RECONSTITUTED LIVES:
CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSNATIONAL
MIGRATION BETWEEN CANADA AND TAIWAN

by

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ABSTRACT

It is becoming increasingly common for current-day migrants to build transnational connections transcending national borders. Amongst recent immigrants from Taiwan to Canada, an "astronaut" type of family arrangement has emerged. In the "astronaut" families, either one or both parents continue working in Taiwan to maximize the financial resources of the family, while the children reside in Canada. These children affected by transnational migration between Canada and Taiwan no longer experience a radical break from their place of origin—Taiwan. Instead, both the settlement society and their ethnic origin have continually informed the processes of these children's home-making and identity development.

Based on eleven individual interviews conducted in Greater Vancouver regional district of British Columbia, Canada between June and September, 2001, this study explores the impact of transnational family arrangements on children's lives, and children's senses of home and identity. Findings suggest that the families of the children interviewed undergo a reconfiguration of the traditional family structure, a reconfiguration based on the establishment of various transnational connections linking family in Taiwan and family in Vancouver. The new transnational family structure is operating within new forms of interdependence between family members and within changing family relationships. The transnational family arrangement has affected how the children define "home" and where they consider to be "home". The children's senses of home are influenced by the interaction between their quotidian experiences in Vancouver and their

transnational connections with Taiwan.   In terms of identity, the children interviewed reveal a persistence of Taiwanese identity over time and at the same time a fluctuation in the intensity of their Taiwanese identity.   The main factors affecting the children's senses of identity are: cross-cultural contacts they have experienced in Vancouver, the significant flow of people and cultural items from Taiwan to Vancouver, and the primordial attachment to their place of origin.   The children have learned to negotiate within "astronaut" families. They have become new kinds of "transnational" people—those who can situate themselves somewhere between being Taiwanese and being Canadian and yet, be both.

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Chapter One: Framing the Study

> We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context', *positioned*. (Hall, 1990, p. 222)

Born into a middle-class family in Taiwan, I lived my childhood and adolescence there. In 1998, I graduated from a university in Taipei, Taiwan, and not long after that, I moved to Vancouver, Canada with my family. The first night I stayed in Vancouver, I was amazed by the countless stars in the sky, like diamonds dotting a huge dark blue velvet cloth. I said to myself, this was the sky of Vancouver, a city that I had heard about frequently, even before my family had decided to immigrate here. I had heard about Vancouver because some of my neighbours and family friends and relatives in Taiwan had moved to Vancouver during the last decade.

I had heard about the beautiful environment, the easy pace of life, and, above all, the large Chinese population in Vancouver. I had also learned that, many immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong choose to arrange their families in a "spatially extended" way. The chief breadwinners of the family stay back in their homeland to maximize the financial resources of the family, while the children live in Vancouver. In some families, children stay with one of their parents; in some other families, children live in Vancouver with siblings, or other relatives. When I still lived in Taiwan, I had parents' friends visiting and telling stories about how frequently they travelled back and forth across the Pacific Ocean and how they had become like "aerial flyers". Some of the fathers, who stayed in Taiwan

alone, exchanged stories of how they adapted to the "middle-aged single life". For

example, some learned to cook for the first time in their lives. One father recalled that he

forgot to add washing-powder when he did his laundry the first time. Some of them

enjoyed the freedom of living alone: leaving the toilet seat up after use and leaving a messy

bedroom. A father who lived alone in a big place told us that his place had been covered

with dust, but if we went to his place, we could find a clear path from the living room to his

bedroom in his dusty home, since the path was the only part of his home that he used.

Most of the fathers who were away from their families for most of the time told their stories

to friends in an easy manner and made fun of themselves in the new situation. At that time,

I could only imagine how a family stayed as a family when they were far away from one

another, and what it would be like to undergo such a transition in life.

After moving to Vancouver, I started to be acquainted with children in these spatially

extended families and became interested to know the other parts of the stories in these

families, the stories of children who frequently live in the absence of parents. I was

curious about how these children adapt to a new way of life. I was also curious about how

these children respond to the split household arrangement and how they define their senses

of home and identity. These queries motivated me to start this research project, and to

study the phenomenon of the split household arrangement in my own ethnic community in

Vancouver.

Within my own ethnic community, the phenomenon of the split household arrangement

is not unusual; instead, it is frequently discussed.   When I came to Vancouver, I was not

surprised to know many families in this situation.   After reading the literature, I realized

that this phenomenon of the split household across significant space is not exclusive to

immigrants from Asia.   In fact, in recent years, it is becoming increasingly common for

families to experience a great deal of international mobility due to the changing nature,

location and demands of work.   This reality poses new challenges for children and families.

Researched in Vancouver, Canada, this thesis presents my exploration of children's

experiences in transnational families, with a focus on the lives and senses of home and

identity of eleven children from Taiwan.

The strategy of the split household arrangement involves the maintenance of familial,

economic, and social relations across national borders.   The transnational lifestyle among

some Chinese immigrants has yielded a number of terms that are used to describe the

Chinese transnational families and the individual family members.   For example, Chinese

transnational families are given the name, "astronaut families".   Parents who fly back and

forth are referred to as "astronauts" (Skeldon, 1994; Mak, 1991; Pe-Pua, 1998; Lam, 1994;

Ho et al., 2000; Waters, 2001b), "spacemen", "spaceparents" (Lam, 1994), and "*kongzhong*

feiren" (Wong, 1998), while their children are referred to as "parachute" children (Pe-Pua,

1998) and "satellite" children (Waters, 2001a).   Wong (1998) indicates the origin of the

most frequently used term "astronaut"(or *tai kong ren* in Chinese):

> The term "astronaut" is one of those delightful vernacular coinages that sum up
> social changes with a precision and fit seldom found in acdemic treatises.

Apparently of Hong Kong origin, it describes a new phenomenon in the Chinese diaspora that first gained widespread public attention in the 1980's and which had become commonplace by the 1990's[1].... The frequent, back-and-forth flying...involved is the source of the term "astronaut", which would also be a pun on the absence (*kong*, "emptiness") of the *taizuo* (wife). (pp. 134-135)

The word, "astronaut", "combines the English meaning of a person who spends time in space, that is, an airplane, with a Cantonese play on words around 'empty wife', or 'home without a wife'" (Skeldon, 1994, p. 11). Similar play of double meaning is also seen in other terms referring to this situation. For example, the Chinese term, "*kongzhong feiren*", is translated as "aerial flyer". It describes a person who flies in the sky, and it also connotes the effort required to keep balance like that of an aerial performer in the circus. Another example is the term, "parachute" children, which conveys the meaning that children are not only dropped off from an airplane, but they also land on their own.

No matter what terms best justify the situation, they all intend to conceptualize a new form of family organization that operates in a transnational context. This "astronaut" phenomenon can be conceptualized as transnationalism where these migrants develop and build connections that link their origin and settlement countries (Glick Schiller et al.1992). The next part of this chapter provides an orientation to the transnational connections among many current-day migrants. It also presents a theoretical starting point to understand migration experiences and identity development in a transnational context.

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[1] See references to "astronaut" indexed in Skeldon, 1994. <Reluctant Exiles? Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese>

A Theoretical Context: Migration Experiences and Identity Development in a

Transnational Context

The theoretical starting point of this study is to reconsider the traditional view toward immigrants as the "uprooted" (Handlin, 1973), and to capture the idea of "transnationalism" as a conceptual tool to understand current-day migration process.

During the 1970's and early 1980's, immigration was mostly understood within a bipolar framework. It was widely held that people moved between places that were fundamentally distinct and that it was impossible for immigrants to sustain significant involvement, at a distance, with their country of origin. Consequently, migrants followed only two basic trajectories of experiences: circular or linear. Migrants of circular experience remained oriented to their place of origin and stayed only briefly in the host country before returning home. Migrants of linear experience reoriented gradually to life in the host country and leaned towards permanent resettlement (Rouse, 1995, p. 353).

Embodied within this bipolar framework, there has been an assumption guiding the majority of international migration studies. The assumption is expressed in the view that "the sojourn of immigrants entails a radical, and in many cases a singular, break from the old country to the new nation; migration is *inter*-national across well-defined national territories and boundaries. In the process of unidirectional crossing, migrants are 'uprooted' and shorn of premigration networks, cultures, and belongings" (Lie, 1995, p. 303). Correspondingly, the identity of the immigrants was also considered to be following

one of these two trajectories. Circular migrants were assumed to retain identities associated with their place of origin, while linear migrants were expected to abandon old identities and gradually develop new ones. Within this framework, multiple or multi-local identities were regarded either as markers of transitional status or as both peculiar and pathological (Rouse, 1995, pp. 353-354).

However, there has been an emerging effort to challenge premises that assume a permanent rupture between immigrants and their countries of origin (Basch et al., 1994). In response to the reality that "in a global economy contemporary migrants have found full incorporation in the countries within which they resettle either not possible or not desirable" (Glick Schiller and Basch, 1995, p. 52), many current-day immigrants have built transnational linkages transcending national borders. Among immigrants in North America and Europe, scholars have observed the increasing transnational linkages spanning national boundaries, which influence the social, economic and political activities in both the sending and receiving countries (Glick Schiller and Basch, 1995; Windland, 1998). Transnational connections are forged through sending of goods and remittances, kinship relations, overseas communications, business practice, or transnational organization. Advances in the technologies of transportation and communication facilitate the process of establishing transnational connections and make the maintenance of transnational connections possible and easy. Transportation is convenient as a result of inexpensive and fast travel, and real-time communication is efficient by the use of telephones, faxes, e-mails,

satellite, and the Internet. Various connections linking migrants in the receiving country with their homelands "have provided migrants with points of reference that take them beyond the borders of the host countries" (Winland, 1998, p. 557). As John Lie (1995) has indicated:

> The infrastructural possibility of the imagined diaspora communities subverts the unidirectionality of migrant passage; circles, returns, and multiple movements follow the waxing and waning structures of opportunities and networks. Whether articulated as the "social space of postmodernism" (Roger Rouse in *Diaspora* 1(1), 1991) or "global ethnoscapes" (Arjun Appadurai in *Public Culture* 2:2, 1989), the new concepts seek to better describe and to grope toward a more powerful explanation of the emerging transnational reality. (p. 305)

The long-held concepts of immigrants and *inter*-national migration have been transformed to new concepts of "transmigrants"[2] and "*trans*-national migration". The idea of "transnationalism" serves as a powerful conceptual tool in understanding today's migration process. Glick Schiller et al. (1992) defined "transnationalism" as "the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (p. 1). The conceptualization, transnationalism, challenges the territorial nationalism that defines the modern nation-state, and replaces the received national border with the borderlands of shifting and contested boundaries (Lie, 1995, p. 304). In addition, the concept of transnationalism allows researchers to consider the "ongoing and continuing ways in which current-day immigrants construct and reconstitute

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[2] Transmigrants are immigrants "whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state" (Click Schiller and Basch, 1995, p. 48).

their simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society" (Glick Schiller and Basch, 1995, p. 48).

On the other hand, a reconsideration of the conceptualizations of immigrants points to the need to rethink the unproblematized link between identity and place. Among many immigrants nowadays, it is the transnational connections rather than "any single, bounded and contiguous local that now serve as the principal setting in which they organize their lives and orchestrate their actions" (Rouse, 1995, p. 354). Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond the understanding of identities, whether ethnic, national, racial or communal, as fundamentally "localized" (Rouse, 1995). Instead, identities should be understood as being both local and global (Basch et al., 1994). Discussions involving identities of (im)migrants should not neglect the fact that many of the current-day migrants live their lives across geographical boundaries and respond to varied circumstances they face in more than one place (Glick Schiller and Basch, 1995).

Research Purpose and Questions

The transnational social network is composed of various relations, including economic, social, familial, organizational, religious and political relations (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). The scale of transnational networks established by transmigrants ranges from institutionalized organization to personal relations. This study investigates the implication of transnational migration on a personal level. The purpose of this study is to explore the

experiences of families that operate in a transnational context, focusing on the experiences of children in these families.   For this study I am interested in the following questions. How does a family operate in a transnational context?   How does a traditional family structure adapt to the changes and demands of new forms of family life?   How do transnational movements and connections affect the children in these families?   How do children perceive "home" and "abroad", and see themselves in relation to Canada and their place of origin?   How do children negotiate their identities in a transnational context?

Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of six chapters.   Chapter Two provides a historical context in which to understand the flow of contemporary Chinese migration to Canada, and provides a background to help understand the emergence of Chinese transnational families in Canada. This second chapter also reviews the presentation of what has been labelled the "astronaut" phenomenon in previous studies.   The third chapter discusses the research methods used, introduces the research participants, and deals with some ethical concerns.   Chapter Four discusses major findings on the impacts of transnational family arrangements on children. Chapter Five presents the children's sense of home and identity in the form of case studies. It also discusses important themes arising from the case studies.   Chapter Six closes this thesis by looking into the implications of transnational family arrangement for the meaning of family, of home, and of the search for an identity in a transnational context.   This last

chapter also suggests several areas for future study.

