, Wu, 1996b). So the most important value and practices in parenting include developing a moral character, good manners, achievement in education, self-fulfillment, and maintain harmonious social relations (Lau & Yeung, 1996; Wu, 1996). This emphasis of traditional moral education persists even in communist China (Wu, 1996b).

Some researchers reported sex-role differentiation was maintained by practices of parents and educational systems, with strong social sanctions
related to gender behaviours starting in early childhood and continuing into adulthood, in traditional Chinese societies (Cheung, 1996; Goodwin & Tang, 1996). However, in the present study, participants did not report such strong sex-differentiation education and teaching experience. No easy explanation can be offered to resolve this different observation. One observation is perhaps that the strongly sex-role differentiated Chinese culture has clear behavioural gender expectations, yet the culture has seldom explored the psychological and experiential meaning of being a man. There are a lot of instructions on “what a man should do” but very few on the personal meaning of being a man. This is similar to an observation made by Cornish (1999) that there was often a lack of real understanding of men as gendered beings in our cultures. Therefore, the sex differentiation and stereotypes were conveyed predominantly through behavioural sanction and differential expectations and beliefs between boys and girls (Cheung, 1996); rather than through personal mentoring and education. As a result, these participants did not report any significant experience of receiving gender education and teaching.

**Gender Identity Development During Childhood**

The lack of the father’s involvement in parenting their boys found in this study is well documented by other researchers and writers; sometimes termed the absent father phenomenon (Lynch, 1999). Most fathers of the participants in this study might not have been physically missing but often were emotionally absent, or were ‘silent fathers’. It was especially true in traditional Chinese culture that emphasized gender stereotypes and the division of roles between
man and woman such as "men work outside, women work inside". The "strict father, kind mother" roles in parenting dictated that father was the distant, disciplinary person (Cheung, 1996; Goodwin & Tang, 1996). The 'silent father' experience of these participants suggested that they were brought up in traditional parenting and gender role arrangements.

The finding of the strong emphasis of parental teaching by example was another typical Chinese parenting style reported by other researchers (Wu, 1996). Parents had high expectations that their children were 'dongshi', or could understand age equivalent or even adult moral values and interpersonal issues. They expected children at a certain age to have the moral reasoning ability to understand parental teaching and modelling (Wu, 1996). This emphasis on the children to observe models and learn on their own might helps to explain why participants in this study reported very few experiences of being taught directly by their parents.

These participants revealed the past social context behind the 'silent father' phenomenon such as the busyness of the father, their lack of education; and the fact that many families went through wars and a series of economic and political turmoils in China, such as the Cultural Revolution. These issues were reported by several participants. Others reflected that the personality of their fathers was introverted, inexpressive, and quiet. Often, normal Chinese parents did not allow their affection for their children to interfere with their disciplinary responsibility, because of the fear of spoiling the children (Ho, 1996; Wu, 1996). They thought their responsibilities were teaching moral principles, and
transferring beliefs and high expectations to their children (Cheung, 1996; Wu, 1996). They were less concerned with the development of self-esteem and personal identity of the children. Parents preferred their children sticking to the collective norm and interest rather than finding their individualistic identities. For example, one participant shared that his parents related his lack of success to his weak masculine personality. Chinese parents often do not encourage children to find their own path to identity. The participant had to resolve his problem through his own searching. When boys cannot find out their ways to assume the masculine qualities and power of their adult father, they often feel confused and discouraged.

**Gender Identity Development During Adolescence**

The participants reported more indirect socialization influences in their gender identity development during adolescence. They also described themselves as an active agent of selecting gender-related information and constructing their own perspective. Three of them clearly described having their own self-initiated gender identity project during adolescence. This experience agrees with the cognitive schema theory and social learning theory of gender development. Individuals have self-motivation to regulate their behaviour so that it conforms to the culture's definition of maleness and femaleness (Bem, 1981). Gender development involves a shift from direct socialization during childhood to a self-regulatory control of gender-linked behaviour with increasing age (Bandura, 1977; Bussey & Bandura, 1992).
In this study, all participants reported some influences other than their families, such as peers, school, television, and literature that had contributed to their gender identity development. The active search by these participants in biographies of others and experiences that could mentor them was a very common experience among them. Similar to observing their parents during childhood, these participants said that they looked to other people to find models to follow. Modelling and mentoring from other successful and trustworthy people is perhaps the most feasible way for many to learn to be a man during adolescence (Bandura, 1977; Bussey & Bandura, 1992; Cunningham, 2001).