Chapter Two: Contextualizing the "Astronaut" Families in Vancouver

It is interesting that terms such as "astronaut", "spaceparents", and "satellite" all connote the image of endless aerial orbiting (Wong, 1998, p. 135). They all relate to such concepts as space, gravity, orbit and a "core". Above all, these terms all imply a considerable distance separating the subject orbiting in space and the "core". The use of these terms suggests that, for people in the "astronaut" families, spatial distance between family members is an important aspect of their everyday life. In fact, this migration pattern involving short-term or long-term family separation is not an invention of contemporary Chinese migrants. Instead, it can be regarded as a reversed version of the circumstances of the early Chinese male immigrants albeit at a higher economic level. A common story of early Chinese immigrants was a "hardworking man with a wife and children in China, who faithfully remitted his earnings back to support family and clan members, and later- often decades later—sponsored their immigration" (Wong, 1998, p. 137). Now, the circumstances are reversed in the contemporary version in two senses. First, the male breadwinners (though in some cases female) are now living in the place of origin while their families are now the far-flung ones and are placed in the adopted country. Secondly, the new circumstances can be seen as a case of "overseas Chinese in reverse-living overseas and sojourning in greater China" (Wong, 1998, p. 137). An important difference between the early and the contemporary Chinese migrants is the high density of

transnational contacts in the new circumstances. The links and contacts—physical, material, and emotional—between the place of origin and settlement are highly intense and frequent.

To understand how the circumstances of early Chinese immigrants have transformed to the circumstances of contemporary Chinese transmigrants, it is necessary to summarize the history of Chinese migration to Canada. An introduction to this history also contributes to understanding the large flow of the Chinese population to Canada in the last half of the twentieth century and the emergence of the "astronaut" phenomenon. I will first briefly introduce the history of early Chinese migration to Canada. Then, I will locate the large flow of Chinese migration to Canada in the last half of the twentieth century within the policy context. Finally, I will examine the depiction of the "astronaut" families in the literature, discussing the emergence of the "astronaut" phenomenon and some micro-level studies on these families.

The Context of Contemporary Chinese Migration to Canada

A Brief History of Chinese Migration to Canada

The history of Chinese migration to Canada can be divided into "three periods that roughly correspond to major shifts in Canada's legislation towards Chinese with respect to civil rights and immigration" (Li, 1992, p. 265). The first period covers the years from 1858 to the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923. The initial wave of Chinese

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immigration to Canada began in 1858, in response to the Gold Rush in the Fraser Valley of

British Columbia.   Large-scale immigration of Chinese people did not occur until the

construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway between 1881 and 1885.   During the first

period of Chinese migration, most Chinese people came to Canada as independent miners

and workers; others were recruited as contract or indentured labourers, with the exception of

a few merchants (Li, 1992; Li, 1999).

During this period, the Chinese people were subject to institutional racism and

legislative controls (Li, 1992).   Between 1875 and 1923, British Columbia passed various

laws restricting the rights of the Chinese people already here and preventing further

immigration of the Chinese people.   For example, the 1885 Act imposed a "head tax" on

every Chinese person entering Canada.   Furthermore, the passage of the Chinese

Immigration Act in 1923 almost completely stopped all Chinese people from entering

Canada (Li, 1992; Li, 1999)[3].

The years from 1924 to 1947 constitute the second period of Chinese immigration to

Canada.   This period was characterized by systematical exclusion of Chinese people,

continued legislative controls and social animosity by other Canadians (Li, 1992).   The

restrictive immigration policy and institutional racism toward the Chinese people resulted in

retarding the development of the Chinese Canadian family.   Like many other pioneers in

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[3] The Chinese Immigration Act stipulated that entry to Canada for persons of Chinese origin, regardless of citizenship, would be restricted to diplomats, merchants, students and children born in Canada.   All other Chinese people were excluded (Li, 1992, p. 267; Li, 1999, p. 359).

Canada, Chinese immigrants in the latter half of the nineteenth century were mainly men. The imposition of the head tax, economic hardship, and the racist social sentiment discouraged Chinese men from bringing their wives and children to Canada (Li, 1992, p. 269). The Chinese Immigration Act in 1923 further made it legally impossible for the Chinese people to sponsor their families to join them[4]. Although married in China, without the presence of Chinese women, many Chinese men lived like bachelors in Canada. They lived a communal life in the bunkhouse and depended on the ethnic community for support. Those who could find financial resources would take an occasional trip to China for a reunion with their wives and families, or to have children (Li, 1992, pp. 269-270). It was only after the postwar changes in immigration policy that many Chinese people had a chance to reunite with their wives and families, and a more balanced sex ratio gradually appeared amongst the Chinese community (Li, 1992, p. 270).

Amendment of Immigration Policy After the End of the Second World War

The third period of Chinese migration to Canada begins after the end of the Second World War. Until 1945, the Canadian government directly or indirectly selected its "desirable" immigrants on the basis of racial background (Smart, 1994, p. 98). After the end of the Second World War, there was a worldwide emerging reaction against the colonial,

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[4] As late as 1941, there were 20,141 "separated" Chinese families in Canada, in which the husbands dwelled in Canada while their wives and children remained in China. In the same year, there were only 1,177 "intact" Chinese families in Canada, in which the whole family lives in Canada (Li, 1998, p. 67).

imperial, and racist heritage of the previous era (Isajiw, 1999).   In response to this trend

and the economic restructuring in the Canadian economy and labor force (Wong, 1995;

Tseng, 1997), Canada "aligned its immigration policies to economic needs and admitted

large numbers of immigrants of the greatest ethnic diversity ever" (Isajiw, 1999, p. 83).

Following this movement, there emerged a much more open immigration policy.   In 1947,

the Parliament of Canada repealed the Chinese Immigration Act and enfranchised the

Chinese people.   The 1960's and 1970's were the period of family reunification.   Wives

could be reunited with their husbands and children could be reunited with their fathers after

years of separation.   Moreover, in the two decades following 1947, the number of

immigrants who came as families largely increased (Ma, 1979; Li, 1992).

In addition to the attempt to rationalize immigration, the government linked the

immigration policy to economic development (Isajiw, 1999, p. 85).   During this period,

Canada's immigration policy started moving toward two goals.   One is to select

immigrants who are most likely to adapt to the Canadian way of life.   The other is to

facilitate Canada's economic and demographic objectives (Papademetriou, 1988).   On this

basis, in 1967, Canada adopted a universal point system, the Merit Point System, to assess

potential immigrants.   "This new legislation provided that the independent and sponsored

applicants be assessed by immigration officials according to their possession of a set of

characteristics, and each characteristic was assigned a range of merit points" (Isajiw, 1999,

p. 85)[5].   According to the 1967 legislation, immigrants were selected from three broad

categories.   The first category was economic immigrants, who were selected for the

contributions they could make to the Canadian economy through a point system.   The

second category is dependants or family class immigrants, who intend to join sponsoring

relatives already in Canada.   The last category is refugees, who are taken into Canada on

humanitarian grounds.   The race, religion, sex, nationality, and social origin of immigrants

became irrelevant in the process of selection (Johnson and Lary, 1994, p. 88).   The

Chinese people were thus, allowed to immigrate to Canada under the same criteria as people

of other origins.

The Wave of Contemporary Chinese Migration to Canada

Since 1967, Canada has continued to modify its immigration policy linking

immigration flow to its economic and demographic conditions.   Among the many

amendments, the "business immigration program" is particularly relevant to the large

number of Chinese immigrants to Canada in the last half of the twentieth century.   This

special immigration program was introduced by the government as an attempt to attract

"business immigrants".   These are individuals who are willing to invest money in

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[5] Nine characteristic were singled out: education and training (0-20 merit points, one point for each year of education or training); personal qualities, such as adaptability, motivation, initiative and so on (0-15 points); occupational demand for the occupation the applicant would follow (0-15 points); occupational skill, from unskilled to professional (1-10 points); age (0-10 points); arranged employment (0 or 10 points); knowledge of English and /or French (0-10 points); relatives in Canada (0 or 3 or 5 points); and employment opportunities in the area of destination (0-5 points).   The original regulations stipulated that the applicant, to be admitted, must receive at least 50 points.   In the following years, the government continued introducing modifications and new regulations (Isajiw, 1999, p. 85).

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Canadian business enterprises. In 1978, new immigration regulations allowed the admission of entrepreneurs as immigrants without assessment on the basis of occupational demands or arranged employment that the merit point system required. In 1985, another amendment expanded the class of business immigrants to include self-employed persons, investors, and other entrepreneurs. By the mid-1990s, new definitions of the classes of immigrants emerged. The 1993 Immigration Act identified three classes of immigrants: family class, refugee, and independent immigrants. Independent immigrants were defined as business immigrants[6], skilled workers[7], or assisted relatives[8] (Isajiw, 1999, pp. 85-91).

The development and amendments of Canada's immigration programs correspond with what Wang (1998) termed as an "upgrading of migrants". According to Gungwu Wang (1998), "upgrading of migrants" occurred when the receiving country "decided that a better quality of migrants was desirable":

> This led to changes in migration policy which specified the hierarchy of migrants considered worthy to be given priority. This occurred usually when large numbers of migrant labourers were no longer needed, and the back-breaking part of starting a new industry, or opening up the backwoods or wilderness, had been completed.

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[6] As mentioned above, business immigrants include "entrepreneurs", "investors", and "self-employed", Immigrants coming as entrepreneurs had to show their intention and financial ability to establish and manage a business that could create at least one job for a non-relative. Immigrants coming as investors had to have a proven track record in business and have accumulated a personal net worth of half a million dollars or more. They had to be willing to invest a minimum of $ 250, 000 in the Canadian economy and contribute to creation or continuation of employment opportunities for Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Those coming as self-employed had to show their intention and ability to establish or purchase a business in Canada that would create employment opportunity for them and would make a significant contribution to the economy or the cultural or artistic life of Canada (Isajiw, 1999, p. 91).
[7] Skilled worker category refers to applicants who wished to immigrate on the basis of their education, training, experience or other skills (Isajiw, 1999, p. 91).
[8] Assisted relative category refers to those who applied as independent immigrants but who had a relative in Canada who was able and willing to help them become established (Isajiw, 1999, p. 91).

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Upgrading then took the form of encouraging better educated and successful people to come and fill positions for which local talent was inadequate. Finally, direct efforts to recruit and establish quotas which reflected the newly laid down criteria of quality ensured that the upgrading was systematic and consistent. (p. 17)

Through the introduction of economic-oriented immigration programs, especially the business immigration program, residency is "commodified" (Tseng, 1997) by making the competition open to "people who have financial resources and who are willing to invest in [Canada]" (Tseng, 1997, p. 38).

On the other hand, people in Hong Kong and Taiwan have become major participants of this competition due to the considerable economic, political and social transformation in Asia after the end of the Second World War. Owing to the vast economic development, there is considerable capital formation and capital accumulation of Chinese capitalists in Asia, particularly Hong Kong and Taiwan (Wong, 1995, p. 470). This capital accumulation serves as a strong foundation for their transnational investment and business in the global economic system (Tseng, 1997, p. 45). The flow of capital and the participation in the global economic market will increase the mobility of the capital owners (Wong, 1995, p.470; Tseng, 1997, p. 45). As a result, the entrepreneurial population of Hong Kong (and later Taiwan) became particular targets of Canada's business immigration programs (Waters, 2001abab, p. 7)[9]. Katharyne Mitchell (1993) noticed "a campaign to sell Vancouver as a secure, profitable and livable city in which to do business and reside" (p.

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[9] A large proportion of the business category to Canada has been from Hong Kong and to a lesser degree from Taiwan. For exact figures, see table 1 on the next page.

Table 1

Business Immigrants admitted to Canada from Hong Kong and Taiwan.   1983-90

Year	Total business Immigrants to Canada	From Hong Kong		From Taiwan	
		Number	%	Number	%
1983	6,225	1,180	19.0	221	3.6
1984	6,260	2,287	36.5	154	2.5
1985	6,481	2,821	43.5	155	2.4
1986	7,581	2,433	32.4	345	4.6
1987	11,069	3,173	28.7	775	7.0
1988	15,112	4,477	29.6	1,323	8.8
1989	17,564	5,301	30.2	2,267	12.9
1990	18,445	6,785	36.8	2,476	13.4

Source: Li, 1999, p. 361

266, quoted in Waters, 2001a, p. 7).   Within this context, some motivations such as the

uncertainty of their political future, consideration of their children's education and the

seeking for a better living quality (Tseng, 1997, pp. 16-7) would drive these capital owners

to emigrate.   The result was a significant migration, during the 1980's and the 1990's,

from Hong Kong, Taiwan and more recently from Mainland China to Pacific Rim countries

such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States (Waters, 2001a, p. 6).

This wave of migration not only largely increases the Chinese population in Canada,

but also reshapes the social features of the Chinese community in Canada.   The

contemporary Chinese immigrants come from a more diversified educational and

occupational background, many with a sophisticated urban culture (Li, 1992, p. 271).

Many of the chief wage earners of these immigrant families have achieved a high position

in their career or run a successful business in their homeland.   Due to the establishment of

their career in their homeland and the potential barriers to start a new career in Canada, some of these migrants choose to return to their homeland to continue their careers. By doing so, they intend to secure the financial resources of the family after immigrating to Canada. In using this strategy, some of the family members, husbands in most cases, become "occasional residents" (Mak, 1991, p. 152) who fly back and forth between the home country and the host country to maintain contacts with their family, while their family stays in the host country. Families that adopt this strategy become so-called "astronaut" families.

A Review of "Astronaut" Families in Literature

The use of the term, "astronaut" family, in previous studies is made clear by studies of Pe-Pua et al. (1998), and Janet David (1995): "astronaut" families are defined as families in which *one or both* parents work outside of the country where their family is. However, the terms referring to children in these families appears to be more ambiguous in previous studies. "Parachute" children and "satellite" children are used interchangeably, not clearly distinguishing children living in absence of *both* parents and of *either* parent (Pe-Pua, et.al. 1998, p. 282; Waters, 2001a, p. 4, 6). In this study, the term, "astronaut family", is defined as family containing one or more members who frequently fly back and forth between Taiwan and Canada. "Astronaut children" refers to children in astronaut families in general, while the term, "satellite", describes the situation in which children live in Canada

without the presence of both parents for majority of the time.

The Emergence of the "Astronaut" Phenomenon

Although there is no reliable data estimating how many contemporary Chinese

migrants have chosen to live in the "astronaut" life style, previous literature and anecdotal

evidence in Vancouver, Canada all suggest that the number of astronauts could be

substantial (Skeldon, 1994; Wong, 1995; Waters, 2001b).   To question the emergence of

the "astronaut" phenomenon, previous literature suggests some explanations from different

points of view.   Mak (1991) attributes the emergence of astronauts to their refusal to "lose

their former identity as part of a privileged class and suffer from a reduction in

employment-related competencies and rewards" (p. 154).   While status dislocation may be

a common experience for many immigrants, it seems to be more unbearable to people who

used to achieve a high income and/or privileged status in their original place. As Mak

clearly describes it, "their specialness is now defined as being members of a minority group

with special needs" (p. 148).   Therefore, the astronaut lifestyle is chosen as a way to cope

with employment difficulties in the new country.

To simply view the "astronaut" phenomenon as a coping strategy seems to imply an

abuse of the business immigration program by these wealthy immigrants who buy their way

into Canada without making real economic contribution to the country (Smart, 1994, p. 117).

To give a broader perspective, Smart (1994) points out the structural mechanism through

which the dilemma faced by these business immigrants happens: "the inherent contradiction

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between the business immigration policy and the business immigrants' economic behavior"

(p. 117). On the one hand, "business demands mobility of labor and management"

(Skeldon, 1994, p. 14) in this era of the global economy; on the other hand, the concept of

immigration implies the stability of settlement (Smart, 1994, pp. 117-8). Contemporary

Chinese migrants, when confronted with this dilemma, develop the strategy of the split

household in order to meet both the immigration criteria and the economic demands.

Studies by Skeldon (1994) and Wong (1995) fit the astronaut phenomenon in with the

worldwide trend of globalization. In Skeldon's view (1994), the transnational movement

of contemporary Chinese migrants is a way businessmen successfully expand Asian

activities around the globe, an expansion which is a natural process in globalization.

Wong (1995) follows the idea of Glick Schiller et al. (1992) and conceptualizes the

astronaut phenomenon as "transnationalism". He indicates that "it is globalization of these

migrants' business interests linking Asia to North America which imposes the astronaut

lifestyle" (p. 471). Moreover, drawing upon her interview data, Waters (2001b) suggests

that, "rather than being a response to unemployment…, the Astronaut situation had been

planned before emigration" (p. 19). Instead of a reactive strategy or a "syndrome" (Waters,

2001b) of migration experience, the evolution of astronaut-type migration is also found to

be these migrants' strategic choices.

Existing Knowledge on Children in "Astronaut" Families

In addition to the exploration of how these families become "astronaut" families,

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micro-level studies have been conducted in Australia (Pe-Pua et al., 1998), the United States (Lin, 1996), New Zealand (Ho et al., 2000), and Canada (Waters, 2001a; 2001b).

These studies explore the settlement process after these families come to the host country. Ho et al. (1998) have attempted to provide the context and prospects of the "astronaut" phenomenon in New Zealand. Lin studied (1996) the adjustment difficulties faced by new Taiwanese immigrant families in the United States with special reference to the "astronaut" situation. He observed a "role reversal" between parents and children, and indicated psychosocial adaptation strategies developed by these families. Instead of perceiving the family as a unified unit and discussing the experiences of family members with no differentiation, studies of Pe-Pua et al. (1998) and Waters (2001a; 2001b) shed light on the differentiated experiences of members within the "astronaut" families. Pe-Pua et al. suggest general implications of the "astronaut" family arrangement on the children. Pe-Pua et al. point out a number of potential impacts on children, including:

> This phenomenon has the potential of either strengthening or breaking up relationships between parents and children, and between siblings….. At the same time, it could build a sense of independence and responsibility among children, it could also create a loss of control brought about by the sudden freedom from familial restrictions, possession of material resources…. (pp. 291-292).

Waters (2001a) further examines the everyday life situation of "satellite" kids and points out some related concerns about the "satellite" situation expressed in the public media. Two main issues appear in the Chinese-language press. The first concern is expressed by school authorities, who need to carry out an extra "baby-sitting" role, taking care of students

who do not have parents around all the time[10] (p. 4).   The second concern relates to "the

perceived vulnerability of these lone-children vis-à-vis teenage gangs" (p. 4).   The

"satellite" situation is associated with gang activities and behavioral problems.   Some of

the images portrayed by the public media coincide with Water's examination of "satellite"

students' life experiences and school's responses toward these children.   Drawing upon her

interview data, Waters (2001a) indicates "the attenuation of parental authority, as children,

in the absence of their parents, command control over almost every aspect of their daily

lives" (p. 34).   She also suggests that children face increasing practical responsibilities (pp.

15-17), and serious emotional strain, including a sense of having no home and a feeling of

loneliness (pp. 25-29).   Another important message from Waters's study is the school's

perspective on the "satellite" children, which portrays satellite students as students at risk

and often posing disciplinary and social problems (pp. 29-33).

Expanding the Knowledge of Children in "Astronaut" Families

The decision of migration and the following processes of settlement and adjustment are

an unsettling experience for most immigrant families, especially families that are

reconstituting a new way of life in a transnational context.   In addition to the enthusiasm of

understanding an important phenomenon in my own ethnic community, and expanding the

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[10]   See Yeung, W.K. 1997.   Astronaut student surcharge.   Ming Pao Daily News, 24th December A3.
Also, "Should satellite kids pay 'babysitting fee' to their schools?".   World Journal Daily News, 13 January
1998.

existing depiction of this phenomenon from an insider's perspective, this study is an attempt

to see the "astronaut" phenomenon in a broader context. Rather than an exclusive

phenomenon among Chinese migrants, the transnational household strategy can be found

amongst various ethnic groups and in various geographical locations. In studying the

Taiwanese "astronaut" children in a Canadian context, this study will contribute to

uncovering how a family operates in a transnational context and manages to maintain itself

as a unit. Moreover, through children's narratives, this study will contribute to a better

understanding of the changing meaning of family, of home, and of the search for an identity

in transnational movements.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

In order to explore the experiences of children in "astronaut" families, I have employed a qualitative research method of open-ended, in-depth interviewing, which allows both the researcher and the participants an opportunity to engage in telling, listening, and sharing. Eleven individual interviews were conducted in Greater Vancouver between June and September in the year of 2001. The eleven interviewees are all immigrant students from Taiwan, who have had experiences in living in the "astronaut" situation.

As an immigrant student from Taiwan, I realize the importance of recognizing my position as an "insider", who is doing research within my own ethnic community. This realization means that I must recognize how my preexisting experiences affect the process of doing the research. For example, as part of the Taiwanese community in Greater Vancouver, I am acquainted with many "astronaut families" from Taiwan and have established social networks within the Taiwanese community. Having established personal networks, I can easily identify potential participants. Therefore, my identity as a Taiwanese student has partly influenced me to limit my participant selection to Chinese students from Taiwan instead of Chinese students from Asia in general. There is, however, another reason for narrowing down the research subjects exclusively to Taiwanese students. It is necessary to note that Chinese immigrants come from many different locations. Despite some shared cultures, customs, and language, immigrants from Mainland China,

Hong Kong, Taiwan, or South Asia have developed their distinct identities before emigration. Since the focus of this study is to explore the interplay between transnational household arrangements and children's identity development, I chose to concentrate on one subgroup under the big "Chinese immigrant" umbrella.

Approaching this research from an insider's perspective also means that I must acknowledge what my preexisting experiences bring to the research. On the one hand, my fluency in the language and familiarity with the culture help me "internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes, and expectations of the people under study" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 35). Recruiting participants through networking also facilitates the establishment of rapport and trust between the participants and me. On the other hand, I have to be aware of my assumptions and biases in studying a frequently discussed phenomenon, the "astronaut" families, in my ethnic community. For example, in both the process of interviewing and analyzing interview data, I may be blind to some circumstances or information that I have taken for granted. These circumstances or information could be new and important to others who are not familiar with the "astronaut" phenomenon. To address my research blindness, I employ techniques such as critical inquiry and reflexivity to help me see through limiting factors that result from my personal experiences, and to help me uncover inherent assumptions and biases that I hold (MacNiel, 1999, p. 15).

The Study Participants

Participant Recruitment

Because the target population of this study was a small, tightly knit and difficult-to-find population, I looked for the potential participants through snowball sampling (Bernard, 1994, p. 97). Potential participants were identified through four resource people, who were "astronaut" children from Taiwan and were well known to me. In addition to participating in my study themselves, the four resource people also provided me with contacts of other "astronaut" children from Taiwan. Upon receiving information from my resource people about possible participants, I sent out formal initial contact letters to them introducing myself and explaining the purpose and procedure of my study. Telephone calls or e-mail contacts were made later for each potential participant to answer their inquiries and discuss the possibility of their participation. For students who were willing to participate, I arranged an appropriate time and place with them for the individual interviews. Before each of the interviews started, the participants were given an informed consent form to sign.

A Profile of the Research Participants

Eleven Taiwanese students in the Greater Vancouver participated in this study. This group includes six female and five male students, whose ages range from eighteen to twenty-three. Among the participants, two are brothers. The participants are first

generation immigrant students from Taiwan and the period of time they have lived in Canada ranges from three to ten years. All but one had studied at a high school in the Greater Vancouver area. Although the educational background was not considered in participant selection, all of the participants are currently studying at university or college.

Among the eleven participants, seven of them have experienced different stages of family rearrangement. For example, Nelson, Jason, Jerry, Tony, and Jayde had lived with one or both of their parents for a couple of years before their parents both became "astronauts". In Alice and Tim's family, parents joined them in Vancouver after Alice and Tim had lived with only siblings for several years. Parents of students such as Alice and Nelson arranged a "transition period" to help them adapt to living in the frequent absence of parents. Alice had lived with her aunt's family, and Nelson had lived with a home stay family before they started living on their own. There are also families (Joan, Elaine, Gill and Karen) in which parents have chosen to be "astronauts" since the family migrated to Canada. Although the participants have gone through different stages of family rearrangement, all of them have experiences living in the absence of either one or both parents for a significant amount of time.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process consists of pre-interview informal conversations, individual open-ended in-depth interviews, and follow-up telephone contacts. Prior to

conducting formal interviews, I had many casual conversations with not only the children, but also some of the parents in these "astronaut" families, through social occasions or through Internet meetings. The dialogue with them, in the form of friendly conversations, helped me formulate provocative questions in individual interviews. This approach of collecting information lasted until I had enough information to set the stage for individual interviews with well-informed questions.

I facilitated open-ended interviews with each of the participants, lasting about one hour to two hours. Although I had formulated sets of questions before conducting interviews, I also valued the participants' influence in leading the direction of the interviews. When necessary, follow-up phone calls were made for clarification or expansion of ideas. The language used in interviews was mainly Mandarin; however, both participants and I were freely switching languages between Mandarin and English at our will. All interviews were tape-recorded with participants' permission and translated and transcribed fully into English for data analysis. When translating the interviews from Mandarin into English, I sometimes felt hesitant about choosing the right English words to fully express the participants' thoughts and feelings. At these times, I contacted the participants and invited them to rephrase their own words in English. By doing so, I hoped to eliminate the possible misinterpretation resulting from the different nature between these two languages.