The participants reflected some negative influences from peers affecting their development as a person but did not report any negative influence in particular to their male identity. Negative things mentioned by other writers such as differential attitudes to women and men; punishment of feminine behaviour during childhood, problematic modelling of extreme masculinity by the father, and a negative relationship between mother and son were not reported (Blee & Tickamyer, 1997; Lynch & Kilmartin, 1999).

Gender Identity Development During Adulthood

In this study, participants also made some interesting comments on whether they had changed during adulthood. Five of them described that their current male identities were products of long-term development under the influences of their family of origin, education, and their personality; but they also reflected that they had also changed gradually in adulthood as a result of different life events and experiences. These experiences partially support both
the static and the dynamic views of gender identity development. It seems that direct and indirect socialization experiences in early years do constitute an important source of information upon which other gender-related practices are built. Adult men then draw on these fundamentals to reconstruct their gender-identity based on their social positions and their ongoing interactions with their families.

Some of the ongoing interactions with the participants' families described in the study were balancing career and family, reconstructing boundary of power and authority in the family, finding one's place in family, compromising with their spouse to build a functioning family, understanding people and the female gender, being involved in parenting, and learning a deeper meaning of being a good man. In a Chinese culture, that regards masculine competency-strength traits as superior, and feminine warm-expressiveness traits as inferior (Cheung, 1996), these personal changes were very significant shifts from the male norm they used to have before adulthood. It was a very positive result to show and support the proposition that male identity was still very much a fluid and dynamic construct, changing through new experiences in adulthood (Chua & Fujino, 1999; Ferree, 1990; Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk, 2004).

According to Bandura's social learning theory (1977, 1997), one's self efficacy comes from four primary sources: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states, in descending order of importance. In this study, participants constructed their male identity through mostly modelling experiences in childhood and adolescent
developmental periods. They reported some mastery experiences of being a man during adulthood, such as how they fulfilled their responsibility and roles as a man. According to social learning theory, those mastery learning experiences would provide more authentic and convincing evidence of their self efficacy regarding being men. Until men have successful mastery experiences of alternate male roles, they are not willing to give up their current gender identity and privileges. Using social learning theory, it is speculated that the reluctance of some acculturated Chinese Canadian men to adopt gender modern attitude (Kim, Laroche, & Tomiuk, 2004) could be understood as a lack of successful mastery experiences in their male identity development in new social context. This preliminary observation needs to be further researched.

Familial Events Influenced Male Identity Development in Adulthood

It was found in the study that familial events and relationships influenced male identity development in adulthood. This finding agreed with some recent studies that found men reconstructed their male beliefs and behaviour through dynamic relational processes (Cornish, 1999; Duindam & Spruijt, 1997; Robertson & Verschelden, 1993; Zuo, 1997). Familial relationships and events often provide the dynamics and momentum necessary to change male identity and gender boundaries. Levant (1997) reported that only in a combination of special familial and personal circumstances could men possibly shift their primary identity and commitment from work to their home and family. These circumstances were found to be when the women had higher income, or the men had already a sense of accomplishment in life, or when there was a supportive
social environment. So negotiation or conflicts of roles in familial relationships probably often provides men with meaningful gender-identity encountering experiences that enables them to change their sense of male identity.

Although participants were being challenged to change in both private and public lives, being a man was often more meaningful to these Chinese Canadian immigrant men in a familial context than in a social context. They often defined themselves through their familial roles: as a father, husband, leader and protector of the family. However, the culture of the egalitarian Canadian society might have created a general consciousness of gender equity among these Chinese Canadian immigrant men. They mentioned that they learned to appreciate the female gender in the workplace and understood that women could be very capable too. However, participants reported that familial events and relationships resulted in direct impacts on their male identity. Interaction in family events was the most influential factor that prompted participants to reconstruct their male identity boundaries. This can explain Kim, Laorche, and Tomiuk's (2004) finding that acculturation to Canadian culture does not necessarily imply a modern gender-role attitude among Chinese Canadian men, as each person perceives these social values, but reconstructs his particular male identity boundaries according to his particular family interactions. This was quite different from some male experiences reported in the Canadian mainstream culture that indicated men faced challenges from a broad range of social contacts to change their hegemonic male roles; such as friends, co-
workers, lovers, spouses, books, workshops, formal education and socio-economic conditions (Cornish, 1999).

The current finding is similar to Chua and Fujino’s (1999) observation on Asian American men.

For Asian-American men, the masculinity issue is about who one is and how one relates to family and relatives, loved ones, emotional partners, closed friends, and acquaintances. It is also related to the ways one presents oneself to the world at the workplace, at school and leisure situations, and other public gatherings. It is in these ways Asian-American men reproduce and negotiate gender relations with women and other men in their lives (p.393).

This phenomenon of relating one’s male identity closely to his family context can be traced back to the Chinese culture. Chinese personal relations are built fundamentally on the five cardinal human relationships, including the relationships of husband and wife and father and sons (Goodwin & Tang, 1996). There is emphasis on hierarchy and differential status in these relationships. This differential status helped perpetuate the superiority of male identity in the society and inside the family. Given the gender equity social environment of North America prevails in the public face of the society, male identity becomes a private family matter for Chinese Canadians. Chinese Canadian men could either hold on to their traditional power in the family or to find a new expression of male identity. From this study, the most influential factor affecting participants’ course of male identity development was the gender encountering relationships inside their families.

Inside these families, these men indicated significant participation in housework, although they were living a most traditional family arrangement with a full-time housewife. Among the six families, half of them had full-time mothers
and two families had mothers who worked outside the home. The women still took a main role in household duties. However, three men indicated that they performed half of the housework, two said they did one-quarter; and only one man revealed he did not do any because he worked mostly overseas. This rate of participation in housework was quite high as compared to other reports which indicated on average only one-third of men did housework (Goodwin & Tang, 1996; Harrell, 1995; Levant, 1997). Regarding the motivation to do housework, half of them indicated that they realized being a woman was also a tough job, and so they wanted to help out as much as they could. They described their participation in housework was mainly due to personal motivation and relationship with their spouse rather than pressure or the larger social climate. This agrees with the observation by Da (2004) that Chinese men participate in housework correspond to women's expectation.

Although the current study did not intend to compare fatherhood of the two generations of fathers that appeared in the study, the recollection of participants gave some clear account of the similarities and differences of the two generations of fathers. While participants' own fathers were described as silent or absent fathers, these participants were much more active in fatherhood. Half of them described family as more important than their career, and they tried to balance work and family. Compared with their fathers, they were more willing to spend time with their children, and wanted to be active in their roles as fathers and parenting. They were also more affectionate, and indicated that fatherhood had touched their humanity and made them better persons. These participants
said that they have modelled after their fathers in their hard work and responsible attitudes towards work and life; but they became very different in fatherhood and were no longer ‘silent fathers’. This study revealed that it was not the biological gender but the social culture, interactions, and practices that had once influenced male identity to define characteristics and activities as being masculine (Chua & Fujino, 1999).

Looking Forward to Personal Growth

All participants were looking towards some kind of personal growth to develop themselves into a fuller person. This agrees with the observation made by Lau and Yeung (1996), and Wu (1996) that the main value in Chinese culture expects men to be competent human beings or zuoren. Being a competent human being usually means they have achieved both individualistic and collective benefits for themselves and the group; with qualities such as being a supreme moral person, achieving interpersonal harmony, being involved in collective decision making, having good manners, having filial piety and education (Lau & Yeung, 1996). In the present study, most participants wanted to be more understanding, have self-control, be more sociable and tolerant, have more social skills, follow their hearts and personalities, and find spiritual and interpersonal meaning of existence. Often they mentioned their desire to improve their weaknesses in their current personalities.