Throughout the course of interviewing, I wrote down a journal entry after each interview in order to record and to reflect on important information. Writing journals

helped me preserve the freshness and insights of the interview data. This process of reflecting also allowed me to develop sensitivity to certain themes that came up in earlier interviews, which facilitated the conducting of the following interviews.

To make sense of the interviewees' ideas and stories, I analyzed the narrative structures of each interview to look for themes in each account. As I worked through each interview, I used thematic analysis to look for common properties in interviewees' accounts by categorizing recurrent topics and ideas. Finally, I identified the relationships between themes across interviews, looking for shared themes, comparing and contrasting different themes to find patterns of their ideas (Fetterman, 1998; Spradley, 1979). To enhance the validity of my analysis and the interpretation of data, as I conducted the analysis, I kept in mind to switch back and forth between the two perspectives, the emic (insider) and the etic (outsider). While keeping the insights of an insider, I tried to avoid "biased subjectivity", which Kvale (1996) defines as "researchers noticing only evidence that supports their own opinions, selectively interpreting and reporting statements justifying their own conclusions, overlooking any counter evidence" (p. 212, quoted in MacNiel, 1999, p. 66).

The Protection of Research Participants: Confidentiality

"Astronaut" families have been a sensitive issue within the Taiwanese community; many families worry about being identified and this phenomenon being made widely known. The Taiwanese community fears negative responses from policy makers or the mainstream

society.   As a result, a main risk of participants to participate in this study is the issue of confidentiality.

To protect the participants of this study, participants' confidentiality were carefully considered and assured.   First, the research participants were identified through my personal network instead of institutional organizations so that their individual identities were kept confidential.   Secondly, I am the only person who knows the participants' real names.   Pseudonyms were used throughout the study and in any form of written materials. The tapes and transcripts were identified only by code names.   All data were preserved in a locked cabinet and were accessible only to my research committee and me.   Thirdly, during the interviews, the confidentiality between participants and their peers and families was preserved.   Interviews were conducted in a place without the presence of participants' peers and families.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the participants of this study and identified the research process.   The next two chapters will present significant findings from the data collected and discuss the data. In Chapter Four, I will discuss the participants' experiences of living with frequently absent parents.   I will also contrast findings from my participants' accounts with the depiction of the "astronaut" students in previous studies.   In an attempt to provide a complete picture of these students' rich insights, Chapter Five presents

participants' perceptions of home and identity in the form of case studies. Since I have

heard many important themes of identity and home arise in the process of hearing these

students' stories, I will discuss these themes in detail.

Chapter Four: Impacts of Transnational Family Arrangements on Children

Among previous studies on the "astronaut" phenomenon, some researchers attributed the choice of the split household to employment difficulties in the settlement country. Some researchers suggested that these families had decided to adopt the "astronaut" strategy before emigration. Both situations are found in the families of the students I studied. The eleven students interviewed are all from middle class families. The students' parents were middle-aged when the family emigrated (most of the parents were in their 40's). Some parents of the students interviewed did not intend to find a job in Canada because their qualifications were not acknowledged in Canada. These parents had decided to adopt the "astronaut" arrangement before emigration. For example, several of the parents were teachers in Taiwan and had almost reached the age of retirement when they emigrated. Their teaching credentials were not portable; in addition, their pension would be at risk if they quit teaching before retirement. As a result, these parents chose to continue teaching in Taiwan until retirement, and then, they moved to Vancouver. Some other parents perceived that, compared with their established career in Taiwan, they would not be able to find a decent job in Vancouver to support the family because of language barriers or lack of Canadian experience.

In some families of the interviewees, parents stayed in Vancouver with their children for several years before they decided to return to Taiwan. Some of the parents decided to

return to Taiwan because they found it difficult to start a business in Canada as they originally planned. Some parents considered their children independent enough to take care of themselves, so parents returned to Taiwan in order to increase the financial resources of the family.

Although the participants have gone through different stages of family arrangement, one commonality among them is that no one had ever experienced living without parents before they moved to Canada. As a result, it was important, in our conversations, to have dialogue about changes in their lives. How does a traditional family structure adapt to the changes and demands posed by the spatial separation between family members? How do transnational family arrangements influence these children's daily lives? In this chapter, I will discuss, in a transnational context, different aspects of how these students have experienced a new form of family life.

Coping With Life in the Absence of Parents

What Is the Difference?

Faced with life without parents, two among eleven interviewees found it not as easy to adjust in the first several months as they had thought. Gill is one of them. When thinking back to her arrival here, Gill recalled what it was like, at the age of 14, living with her older brother for the first time in her life:

> In the first three months, I went to highschool and I had a hard time adjusting to living here because my mom was gone and no one cooked for me. No one took

care of my daily life.   I called my mom everyday and cried on the phone.   The first three months was pretty tough for me.   But after that, I started enjoy living here because I loved my school.   I loved going to school.   And the environment here was very good and relaxing.   So I started feeling that life here was actually not so different, just that my parents were not here.   Yeah, and after three months, I almost forgot about my mom. *Laugh.*

Surprising as the transformation in Gill's mentality is, I find it not unusual among my interviewees.   As a matter of fact, the majority of these students find coping with the life in the absence of parents not as difficult as expected.   "At first, maybe sometimes I would feel a little lonely when I was home alone", Jayde described and went on to say,

But gradually I got used to it.   I don't feel that there has to be someone at home so that I could feel warm because this is my home.   I don't feel that being alone at home is anything special or a big deal.   This is the way my life is.

When asked to describe changes in her life resulting from the frequent absence of parents, Gill spoke about "no one cooked for me [and] no one took care of my daily life".   Many other students I interviewed also identified this point.   The first thing these students encountered was dealing with the day-to-day running of their lives.   Similar to what Waters (2001a) points out in her study, for students who live without the presence of both parents, "almost every aspect of the day-to-day running of their lives is in their charge.   In some cases, they are responsible for undertaking all the domestic chores themselves, in several cases a part-time cleaner would attend to the house once a week" (p. 16).

In addition to hiring a cleaner to help children with the domestic work, familial organizational arrangements to cope with the long absence of parents took different forms. In some families of individuals that I interviewed, parents pre-ordered meals or pre-

arranged tutoring for the children.   Some students suggested that, when coming back to Vancouver, parents would make major household decisions or major purchases for the family.   In one student's family, the father spent most of his time in Taiwan while the mother stayed in Vancouver and returned to Taiwan for a couple of weeks every two or three months.   Every time before the mother flew back to Taiwan, she would cook for a whole week until the freezer was stuffed with food in order to make sure that children had no worry about food supply.

Although parents' preparation for children to deal with living on their own is helpful, with frequent absence of parents, the everyday running of life is in these children's hands. They must deal with: laundry, transportation, food preparation, bill payments, grocery shopping, garbage handling, and house cleaning.   However, increasing daily life responsibilities are apparently not just considered a burden.   For Nelson, who lives on his own, taking care of domestic chores also implies a chance to acquire the ability to live an independent life:

> I got to learn how to cook, though not very well, do laundry, pay all kinds of bills, and even fix some small stuff.   I knew how to do none of these when I was in Taiwan.   By being responsible for my own life, I also got to know how to better arrange my own time, budget money, and make decisions for myself.

Students who live with siblings speak about cooperation and a division of labour between siblings.   According to Tim, he is responsible for doing "small things such as cleaning the house, doing laundry or once in a while cooking, and [his brother] takes care of big things or external matters such as making household decisions."   Jayde sees the share of

responsibilities with her siblings in this way:

> I think sharing responsibilities like us is a very good thing.... At first, I would think that why I did more and why [my brother and sister] did nothing. I thought it was so unfair. But gradually I realized that someone had to do it, right? And actually when I was not home, they did things, too. So, doing housework or even doing a bit more than they do is no big deal. Anyway, after you have your own family, you still need to learn to do all these sooner or later. Learning them now is not bad at all. I think it's because I have grown up so that I'm able to see things from a different angle.

Apart from the acquisition of practical life skills, some students that I interviewed

mentioned that they had matured during the process of coping with the long absence of their

parents. Dealing with what happens in day-to-day life without the constant help from

parents, in Joan's words, "gives children the chance to start learning 5 years in advance how

to plan [their lives]." Gill also described some inner changes which happened to her:

> I became tougher, and more able to handle things by myself. When I was in Taiwan, I asked my mom to handle everything for me. Because knowing that there is someone to rely on, and someone who's willing to be relied on by you, you would unbridledly rely yourself on her.... It made me unable to make any decision on my own, and very dependent and very fragile...it was like I would die without my mom. But, now, it's like the opposite. When facing difficulties, I would want to solve it by myself as soon as I can. It's kind of a reality check, you know? I mean, you would beome mature earlier because you'd know there's no use in crying...and you realize that, in anyway, you have to face the reality sooner or later...and the best way is just to deal with it.... I know I am not so fragile anymore. I am tougher now.

The notion of fast maturation is found in another important theme: a switching of roles

between family members, especially for those who are the eldest kid in the family. For

example, since her father returned to Taiwan to continue his career there, Elaine had been

living with her mother and her younger triplet brothers. Being the eldest child, she had to

find a balance between her double roles as both a father and a sister:

> [My dad] would expect me to help my mom discipline my brothers, instruct them to the right direction or be a role model. So sometimes I need to snap at them on behalf of my mom. But sometimes I'm pretty close to them because my age is closer to theirs, I could understand them more in some senses such as dating girls. So sometimes I would speak for them and try to let my mom understand what they're thinking…. I'm kind of between a father and a sister, I think. (Elaine)

Elaine is not the only case in which children assume the parental role as a result of the absence of parents. Gill described her older brother, who has been living with her since she moved here, as being her "father, mother, brother, and a friend, too". Role reversal also occurs when some parents "might depend on their teenage or adult children for communication with the host society" (Lin, 1994, p. 6). In Joan's case, she carries out the role of "language broker" in her family. She takes care of correspondence in English or communicates with English speakers on the behalf of her mother. Joan elaborates on her new role in the family:

> I do have the feeling that I need to take care of the family. However, I also got to learn how to take responsibilites and actually force myself to practice English….On the one hand, I was forced to grow up earlier. It may sound difficult, but, on the other hand, the good thing is I can have my own space, my own space to decide things or make choices for myself….When we were in Taiwan, it's like you'd always be viewed as a kid…you're less likely to have the chance to make decisions for yourself…. But now it's different and I like the feeling of being independent.

Role reversal between parents and children also has an impact on parent-child relations, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

What Comes with Freedom?

The concept of freedom is an important theme arising from my interview data, a finding

that echoes previous findings in studies of "satellite" situations (Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Waters 2001a). The students that I interviewed all spoke of freedom as the best part of living without parents. From their conversations with me, the students seem also very aware of the ways in which being free from parents' direct control make a difference in their lives.

What is good about having freedom? These students give various examples. When they want to go out for dates or get back home late, they feel less pressure because there is no one waiting at home. They do not need to ask for parents' permission every time before going out with friends. They can decide by themselves "when the bedroom is messy to an unbearable degree that [they] must clean it up" (Jason). They feel free to arrange their time, when to watch TV, when to do homework or when to hang out with friends. In addition, living without a parent, they can invite friends frequently. Jerry illustrates this point:

> [My friends] have jokingly called my home "Dunbar Community Center". When my parents are not here, they would bring their video games to my place... don't even need to ask me in advance. *Laugh*. If I don't play with them, they don't care. I just do my own stuff, like assignments or net surfing. They totally make themselves home. *Laugh*.

In Waters's (2001a) study of "satellite children", she indicated that: "the physical distance that this migration strategy places between family members is shown to significantly diminish the amount of control that parents can command over the lives of their children, attenuating the strength of parental discipline" (p. 21). For families operating in a transnational context, the diminishing direct control of parents is inevitable.

However, does being away from parents' direct supervision create a loss of control in their behaviors, as is suggested by previous studies (Pe-Pua, 1998; Waters 2001a)?   My interviewees provide a different point of view.   Despite the difficulty in commanding direct control over these students' lives when parents are an ocean away, most of the time, familial restrictions still operate although in a different way:

> I have a lot of freedom here.   It feels more care-free…. I don't need to report to Mom where I am and what I am doing all the time.   But, I still have 'the other father', who is actually my brother.   *Laugh.*   I still need his permission to do some things.   However, unlike my mom, [my brother] gives me a lot of liberty and a lot of trust.   I like this way of discipline better and I am more willing to accept this way of discipline, too.   (Gill)

The notion of preferring being trusted over being directly controlled is also expressed by Jayde.   Since her parents moved back to Taiwan in her grade 12, Jayde has been living with her older brother and older sister.   Here is how she describes having more personal freedom:

> In the absence of my parents, my brother kind of becomes the father figure sometimes.   But he's much more open than my father.   He still has a line there and I can't go past the line.   But as long as I don't go past the line, I can communicate with him and he would grant me the freedom to do things I want….
> For example, I can go for bubble tea with friends at 9 or 10 at night for a couple of hours; I can go to friends' house to watch a video when we suddenly want to do so.

As Jayde adds, "these are some small things, but if my parents were here, I would not be allowed to do any of them".   What these students like about having more personal freedom is mostly the power to decide what they want to do at which time.

On the other hand, being able to write their own timetable may yield a less regular life schedule, as Tim and Tony suggest.   Examples of this are not having meals at regular times,

hanging out late, staying up late, and getting up late, or less study time. It is important to notice; however, that being freer from parental discipline means more than loosening up of their behaviours. As Jayde puts it, "by having more freedom, I also learned to balance my time, to decide which is important to be done first, and to well discipline myself without [parental] supervision". The notion of developing the sense of self-discipline is mentioned by many other interviewees. For Karen, who lives with her younger sister, having control over her own life implies being responsible for not only herself but also her younger sister.

> I've become more and more aware that I need to be responsible for my own behavior. I need to consider the consequence before I do things because now [parents] won't be around to clean things up for me if I screw up, right? It's no good to make them feel worried since they are far away and can't do many things about it. Moreover, I would also make myself responsible for my sister and keep an eye on her so that my parents won't get worried.

In discussing the possession of great personal freedom of children in the "astronaut" families, previous studies put their emphasis on a collapse of parental authority in these families, a loss of control of these students, or "potential" behavioral problems of them (Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Waters, 2001a). "Satellite" students are viewed as sources of behavioural problems, or even social problems. However, it is not the case of the students I studied.

In spite of the fact that the students I interviewed demonstrate many examples of freedom from parents' direct supervision and discipline, they still recognize various ways of family restriction operating inside the family, through the supervision of older siblings, or through the development of self-discipline. The students do point out the negative effects of having too much personal freedom, effects like a less regular life schedule and study time.

Nevertheless, such things as going astray or having no control over their behavior have not

seen evident in the cases I studied. What the students enjoy about having freedom is that

they are not controlled. The students feel empowered to arrange their own time, and make

decisions for themselves. Moreover, having more personal freedom presents a chance for

them to learn to be responsible for their own behaviours and decisions.

Family Relations in Transition

How does a family operate in a transnational context? How do members in a family

maintain themselves as a unit when some are in Vancouver and some spend a large amount

of their time in Taiwan? These are some of the first questions asked when people learn

about the situation of the "astronaut" families. In a study of "astronaut" families in

Australia, Pe-Pua et al (1998) indicated that "this phenomenon has the potential of either

strengthening or breaking up relationships between parents and children, and between

siblings" (p. 92). Waters (2001a) studied the circumstances of "satellite" students in

Vancouver, Canada. She suggested that "the existence of meaningful relationships

between parents and children is significantly attenuated through the Satellite arrangement"

(p. 35). The image of children living alone without parents being around and paying

attention to their daily activities is easily associated with a sense of breakdown of family

relations. It may be true in some cases; however, I did not find any broken family relations

in the cases I studied. On the contrary, what I see from these students' experiences is a

new face of family relations, family relations that keep refashioning themselves in order to survive the challenge of time and distance.

A family operating across an ocean is not likely to function in the same way as a "family of norm" does. It is also reasonable to expect that these students experience their lives differently when their parents are around as compared to when they are away. As Tony said:

> When my dad is here, the atmosphere at home would be more harmonious. Of course it's not that without him we would live in disharmony.... But, maybe it's a feeling of family. It's like we would all chat together and maybe make fun of each other and stuff. When Dad is here, the feeling is somewhat different...

Gill defined the "somewhat different feelings" as she described, "the feeling of the whole family being altogether, the feeling that 'we are together' is not replaceable." Nevertheless, when they elaborated on how they have experienced some subtle changes in their relationship with their family, these students revealed some important implications of the transnational household strategy.

Although the presence of parents does make a difference to the atmosphere of family, Tony does not feel his relationship with his parents was weakened by not living with them all the time. Instead, he considers himself in general to be closer to his family. In our interview, he described how his relation with his father has gradually changed since he moved here:

> Because I have become more independent, my relationship with my dad has also become more like friends.... I think it's because my dad doesn't live with us and there is an interval between his visits. Every time he sees [my brother and I], he would find us more grown-up and mature than the last time he saw us . Therefore,

> he found that he could no longer treat us in the way he did three months ago or half a year ago. He needed to change his attitude toward us all the time. And in this gradual transformation, he would realize little by little that his son has become a grown-up. So he would find patriarchal authority no more an adequate way to get along with us.... It's not just a parent-son relationship any more. It's very good now that we are also like two friends. (Tony)

Apart from his father, Tony also observes a better understanding between his mother and

him:

> In these years, my mom and I started to think alike and agree on the same things more and more.... Maybe it's because when we first moved here and after my dad went back to Taiwan, my mom had stayed with us for another few years.... At that time she didn't speak English so she needed to rely on us to do many things. Maybe during that process of helping her on lots of things, unconsciously I would gradually see things from her point of view instead of only from mine.... So gradually we could understand each other more.

Like Tony, Nelson enjoys a new way of getting along with his parents:

> Now [my parents] talk to me as if we are friends because they can see me as being more mature and responsible. When we talk on the phone or when they come back here, we don't argue as we did in Taiwan because now they don't simply give me orders and expect me to follow them. Instead, they listen to my opinions and respect my decisions more because now they think I've gained the ability to handle things well by myself and they trust me.

The transformation to a more friend-like relation between parents and children also comes

from a changing pattern of interaction in the family. In transnational families, the

traditional or conventional pattern of interaction between family members has shifted.

When parents are away and not able to talk to children face to face in cars or across dinner

tables, advances in communications technology enable a close contact between parents and

children.

The students I interviewed pointed out a number of ways in which they keep in close

contact with their parents when parents are away: long-distance phone calls, email links,

letters, or faxes. The majority of students I interviewed suggested that they talk with their

parents on the phone very frequently, some on a daily basis. In one student's family,

parents in Taiwan and children in Vancouver both set up a web camera on their computers

so that they can talk through the internet and see each other at the same time every day.

Elaine provides interesting insight into the improved quality of communication brought by a

new interactional pattern between her father and she:

> I have been very close to my father since I was a kid, and it never changes. Now
> he doesn't live with me but we write each other emails a lot.... you may think that
> we have less communication now, but actually it's the opposite. Because, in
> emails, we would talk about things that we wouldn't face to face. We would chat
> like friends. He would try to guide me through my tough times by telling me his
> childhood stories and lessons he learned. He would give me career suggestions or
> tell me to follow my dreams.... We would talk about things in a way that is more
> like friends. If he was here, we wouldn't talk in this way. So, actually, I become
> even closer to him now.

Elaine is not the only one who is able to communicate with parents in a new way by writing

instead of talking. Since Tim moved here 4 years ago, in addition to phoning each other

everyday, his father had been writing letters to his brother and him every week continuously.

In these letters, his father showed deep affection that would not be manifested through oral

communication.

In these cases and others to be discussed, one can see that physical distance between

parents and children does not equate with increasing mental distance between them.

Unavoidably and undeniably, due to the transnational household strategy, the quantity of

time parents are able to spend around their children decreases. Most of these students only get to see both or one of their parents once in several months. However, 7 among my 11 interviewees indicated that not always seeing their parents make them cherish the time with their parents more when they come back. Some said when their parents come back, they would minimize their personal activities in order to stay at home more and spend time with their parents. Some said they would go with their parents wherever their parents want to go, such as shopping, having a picnic or just going for a walk, which are the last things they would like to do when they were in Taiwan together. The notion of "real family time together", which these students express, can be illustrated by Karen's narration below:

> When we were in Taiwan, my dad, my mom, my sister, and myself, everyone was way busier than now. I didn't get to see my dad very often…of course not as infrequent as now… but I mean, even if we lived together, we didn't have much time to hang around or do things together. But after we moved here, though I only see them for a couple of weeks every three or four months, we cherish those limited time. For example, one time when they came back, my sister and I asked them to see a movie together. We had so much fun. My parents said they had not gone into a movie theater for almost 10 years and they never expected their teenaged girls would go to a movie with them 'old people'. *Laugh.* Now everytime they come back, we would go to see a movie together. *Laugh.*

A flowering of a better quality of relationship is also seen between siblings who live together in Vancouver. Without the presence of parents, siblings are the only family members here, which makes the relation between siblings really close in many cases. Take Alice for instance; after she moved to Vancouver, she had lived with her sister in her aunt's family for one year. During the year, Alice became very close to her sister because she felt that her sister was "the only person she could totally trust" and they relied on each other in

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both a practical and emotional sense.   According to Alice,

> Cousins and aunt are still different from your own family... sometimes there would
> be some friction because of the different ways of discipline in the two families.... So
> [my sister and I] sort of formed an alliance and we also invented some 'secret code'
> or signs that were used only between us.   We help each other; we share secrets that
> we don't want to tell others; we support each other in everything.

Many other students interviewed confirm the feeling of closeness with siblings because of

living their lives with one another.   Interestingly, many students mentioned a

transformation of relation between siblings, a transformation from increasing arguments in

the beginning period to making compromises with each other and becoming good friends.

When thinking back to his arrival here, Tim admits that because there was no parent to

judge who was right and who was wrong, he argued with his older brother a lot.   Frictions

occurred especially when the older brother-younger brother relationship had to become

father-son relationship in some circumstances:

> My dad actually gave my brother the authority to supervise me, so, in the family, my
> brother is the father sometimes.   But in the beginning I was not used to it...
> listening to or obeying what my brother said.... So we argued a lot about some very
> small things like who was supposed to wash the dishes?   Who could be in charge of
> things?   (Tim)

> **W.H.:** When these kind of arguments happened, how did you deal with it?

> Compromise.   At first it's not easy, but gradually you learn to make compromise
> with each other, like taking turns or cooperating in doing many things.   Because
> there was no elder to judge who's right, no one is gonna 'win' the fight, right?
> After some meaningless fights, we worked out our way and now we communicate
> with each other really well.   (Tim)

Jayde experiences the same process, too.   She reflects on some changes in her relation with

her older brother and sister after her parents moved back to Taiwan:

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After my parents moved back, we started to need to do things for each other.... When we lived with our parents, I was more self-centered. But after our parents moved back to Taiwan, we learned that we needed to make compromises.... For example, when we both need to use the car, we have to check each other's schedule. We have to negotiate and compromise, right? Like when parents were here, they would drive us around.... But as we grow up, we need to take responsibilities for ourselves.

Although the majority of the students interviewed experienced a closer relation with siblings and an enduring bond with parents in Taiwan, there is one student who finds the connection between his family members weaker since his family moved to Vancouver.

Jason's mother used to be the core of the family when they were in Taiwan, the person who connected everyone in the family. As a result, since his family immigrated to Canada and his mother returned to Taiwan for her teaching job, he has been feeling that it is hard to maintain the family as it was in Taiwan. In addition, when his mother comes back every winter and summer vacation, Jason sometimes feels that his mother's staying with them somewhat interferes with their everyday routine. Putting himself in his mother's role, Jason also sees a sense of loss his mother has when she comes back here because she feels that she is no longer a part of their lives.

I think one important reason is that my parents have been trying to train us to be independent since we were kids; therefore, we quickly adjusted well to living without them. Then my mom might feel that we don't need her as much as we did before.... However, for me, family love is something that will never change. Although now it's not like the old days in Taiwan any more, family is always family. (Jason)

As Jason puts it, "family is always family". In this global era, it is not uncommon that a family is scattered in different geographical locations. Despite the tensions between

independence and threatened family ties, these families still manage to survive in a

transnational context as a unit in their own various and reconstituted ways.

School Responses and Public Opinon

In her study, Waters indicated that, there is greater and greater awareness of what has

been described as the "astronaut" phenomenon and "satellite" situation among school

authorities and the public media (Waters, 2001a).   A popular image is that "a young

student living alone is a prime target for criminals for either extortion or gang recruitment"

(Vancouver Sun, quoted in Waters, 2001a, p. 5).   According to previous studies, school

authorities perceive great personal freedom of "satellite" students as contributing to a

collapse of parental authority in the families and disciplinary problems experienced with

these students (Pe-Pua et al., 1998; Waters, 2001a).

The students I interviewed do not feel any special attention from the school authority

and teachers.   Eight out of eleven students suggested that none of their teachers knew

about their family situation.   Let us start with the three exceptions here.   Jayde was a

member of the school basketball team when she was in high school, and she had established

a very good personal relationship with her coach.   Her coach would bring the team to

basketball games or invite them for dinner and chat like good friends.   That was how her

coach found out that her parents didn't live with them on a daily basis.   As for other

teachers, she said, "the border between teachers and students was quite clear and, out of

respect, I didn't get to have a personal relationship with other teachers so they didn't talk about family stuff with me."