This study cast doubt on the popular hypothesis that Chinese people are basically collectivists with no individualistic or personal wishes. Two participants actually used the concept of self-realization, a concept usually treated as a
western value, in their pursuit of being a more satisfying person. It was possible that this emphasis on personal value was a result of the immigrants' acculturation experiences. Another possibility was that it had been observed that old teaching of the traditional collectivistic Confusian value had been defied, especially after the 1988 freedom movement in China and Hong Kong. Studies had shown that Chinese in Hong Kong and China did place great emphasis on personal values, no less than Americans (Lau & Yeung, 1996).

Participants in this study showed flexibility and willingness to compromise in their gender roles even though they were living in traditional household arrangements and could continue to hold onto privileges and power. This experience was very different from the Cornish's finding (1999) that indicated pro-feminist Canadian men went through conflict and pain before embracing a balance of power between genders. The Chinese Canadian immigrant men in the study did not have a painful process of intense power and conflict with the female gender. Although no direct comparison was possible between the two studies, as participants in this study were not purposefully selected converted pro-feminist males, as in Cornish's study. However, it was interesting that this small group of educated Chinese Canadian immigrant men was able to develop flexibility in their male identity without report of any major familial conflict; given the fact that they had come from a traditional male dominant Chinese culture, and had to settle down in a more egalitarian Canadian culture. A possible reason of this positive personal development was one observed by Chua and Fujino's study (1999) among Asian American single college males. Chua and
Fujino (1999) found that, although Asian American men could engage in patriarchy and continue to enjoy male privileges, they found that racism and their social representation or image would prevent them from fully copying hegemonic male identity like white males. Therefore, these Asian American men tended to develop new forms of non-hegemonic masculinities.

Ego development theory (Costos, 1990; Erikson, 1968) also seemed to describe these participants' view about the future of their manhood appropriately. These participants fitted the description as men in a post-conforming stage of ego-development. They consciously integrated both masculine and feminine aspects of self, and had a less gender stereotyped definition of self (Bursik, 1995; Wade, 1998). They understood the advantages and shortcomings of being a man, and they embraced and chose to be men with more confidence in the future. As Bem (1981) presented the gender schema theory and said about gender identity development.

We might then come to accept as a given the fact that we are male or female as un-self-consciously as we now accept as a given the fact that we are human. Our maleness or femaleness would be self evident and non-problematic; rarely would we be prompted to ponder it, to assert that it is true, to fear that it might be in jeopardy, or wish that it were otherwise. The gender distinctions that remained would still be perceived-perhaps even cherished—but they would not function as imperialistic schemata for organizing everything else, and the artificial constraints of gender on the individual's unique blend of temperament and behaviour would be eliminated. The feminist prescription, then, is not that individual be androgynous, but that the society be aschematic (p.363).

Limitations

The participants in this study were highly educated Chinese Canadian immigrant adult men from Hong Kong and Mainland China who spoke fluent English. They were professionals and elite in their fields who came to North
America as students and independent immigrants. Their experiences might not be the same as the general population of Chinese Canadians. There were no participants who come from Taiwan and the study did not claim to validate experiences of men from different Chinese cultures. The data from the interviews were not reconfirmed with participants' families or spouses. The present study was limited to heterosexual, married men and did not include gay men and men who experienced separation, divorce or being widowed.

Implications

The findings of the five themes of male experience in male gender identity development help to understand the male gender identity development in general and among Chinese Canadian male immigrants in particular. This qualitative study demonstrates benefits of exploring male identity from the lived experiences from childhood to adulthood in a developmental approach. The current male identity formation and experiences are better understood within the context of earlier learning and developmental experiences.