Jerry, who went to a Catholic high school, remembers that only a priest knew about his family because the priest talked with every student about almost everything with a great amount of patience and an excellent memory. Knowing that Jerry's father didn't live here and his mother flew back and forth between Vancouver and Taiwan, the Father "didn't really say anything about it because it's a family choice anyway". The reason why Nelson's school authorities would know that he had been living alone was because he transferred high schools many times. Therefore, every time he went to a new school, he needed to see the school counselor and the counselors would ask about his family conditions.

Except for the three students, other students could not recall any of their teachers knowing about their family situation, or, at least, none of their teachers had talked about family issues with them. There are two main reasons commonly recognized by the students interviewed suggesting why their family situation did not arouse attention from their teachers. One is lack of a personal relationship with teachers. The students interviewed generally reveal that there was almost no personal interaction between them and their teachers whatsoever, either because of language barriers (Jason) or traditional Chinese culture, which involves respecting the authority of teachers (Karen). Alice's words are representative of the thoughts of many other students in this respect: " I think

teachers here, in high schools or in universities, do not really ask students very personal

questions, *if not necessary.*" Her emphasis on the condition of "if not necessary" indicates

the other reason that is recognized by many students interviewed. When is it *necessary* for

teachers to ask personal questions?

> I didn't misbehave in school. Sometimes I was noisy at class, or fooling around
> after school, but I wasn't very bad. My marks were okay. So [teachers] didn't
> pay extra attention to me. (Tim)

Experiences tell these students "as along as [they] perform okay in schoolwork and do not

create problems, teachers will not care to know too much about [their] family" (Elaine). If

teachers do not ask, these students do not bother mentioning it to teachers, either.

It is interesting to see what my interviewees say about the school's responses together

with what is pinpointed by a Vice-Principal of a public high school in Richmond (quoted in

Waters, 2001a, p. 30):

> It is difficult to determine how many [satellite students] there are as they really only
> come to light when there is a difficulty and we are trying to make contact with the
> home.

The common ground between both parties is the idea of "no problem, no awareness". As

long as these satellite students behave normally in school, they seem no different from other

students and family does not become an issue at all.

There seems no need for these students to hide their family situation from friends.

All students interviewed suggest that their friends know about the frequent absence or

transnational travels of their parents. Most of their close friends being Taiwanese, these

students feel that they do not need to explain the household situation because it is not an

uncommon phenomenon in Vancouver among immigrant families from Taiwan or Hong

Kong:

> The only thing you need to say is your parents fly back and forth. They understand immediately because many of my friends are of similar background. It is nothing special at all. (Joan)

Even for friends that are not Taiwanese and not familiar with terms such as "astronauts" or

"satellite students", it is not difficult for these students to say to them why their parents are

away:

> It's no big deal. I only need to tell them that my dad has to work in Taiwan and they can understand. I think they also know that it's not easy for immigrants to make enough money here, especially for middle-aged immigrants. (Jerry)

From what is shown in the previous literature as well as what I have heard from some

Taiwanese families, the "astronaut" situation is a sensitive issue which is "the less known

by others, the better", in the words of a Taiwanese housewife. From these students' points

of view, nevertheless, they do not view their family situation as unusual or secret. In

Karen's words, "in this age, family scattering in different places does not draw much

people's attention or interest any more. You do not need to go out and say it loud, but it is

also no big deal if others know".

In this chapter, the students interviewed have revealed how they adapted to living

without their parents for extended periods of time. Although being perceived by many

outsiders as posing behavioral problems, these students I interviewed have shown a

development of independence and maturity because they have to be responsible for

everyday family choices. The students have also learned to constantly renegotiate their

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relationships with other family members due to the new forms of residential arrangements. As the institution of family becomes increasingly multi-local, it is worthwhile to examine the changing meaning of home. How do these students see themselves in relation to Canada and Taiwan? These questions will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Children's Perceptions of "Home" and "Identity" in a Transnational Context

> Sometimes I feel good about having two homes....I feel good about being able to choose between living in two very different places, knowing that I have the ability to survive in both places.   But sometimes I feel that the two worlds are like a door with two sides but are both closed.   I think whichever way I feel depends on whether I am doing well at that time.   (Karen)

This is the response from Karen, a student I interviewed, when she and I talked about her feelings toward having two homes, one in Vancouver, the other in Taiwan.   For children whose family is operating in a transnational context, and whose lives are affected by transnational movements of parents, what do they consider their home?   For these children, where is "home", and where is "abroad"?   How do they see themselves in relation to Canada and Taiwan?   How does the transnational family arrangement influence the identity development of these children?   When asked the question, "where is home for you now", some of the students interviewed answered quite spontaneously without hesitating to consider; some of them responded after long pondering.   What is common is that they have revealed to me rich insights that I never imagined I could learn.   It is because of the rich insights and thoughts of each of the students that I find it necessary to present their stories case by case in this chapter.   In this chapter, I intend to present how these students have come to perceive "home" and how they see themselves in relation to Canada and Taiwan.

Case Studies

  Joan. During our interview, Joan's experience of going back to Taiwan this summer

was a repeated theme. Since Joan moved to Vancouver three years ago at the age of 18,

she has gone back to Taiwan twice. The last trip to Taiwan had a great impact on her.

First, she found she had lost the closeness with her old friends. She described, with

obvious disappointment, what it was like seeing her old friends again:

> Many people and old friends have changed. I thought we were still friends before I
> went back, but, after I went back, I felt that the friendship had faded away....In
> addition, I kind of sensed that they somehow viewed me as, as someone from abroad.
> They would think that I'm a 'foreigner' or an outsider.... not exactly an outsider...
> It's more like, umm, you're not people of our place. You are different from 'us'.
> It made me feel very uncomfortable because I didn't think there's big difference.
> Of course I had changed over these years, but they had changed, too, right?

The feeling of being "out of place" did not only come from Joan's friends' reaction toward

her, but also from changes in her ways of thinking in these three years. After three years

residing in Vancouver, she has been influenced by people here and, without noticing, has

gradually identified with social values here. Joan was not aware of Canadian society's

influence on her until she found herself in shock when she went back to Taiwan:

> To be honest, I am still Taiwanese. But when I went back again three years later,
> suddenly I found that a lot of things I had agreed with for 18 years, well, at least I
> didn't disagree with, had become different all of sudden. Some ways of thinking or
> behaving, some concepts or some social standard.... Many things seemed
> unreasonable to me. Some of them had even become unbearable.

Joan was shocked at her feelings of alienation from people in Taiwan and the Taiwanese

society in general. Equally shocking to her was the discord between what she remembered

about Taiwan and what she really experienced in Taiwan. Joan took her searching for "the

good food in her memory" as an example:

> I missed many of the food and restaurants in Taiwan a lot. But when I went back last time and tried to find those places, I found the taste to be different from before, different from what I had remembered. And some of the places were gone. My favorite snack place became a three-story Starbucks!! It's really hard to describe the feeling when I saw the new Starbucks....Only one or two stores would make me feel the way I did either three years ago or when I was a kid.

The conflicts between memory and reality contributed to a "familiar but also strange feeling" toward her "homeland".

> I was born and brought up there and I spent 18 years there. That should be the place which I am most familiar with, right?....But there are so many places that I knew but they are not the same any more. On the last day of the trip, when I was about to leave, I was watching the street and wondering about, when I come back again next time, will I still know this place?

When the indicators signifying her homeland changed, it became hard for Joan to find a sense of belonging in Taiwan. She expressed a feeling of confusion and loss:

> I am really afraid of that kind of feeling...it's the feeling that you think you belong to this place, you were born in this place, but you don't know whether you truly belong here or you belong somewhere else? Where?....That's a feeling of confusion and loss. It is (*pause*) not knowing yourself.

Unable to find a sense of belonging in Taiwan, Joan turned to look for a place of her own in Vancouver. Having started expanding her social life here, and enjoying the weather and the nice environment here, Joan is happy with her life in Vancouver. The "frustrated experience" of going back to Taiwan last time and the gradually increasing satisfaction of life in Vancouver altogether make Joan now consider Vancouver to be her home.

However, in Joan's words, "whether I feel that I belong to Vancouver depends on whom I am with":

> When I am with those "foreigners" in school, some of which are friends from my dorm, they didn't make me feel that I'm a person from another place or that I don't belong here. But, instead, I'd have a bit of that kind of feeling when I'm with Taiwanese friends... Most of my close friends are from Taiwan. When I am with them, I'd have a bit of feeling that we don't quite belong to this place....Because, maybe it's because when we are together as a group of Taiwanese, we speak our own language ....I don't know, it's just a feeling... but, actually it's okay, it's not a very strong feeling, but, yeah, it depends.

Joan's sense of belonging appears more secure when she is with friends who are not Taiwanese. On the other hand, when she is with Taiwanese friends, she speaks the native language, eats Taiwanese foods or discusses Taiwanese gossip with them. It is these times that would make her sense of belonging uncertain and contradictory.

> For now, I feel that Vancouver is my home. But, on the other hand, I don't want to admit the fact that I don't consider Taiwan to be my home any more. Because, after all, that's the place where I was born and where I had lived for 18 years.

Elaine. Elaine came to Canada five years ago at the age of 15. After helping the family settle down here, Elaine's father went back to Taiwan to work. Since then, Elaine has been living with her mother and three younger brothers. Thinking back to her arrival here, Elaine recalled:

> I wanted to go back to Taiwan 'very' badly in my first year here because I missed my friends there very much. But roughly in the third year, I started feeling that staying here is not bad, either. And I didn't want to go back to Taiwan so badly any more. Although I still do want to go back, I feel quite good about my life here.

Elaine changed her thoughts when she began to appreciate Vancouver's learning environment, the education system, the moderate weather and the fresh air. While she considers herself well adjusted to living here, Elaine is uncertain about where her "home" is

right now.   She slowly explained it to me after careful consideration:

> If someone asks me where home is for me now, I don't feel right to answer either
> Vancouver or Taiwan.... This is because now my mom and brothers live here and
> I'm studying here, I would feel here is home for me right now.   As for Taiwan, we
> still have a home there, but I don't go back there very often.   I would feel that
> Taiwan is more like the place where I go to visit my relatives and friends and a place
> to have fun.   But, inside of me, still...I still feel a part of me is attached to Taiwan.

Elaine tends to look at this issue from a "more realistic perspective":

> I think after I have a career of my own, my home will be the place where I plan to
> stay at for a long time and where I plan to build my career at.

She added:

> So I don't really feel [Vancouver] is home for me, either.   It's more of a place
> where I've been studying and is probably a starting place for my future career.   It is
> more like a transnational period and a transitional place for me.   This is because
> after I graduate, I want to go to the USA or China to work.   After I work and live in
> another country for a long time, Vancouver for me will be just another place where
> I've lived in and finished my education.

As for Taiwan—though not considered to be her home because "it is almost impossible to

go back studying or working in Taiwan"—it will always be the place "where [she] grew up

and where most of [her] culture comes from".

The bond between Taiwan and her is still strong, as Elaine said, "I still feel that I am

part of Taiwan".   She enjoys going back to Taiwan to visit her relatives and friends and

have fun.   Taiwan is where most of her culture comes from, and this part of culture is still

well sustained in her life now.   For example, the majority of Elaine's close friends are

from Taiwan.   Information from Taiwan is always circulating amongst her friends.   New

popular movies or Taiwanese jokes are hard to share with and laugh at together with friends

other than Taiwanese.   When Elaine's father comes back to Vancouver, he often brings her

taped videos from Taiwan, which contain entertainment shows or popular dramas.

Elaine's family would watch the videotapes together, and talk about current news or

updated information of relatives in Taiwan (who got married lately or whose son entered a

good university). Taiwan is virtually brought to Elaine's house, right in the family room in

which "the old days in Taipei seem to come back again".

Elaine related her experiences to that of her friends with similar backgrounds:

> I think actually many Chinese people here feel confused about where home is for
> them....Like me, although I have pretty much got used to living here pretty much, I
> think I've not really integrated into the mainstream society.   And if someone asks
> me where I am from, it's hard to give a straight answer.   Neither Canada nor
> Taiwan seems exactly right.   I think, I would say, I live in Canada, but I am from
> Taiwan.   I grew up in Taiwan.

Tim.   Tim is 18 years old now.   Tim now lives in Vancouver with his whole family:

his parents and an older brother.   When he first moved here four years ago, his parents did

not stay but decided to go back to Taiwan.   He stayed in Vancouver with his older brother.

Three years later, Tim's parents reached retirement age and moved to Vancouver.   Tim has

never gone back to Taiwan in these four years.   Since he still holds a Taiwanese passport,

he did not want to take the risk of being recruited into Taiwan's army service.   Also, his

parents hope that he does not go back until he finishes his education here.

His parents' decision to move to Vancouver is obviously a major influence on Tim's

sense of home.   When his parents still lived in Taiwan, he would watch the Taiwanese

news program and care more about the economy or the politics in Taiwan.   Now, however,

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he rarely watches the Taiwanese news and feels what is happening in Taiwan is less relevant

to him.   Living with the whole family now not only weakens his bond with Taiwan, but

also makes him consider Vancouver to be his home now:

> Previously, I still considered Taiwan to be my home, but gradually it changed....
> Gradually, I started to feel that my dad and mom very clearly expressed that they
> intend to move here one day.   In fact, they did move here about one year ago.
> Actually, the shift is gradual and pretty natural because I started to enjoy my life
> here more and more, and my parents decided to move here.

Tim elaborated on his ideas:

> If my parents still wanted to go back to live in Taiwan, then for me, staying here is
> simply a process of finishing my education.   Taiwan would be home for me and I
> would consider living in Taiwan after graduation.   But since they moved here and
> decided to stay here, I had to start thinking Vancouver as my 'permanent home',
> even if I may go to another place to work in the future.   It depends on where my
> parents place the center of their lives on.

"Where [his] parents place the center of their life" represents "home" to Tim.   He said,

> Speaking of home, I think it's the feeling of where the heart of your family is, and
> not where your home is physically.... And mentally speaking, I want to become
> rooted here because my family is all here.   That's why I think Canada is home for
> me now.

Important as it is, his parents' moving to Vancouver is not the only reason that shifts

Tim's center of life from Taiwan to Vancouver.   Having spent four years in Vancouver,

Tim has adjusted to living here and started enjoying his life here.   In addition, though he

never went back to Taiwan since he immigrated here, he still perceives "some distance

between people in Taiwan and him":

> During these years, I have missed a lot of Taiwanese culture, right?   I think I would
> feel a little bit out of place by being in Taiwan.   They might think that I have
> already emigrated and why am I coming back again?....Although we have the same
> color of skin, they might still think we're different.   Yeah, it's normal.

Although Tim claims many times that Canada or Vancouver is home for him now and

considers that he would not totally fit in Taiwanese society any more, he feels hesitant

saying that he is a Canadian:

> I will say that I am a Taiwanese living in Canada instead of saying that I am a
> Canadian. There are many reasons. First, 'I'm a Taiwanese' is a fact, right?
> And I still have black eyes, black hair, and yellow skin. Moreover, my ways of
> thinking, my concepts, and some of my social and familial values are still more
> Taiwanese. And my family is still "Taiwanese style". We eat Chinese food all
> the time and my parents speak Taiwanese with us.

"I am still a Taiwanese, which is something that will never change. But I am living in

Canada. Canada is where my home is". That is how Tim sees himself in relation to

Canada and to Taiwan now.

Alice. Eight years ago, Alice graduated from an elementary school in Taiwan. That

summer, Alice's family took a trip to Vancouver to visit her older sister, who had been

studying in Vancouver for a year. After some family discussions, Alice decided to stay

with her sister and study in Vancouver, while her parents decided to return to Taiwan to

continue their teaching jobs until the day of retirement. Three years later, Alice's father

retired from his teaching position and moved to Vancouver. Her mother followed one year

ago and now Alice lives with her whole family.

When Alice's parents still lived in Taiwan, she kept in close contact with them by

frequent phone calls. Her parents came back here every summer and winter vacation.

Before her parents' departure from Taiwan, Alice and her sister would fax back a list of

things for their parents to bring over, such as new CDs, Chinese books or their favorite snacks.   The distance between Alice and Taiwan was minimized because of the flow of Taiwanese goods from transnational travels.   It was minimized also because of the easy access to Taiwanese culture in Vancouver.   Giggling, Alice told me:

> Before my dad came here, [my sister and I] didn't even know there were Taiwanese videos for rent.   But since my father moved here, we got to watch a lot of the latest Taiwanese programs because he likes renting Taiwanese videos, such as entertainment shows or dramas.   For example, the show that was playing in Taiwan last Saturday will be available here maybe on the following Wednesday.

Despite frequent contact with Taiwanese culture or goods, Alice confessed that her attachment to Taiwan decreased significantly after her whole family relocated to Vancouver. When her parents still lived in Taiwan, Alice was very concerned about things that were happening in Taiwan.   She recalled an incident, an experience unforgettable to her:

> Do you remember the "Chen-Jing-Xing incident"[12] in Taiwan a couple of years ago? The three notorious criminals?   When that incident happened, my mother lived alone in Taipei, and our home there happened to be in the area where the three fugitives hid themselves.   My dad, my sister and I were so nervous and worried everyday.   We watched Taiwanese news whenever we could to see if the police had arrested the three fugitives yet.   We called our mother many times a day to make sure she's safe there.

To Alice, what happened in Taiwan was more than a series of reports on TV news or newspapers; it was related to her daily life and affected her everyday.   However, ever since her parents both moved here, things became different.   She still pays attention to news in Taiwan, but does not give it so much care and emotion.

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[12] The Chen-Jing-Xing incident, a notorious one in Taiwan, had haunted people in Taiwan and occupied headlines of all kinds of media for several months.   Three criminals kidnapped a highschool girl.   After running and hiding, the three fugitives continued committing other rapes and murders.

Reuniting with the whole family in Vancouver also transformed Alice's sense of home:

> When my parents were still in Taiwan, I felt that part of my family was there;
> therefore, I would consider Taiwan to be more of my home. But now that my
> parents are here, no matter how many relatives of mine are still in Taiwan, I will still
> consider Vancouver to be my home.

"Vancouver is home for [her] now", Alice claimed. And Vancouver is where she plans to

work and stay after she graduates from university. Does she claim herself to be a

Canadian? "Not for now, at least not yet," Alice said,

> Maybe because I still speak Mandarin all the time with my friends and my family.
> My good friends are all Taiwanese, and the things around me are still quite
> Taiwanese. And I still have black hair and yellow skin, so I still think I'm a
> Taiwanese. I won't say I'm a Canadian just because I've lived here for a long
> time.

The self-identity as Taiwanese needs some additional explanation, as what Alice went on to

say, "if people ask, I will say I'm a Taiwanese. But I might add that I was born in Taiwan

but I grew up in Canada."

Jayde. Jayde's family immigrated to Vancouver 10 years ago when she was 10 years

old. Her parents had lived with Jayde, her older brother and an older sister for several

years. Right after Jayde's graduation from high school, her parents returned to Taiwan and

Jayde started living with her siblings. In the summer of 2001, Jayde returned to Taiwan

for the third time and she spent two and a half month there that summer. Spending a

summer in Taiwan had a great impact on Jayde. Since she came back to Vancouver, Jayde

has been repeatedly reflecting on what family and home mean to her and how she sees

Taiwan and Canada.

Growing up and having lived through her adolescence in Vancouver, Jayde regards Vancouver as a place "more suitable for her". Reasons she offered include the pleasant environment, the easy life style, the air, and the weather. And her friends are here. After seconds of reflecting, Jayde suggested the idea of "cultural difference" in explaining why Vancouver is a more suitable place for her:

> The culture and concepts between Taiwan and Canada are somewhat different. I grew up here and I think I tend to think of things in a more Canadian way rather than in a Taiwanese way. So when I went back to Taiwan these times, and talked with my cousins, I felt that I have some generation gap with Taiwanese youth…although we are in the same generation, I still feel that way. There is a gap between us in terms of concepts or ways of thinking.

The acculturation with Canadian culture creates a distance between Jayde and her relatives in Taiwan. Moreover, the way in which people in Taiwan viewed her made Jayde feel "a little bit awkward", too:

> Because I live in Canada, [friends and cousins in Taiwan] would think that I'm special; I am different…. They didn't view me as a Taiwanese anymore; they already viewed me as a foreigner. Even if they don't view me as a total foreigner, they still view me as a half foreigner. They talked to me like I am someone who is superior rather than like we are friends. For example, they think it's better living abroad. So when we were chatting, they always wanted to ask me questions about what it is like living in Canada or going to school in Canada and so on.

Jayde sees Canada as more suitable for her because of the environment in Vancouver, the friends she has made in these years, and the feeling of being differentiated by people in Taiwan. Nevertheless, when talking about a sense of home, Jayde has a different way of seeing it.

Jayde has a very close relationship with her sister, who is 2 years older. They have been sharing everything--clothes, cosmetics or secrets--since they were kids. In the summer of 2001, her sister decided to stay and work in Taiwan. After Jayde came back to Vancouver from Taiwan, she and her brother lived together on their own. She described what it was like being apart from her sister for the first time in her life:

> We had been living without our parents for 3 or 4 years and I had adjusted to it well. However, I had never been away from my sister for such a long time.... When I came back to Vancouver, I came back home feeling a sense of loss and loneliness... especially when I just spent almost 3 months with my whole family in Taiwan. So it's like suddenly I am away from the feeling of home again. I can't pull myself back to the life here so soon, but it's the reality again.... And then I realized that, for me, home is where my family is.

The conversations between Jayde and me made it clear that the close bond between family is important in her case. Now most of her family is in Taiwan; as a result, she thinks of Taiwan as where her home is. For her, "home is not where the home physically is. It is where the family is".

In terms of home, Jayde is clear about what it means to her. Speaking about her sense of identity, Jayde has a more complex feeling:

> Sometimes I feel ironic and a bit weird that, in Taiwan, we are viewed as 'foreigners'; however, in a 'foreign country', we are so-called Taiwanese....I think I'll say that I'm a Taiwanese Canadian. What I want to express by using this term is that I am from Taiwan, but I am a Canadian, too.

Jayde views herself as "half Taiwanese and half Canadian" instead of Taiwanese or Canadian because, though she spent half of her life in Canada, she "hasn't lost the Taiwanese part inside [her]":

After all, the two cultures are different. Saying that there is no cultural or racial difference is a lie. After all, I was neither born here nor totally native....In addition, the way I was brought up by my family is still traditional....At the root of my heart I am still more conservative than [Canadians]. It's still the Chinese way....And my close friends are all Taiwanese, too....Maybe that's also why I can't find a real, complete sense of belonging in both countries.

For Jayde, unable to find "a real, complete sense of belonging in both countries" also means

that "[she] belongs to both places". Jayde elaborated on her double feelings about being

half Taiwanese and half Canadian:

I don't feel that I can't find a real sense of belonging in both countries in daily life. But when I face something meaningful, or something that makes me think about it, for example, when I feel blue, I would feel so. Otherwise, both places are where I grew up, and I can also say that I belong to both places. And in saying so, I feel myself very special..... In fact, I tend to think that I belong to both places... If I want to go back to look for a job in Taiwan, I can. And if I want to find a job here, I can do so, too. So I think it's a good thing... .I have more choices and opportunities than others.

It is common for many immigrant students to embrace both the culture of origin and the

culture of the residing country. As Jayde said to me, "you can be optimistic or pessimistic

about it. It depends on how you think about it, right?" For Jayde, she chooses a positive

attitude towards herself as someone positioned between two cultures.

Jerry. Jerry has been in Vancouver for seven years. His family immigrated to

Canada when he was 14 years old. Upon arrival, Jerry's father stayed for 3 months and

helped the family to settle down. Then his father returned to Taiwan to continue his career

and his mother had lived with Jerry and his brother for another four years. During the four

years, his father came back here every two or three months. When Jerry was in grade 12,

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his mother started to fly to and fro between Taiwan and Vancouver more frequently than before.   Jerry went back to Taiwan twice in 2001 because his father has been too busy to come to Vancouver.   Since Jerry has been here for quite a long time, he does not keep in close contact with his old friends in Taiwan.   However, he made lots of good friends through religious affiliations every time he went back to Taiwan.   These new friends and some religious activities he took part in made Jerry's trips back to Taiwan a lot of fun.

After an enjoyable trip in Taiwan for three months this summer, Jerry came back to Vancouver with a fresh memory of Taipei, the city where he was born and brought up.   In an attempt to compare Taipei with Vancouver, Jerry found himself equally fond of both cities:

> This summer I spent 3 months in Taiwan.   After coming back here, I once tried to compare the similarities between the two cities, Taipei and Vancouver.   And the result was no similarity basically.   Then my brother said to me, what's the point finding similarities between two totally different cities?   I agreed with him.   For me, they're both good but completely different.   I like them both.   Each of them has its advantages.   Taipei has its convenience and liveliness, and Vancouver has its beauty and easiness.   Both of them are great.

For Jerry, both Taiwan and Vancouver are home for him.   And he is quite certain that having two homes is a good thing to him:

> I am happy and comfortable being in both places.   One is my root; the other is where I grew up.   I have the same affection for both places.   That's why I said I'm happy being in both places... because both places are my home and both places are good.

Jerry has a positive feeling about having two homes; he also has a positive self-identity.