The study supports that male gender identity is socially constructed, and men continues to redefine it through on-going interactions between the individual and his social positions and the social structures around them. Although these Chinese Canadian immigrant men are still strongly influenced by their Chinese values, learned in their earlier developmental years, they are able to develop new definitions of being a man when they immigrate to the western society. Growing up in a more male dominated culture, these Chinese Canadian immigrant men were able to negotiate a more socially adaptive male gender
identity that embraces the value of gender equity in the Canadian society. The male experiences in this study contribute to the growing literature of the development of a new psychology of men that is psychologically and socially constructive for both genders, after the deconstruction of traditional masculinity.

The findings reveal the importance of the family micro-system and its dynamics in influencing the male identity development of Chinese Canadian male immigrants. When counselling clients who are experiencing gender role conflicts, it is important to help them to be aware that gender role negotiation may have taken place in their relationships, and help them to develop the communication skills to navigate from power struggle to harmony and balance. With the increasing autonomy seeking behaviour of spouses among acculturated Chinese Canadian immigrants, there is need for couples counselling programs to help men and women to bridge the widening gap of their gender expectations. Some form of gender-aware couples communication programs can help men and women to bridge the gap of their opposite gender skills profile and different frames of references to improve inter-gender communication (Levant, 1996).

The findings also indicate male immigrants were often isolated in their search for personal identity and growth. There is need for them to develop a community of men that can support to each other in their search for newer male identities in adulthood; an open, supportive, affirmative place so that men could learn from each other, to share their search for manhood, to reflect their gender role conflict; and to acknowledge the pain, problem, and responsibility of the process.
The findings suggest that these Chinese Canadian male immigrants are quite insulated from the Canadian mainstream culture. With the continual influx of immigrants from China, and given the long and prevalent history of gender inequality, along with wife and child abuse in their culture of origin, these Chinese immigrant families can be caught in gender-related conflict resulting from the non-hegemonic main culture and the traditional hegemonic Chinese tradition. Mainstream institutions need to be aware of how they can effectively reach out to ethnic groups to promote their progressive ideas and gender equity practices desirable in Canada. Social service agencies that serve the Chinese Canadian community are perhaps the windows or bridges for their community to get in touch with the mainstream Canadian values. People are often socialized according to the dominant social ideology. Alternate, progressive ideas and practices beneficial to male gender identity development and relationships should be made accessible and understandable to men and women to support negotiation of healthier gender roles. Clear social messages supporting gender equity and promoting convincing role models in the community can encourage personal change and social transformation.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is necessary to further investigate men's experiences from a wider spectrum of Chinese Canadians, as the current study was limited to a small particular group of Chinese Canadian immigrant men. Further studies that differentiate male immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China to
understand their differences and similarities regarding male identity among the Chinese communities will be valuable.

Participants reported mainly mastery experiences, successes and failures regarding their male identity development during adulthood; and reported that they were influenced mostly through vicarious learning and verbal persuasion during adolescence and childhood. This preliminary observation of the developmental male identity through life stages might shed more light on gender socialization, and it needs to be further researched. Future research on male identity can also take into consideration both the effects of the family micro-system and the macro-social influences in developing male identity of Chinese Canadian immigrant men, how the interweaving effects of these two levels of experiences affect male identity development. For the family micro-system, further research can be done to include voices of the spouses in describing the development of male gender identity as a common family project, and to look into how the inter-gender dialogue affects development of gender roles.

For Chinese Canadian male immigrants, gender identity is only part of their personal identity development. Research of gender identity development can be investigated in the bigger picture of their personal identity formation. One theoretical framework is Vygotsky's four levels of history (Dien, 2000), which suggests that gender identity development be studied together with the individual's personal identity history, the concurrent social history, cultural history, and the general history of humanity.
Conclusions

The five themes that described a unified male experience of Chinese Canadian male immigrants drew support from other studies and also shed light on new experience that was not reported before. Three themes: feeling a deep sense of responsibility as a man, the attitude of compromising to feminine power, and the greater influences of familial interaction and dynamics in gender identity development can be traced back to some important Chinese cultural values: the socialization practice of learning responsibility during childhood, the emphasis on the value of interpersonal harmony and the cardinal value of family.

The dynamics of the accepting attitude towards the current gender equity value can also be understood that Chinese were socialized to learn to make sacrifice one’s ‘smaller self’ for the sake of ‘larger self’. The ‘larger self’ now is the Canadian society and these male immigrants needed to make life choices within the societal limits, influenced by the immediate micro-familial dynamics and history they engage in. Overall, their male identity developed from long term influences of Chinese value, their family of origin, and education, but they were in a New World and a new era. They were also searching for their own male identity during adulthood in their adopted country.
References


Campbell, J. L., & Snow, B. M. (1992). Gender role conflict and family
environment as predictors of men's martial satisfaction. *Journal of Family
Psychology, 6*, 84-87.

*Growing Up the Chinese Way: Chinese Child and Adolescent Development*,
pp.45-68. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

masculinities: Attitudes and gender expectations. *The Journal of Men's Studies,
7(3)*, 319-413.

Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist
views it. In R. Valle, & M. King (Eds.), *Existential-Phenomenological Alternatives
for Psychology* (pp.48-71). New York: Oxford University Press.

Constantinople, A. (1973). Masculinity-femininity: An exception to the


perspective. *Sex Roles, 22(11-12)*, 723-741.

Creswell, J. W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing


Appendix C: Interview Questions

**Overall statement:**
The interview is about talking about your experiences of becoming a man.

**Current Adulthood**
Now, as an adult, what things are important to you being a man?
How important these things are?
Using the Likert scale of 1 to 5 to indicate the importance.
Referring to things that are important to you as a man now.
What are your experiences of realizing their importance to you?
As a man, what kind of person do you want to be?
Are you different or similar to the person being taught at childhood?
What's different? What's similar?
What other things or experiences had influenced you to be the kind of person in adulthood?
The positive and negative influences.
How do people around you define a man or expect from you?
How do you deal with the conflict or differences between what you are and expected?
What is challenging to you being a man in the current time and place?
What are the good things to be a man nowadays?

**Back to Your Childhood**
In your childhood, how were you being informed about going to be a man?
What you were being informed about the kind of man you should be?
What were the significant people and things?
What were the positive influences? The negative influences?
What were the things (messages, expectations) that you have accepted?
What the parts that are difficult for you to accept?
Did you have someone as your role models as a man, and what were your experiences?
What was the family and environment related to your growing up as a boy?

**Adolescence Period**
Would you illustrate your experiences at this period with ups and downs by a lifeline?
Can you elaborate what happened at this period in your lifeline?
As a adolescent, what are the key things that happened?
What other influences you have experienced at adolescent?

**Future**
If you were going to be a more satisfying man, what would you like to be different from now in the future?
If you are allowed to relive as a man, what would you like to?
**Appendix D**

**Negotiating male identity for Chinese Canadian male immigrants**

**Demographic Information of Interview Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Code number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Languages spoken when you came to Canada:
- Mandarin
- Cantonese
- English

Do you have a religion? No ☐ Yes ☐ I am a ☐

Your country of origin: ___________________________

Years you have resided in Canada: ___________________________

Did you come to Canada as a: Refugee ☐ Immigrant ☐ Student ☐ Work Permit ☐

Highest level of education you have completed outside Canada: ___________________________

Highest level of education you have completed in Canada: ___________________________

Marital Status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐ Widowed ☐ Other ☐

If married, is your spouse Chinese? Yes ☐ No ☐, she is ___________________________

(Optional: Your sexual orientation: heterosexual ☐ homosexual ☐ Both ☐)

If married, are you currently living with your spouse? Yes ☐ No ☐

If married, are you sharing housework with your spouse? No ☐

Yes ☐, I’m doing all ☐ / three-quarters/ half ☐ / one-quarter ☐, of the housework

List some of your housework: ______________________________________

Number of children (if any): ______ number of boys: __ Number of girls: __

List ages of children: ______________________________________

Are you living with extended family members: Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, list relationships of the extended family members: ___________________________

_________________________ ___________________________

_________________________ ___________________________

Are you currently employed? Yes, full time ☐ Yes, part-time ☐ No ☐

If yes, what type of employment? ___________________________

_________________________ _____________________________________