Jerry speaks about his identity with great security and flexibility:

If people ask me where I am from, I will give different answers depending on the occasion. For example, if I go travelling in Europe, I'd say I'm a Canadian. However, if I go travelling in Asia, I'd say I'm a Taiwanese. Because if you say you're a Chinese or a Taiwanese in some foreign countries, such as Eastern Europe, you might experience discrimination right away. But if you say you're a Canadian, you'd be treated very differently. It's simply for convenience....I am a Taiwanese and I am a Canadian. I am both.

It is apparent that Jerry identifies himself strategically as well as with both Taiwan and Canada, and he can find a sense of belonging in both places. Under some circumstances, his Taiwanese identity surpasses his Canadian identity:

But if I have to and can only choose one between my two identities, I'd say I'm a Taiwanese. It's because of my love for that land and the people residing on that land.... I'm willing to identify with that place, and to respond to that place with my enthusiasm and passion. As for Canada, I also have my appreciation and much much more... but this won't change the blood running inside my vessels....

Having suggested so, Jerry never feels it is necessary to choose between his two identities, and it is never confusing to him to have a double identity. Jerry's sense of home and identity is a very secure one. As he confidently expressed, "I am happy with who I am".

Tony. Tony and Jerry are brothers. Tony is one year younger than Jerry. When their family immigrated to Canada seven years ago, Tony was 13 years old. Having families living in Taiwan makes Tony's connection with Taiwan stronger. He pointed out the difference:

If I didn't have family in Taiwan, I wouldn't have as a feeling as strong as I have now about things in Taiwan, such as typhoon, or flood....I would think that, oh, there is a flood in Taiwan now.. those poor people... that's all.... I wouldn't want to call back or do something about it or know more details..

Tony sees a difference between his feelings toward Taiwan and Vancouver, which makes

him regard Taiwan as home for him now:

> I think Vancouver is a very comfortable place to live and study in. That's all it is
> for me….It's a place to enjoy life….There is not much pressure for me here. The
> only thing I need to do is study…and the weather is so nice; the view is so nice too,
> right? It feels like being on vacation….As for Taiwan, not only is there a home,
> it's also a place where I'm familiar with in terms of language and other stuff. But
> also…. I like the feelings there, that of a city life and a faster pace. Everyone is
> busy…. I like the lifestyle there more.

Preferring the lifestyle in Taiwan is one reason why Tony still thinks of Taiwan as his home,

though he has been in Vancouver for 7 years. Another reason is that he considers himself

not yet completely integrated into the mainstream society. He explained:

> I'm pretty happy with my life here, but I think I've never completely integrated into
> the mainstream society since I moved here. For example, the highschool life here
> is like joining some clubs in school, hanging out with friends after school or doing
> volunteer work…. I only participated a little bit in these stuff. Maybe that's why I
> don't feel that I have experienced a lot here.

The incompleteness of his integration also has an influence on Tony's sense of identity.

He views himself more as a Taiwanese than a Canadian. His peers and their ideas of home

and identity also influence him. When Tony went back to Taiwan last winter and this

summer, he made some good friends, whom he considers more 'in the same camp' with him

than his friends in Vancouver. This experience made him feel that, in Taiwan, he still "[fits]

in very well and [he] still [belongs] to the society in Taiwan". His friends in Vancouver

also have an influence on him in this sense:

> Maybe because my close friends or the friends I like here are all Taiwanese, and
> they think of themselves as Taiwanese, too. Maybe that's why there would be the
> thought of wanting to be the same as they are and wanting to be a Taiwanese, too.

Tony's sense of home and identity is very clear and straightforward, without much

struggling or hesitating.   As he clearly indicated, "I am a Taiwanese.   I am from Taiwan

but living in Canada."

Karen.   Karen's family immigrated to Canada about four years ago.   After a two

months stay, her father returned to Taiwan to run his business.   Since then, Karen has been

living with her mother and a sister, while her father comes back to Vancouver every two or

three months.   In the last four years, Karen has experienced a shift in her ideas about

"home":

> For the question of where the home is for me, I would answer differently in different
> stages.   During the initial period, I only wanted to stay here until I graduate, and
> then I wanted to go back to Taiwan to work and live there.   I didn't feel Vancouver
> was my home.   It was just a place to study for me.   That was in the beginning.
> Then, I was not sure, and I started thinking that it's very nice living in Vancouver.
> I started to like what was around me in Vancouver.   I also started to enjoy the
> beautiful living environment and the easy and more relaxing pace of life.   I also
> like what I am learning at school.   I still like living in Taiwan.   But now, I think
> staying in Taiwan or in Vancouver is fine to me.

Karen's perception of home has gradually changed as she adapted to her life in Vancouver.

For her now, both Vancouver and Taiwan are home for her, and are equally part of her life:

> Both Taiwan and Vancouver play a role in my life.   First, my dad still lives in
> Taiwan.   I care a lot about what's going on in Taiwan and about how my dad is
> doing alone in Taiwan....I still consider going back to Taiwan after graduation
> because I want to accompany him....And because he comes back often, I can ask
> him to bring me stuff if I want anything from Taiwan....Even in my daily life, what
> I eat at home everyday is the same as what we had in Taiwan.   What we speak at
> home is Mandarin.   I watch Taiwanese news programs and I listen to Mandarin
> broadcasting stations.   On the other hand, the place where I am spending every
> minute of my day in is Vancouver.   The mountain I see, the street I walk on, the
> movie theater I go to on Tuesday nights are all in Vancouver.   And that is my life
> now....So, for me, both the Taiwanese and the Canadian part are in my life....So, I

think of the two places as both where my home is. When I go back to Taiwan, I still feel that I'm going home. And when I leave Taiwan tocome back here, I feel I'm going home too.

Karen feels at home in both Taiwan and Vancouver and she identifies herself as "a Taiwanese living in Canada".

I am between a Taiwanese and a Canadian, I think. This is because I am not confident, or not ready to say that I am a Canadian yet. However, I am not a Taiwanese in the way I used to be, either. I mean, I am still a Taiwanese, but during these few years in Vancouver, I have changed in the way I think and in the way I see the world around me. I am not the person I used to be.

Karen experiences some contradictions in terms of her feeling towards having two homes and being between a Taiwanese and a Canadian:

Sometimes I feel good about having two homes. I also like the fact that sometimes I can be a Taiwanese and sometimes I can be a Canadian. I feel good about being able to choose between living in two very different places, and knowing that I have the ability to survive in both places. But sometimes I feel that the two worlds are like a door with two sides but are both closed. I think whichever way I feel depends on whether I am doing well at that time.

Nelson. Nelson is the only child in his family. Six years ago, when he was aged sixteen, his family decided to immigrate to Canada. In the first two to three years, his mother stayed here and his father traveled between Taiwan and Canada very frequently. Later his mother returned to live in Taiwan, too and Nelson started living on his own. In his six years of dwelling in Canada, Nelson has "experienced some big changes in his relation with Taiwan and Canada":

During the first year, I wanted to go back to Taiwan very badly.... I missed my friends, and I was homesick....At that time, I thought of Vancouver as just a place where I would gain my education. I would go back in the future after I finish studying. However, as time went by, I got used to living here, I kind of lost my

direction. I could go back to Taiwan, stay here, or even go to the States. I didn't know exactly what I wanted. But after I went back to Taiwan last time, I realized that I am now more suited to live in the Western world.

As Nelson indicated, the trip back to Taiwan contributed to a great change in his thoughts.

Nelson only went back to Taiwan once in the six years. The trip took place five years after his immigration to Canada. Nelson described what he felt about going back to Taiwan again:

> After I was there again, I found out that Taiwan was very different from what it used to be. It was not like what I expected it to be. This is because my image of Taiwan still stayed in five years ago, but both Taiwan and myself changed a lot. After putting things together in my head, I realized that I am not compatible with the way things are in Taiwan any more....As I said, I wanted to go back to Taiwan badly before, and I thought of Taiwan as home for me. But the feeling that I had last time changed me.... Now, I still like going back, but it is just to have fun and to see my family. I don't look forward to go back and develop my career in Taiwan. Instead, I want to establish my career here. If I have the chance, I will want to buy a house in Vancouver or I will go to the States...gradually I began to think of here as my home. I would consider Canada, or Vancouver as my home.

He then gave a vivid illustration of what home is to him:

> When I consider where home is for me, I would consider which place makes me feel the most comfortable. Maybe it's a matter of habits or a matter of having gotten used to it....For example, you might have a lot of fun when you go back to Taiwan tohang out with old friends and eat lots of good stuff. But even so, you would worry about things in Vancouver. Maybe it would occur to you that you have bills to pay, or you might worry about letters or notes sent to you from school. Small things like these are what you would worry about, and these very things make you feel like a part of you is still in Vancouver.... I think that's what having a home feels like to me.

Before Nelson went back to Taiwan, he was still in search of a secure sense of home, and felt Taiwan was more his home than Vancouver. But for Nelson now, Vancouver is home for him and Taiwan is his homeland. Moreover, the last trip to Taiwan made Nelson

realize that he could not get used to living in Taiwan any more. Consequently, if he goes

back to Taiwan, he will need to experience another big change and another series of

adjustment in life. Being happy with what he has right now, he has no intention to "make

that effort and experience that process of adjustment all over again".

Despite feeling at home in Vancouver, Nelson is uncertain about where he truly

belongs. On the one hand, he has lost his sense of belonging and closeness in Taiwan; on

the other hand, he does not think he has totally integrated into Canadian society, either.

For Nelson, he does not truly belong to either of the two places. This ambivalent feeling is

well expressed by him:

> Immigrant students like me who did not come here at an early age are likely to
> become lost and become like no one.... This is especially so in a place like
> Vancouver where there are so many Taiwanese people. It's very likely that you
> still live inside the Taiwanese circle even after you have been here for many years.
> For example, I don't speak English as well as the native people do and my English is
> not as fluent as theirs. But in terms of my Chinese, I can't communicate as well as
> the 'real Taiwanese' do either. So it's like, I am stuck somewhere. I don't feel
> that I'm integrated into the Canadian society very much. That's how I feel when I
> am here. On the other hand, when I go back to Taiwan, I cant totally fit in, either.
> In Taiwan, I would think that I'm different from them because I've lived in Canada
> for several years. And I know my friends also think of me as different from them.
> So, again, you're stuck somewhere. It's like you're stuck in between two places.

Nelson suggests that he is not alone in this situation; instead, he thinks many of his friends

agree with him. He considers himself as "the third group" that is constituted of people of

similar background as him. And people of "the third group are living in a third world of

their own, where they are already away from Taiwan but not into Canada yet". Nelson

explained:

There are quite a lot of people feeling the same way as I do, as far as I know....And we consider ourselves as another group, as the third group. It's like, the CBC (Canadian born Chinese) will hang out with the CBC....Sometimes we talk about this feeling of being stuck between the two identities, and I think it's really sad....When I am here, I feel that since I was not born here and I'm not white, I don't fit in with them very well.... But when I was in Taiwan, I felt that I was not a "real Taiwanese" either. This makes me feel confused sometimes.... I won't say it's wrong or it's anybody's fault. It's just sad, and it's a fact. I don't think it's a good thing or a right thing, but it's the reality and you just can't deny it.

One way Nelson has chosen to deal with ambivalence is by looking to the future and hoping that his life now is just a transitional period. After he gains more social experiences, Nelson hopes that he will figure out a clearer direction of his own:

I hope that after I have a job, not a part time job, I mean a job that I can really take responsibility in, and after I have more social experiences, then I can find a more clear way of my own. For example, maybe I will have a totally Canadian way of thinking and dealing with people of various backgrounds. Maybe at that time I will think that I have really become part of the Canadian society. Or, instead, I may think that I AM a Taiwanese, I want to become a successful Taiwanese businessman, and I want to be a role model to show that we're not inferior than the white people. Either way, I hope that I will be more sure about who I am and where I belong.

Jason. Jason's family immigrated to Canada six years ago when he was 16 years old. At first, his father lived here with them and his mother returned to Taiwan to continue her work. Immigrating to Canada under the business category, his father intended to open a small business or look for a job here. However, his father found it really hard to do so after a couple of years. It is hard not only because of language barriers, but also because he was already over 50 years old. Consequently, Jason's father had to go back to Taiwan for economic reasons. Since then, Jason has been living with his brother and two sisters

here, and his parents come back here about two or three times a year.

Since Jason moved here, he has kept little contact with his friends in Taiwan. He did not have any chance to go back to Taiwan until last year. It was the only time Jason went back to Taiwan in the six years and he described his experience in Taiwan:

> I hadn't gone back for 5 years. So when I went back, everything seemed different. Everything was strange to me. For example, my relatives were a bit like strangers to me already. And old friends were not close any more because I didn't keep in touch with them a lot....After all, in these 5 years, we have received different education, and have lived in different environments....One time a friend asked me, "why did you still speak Mandarin so well"? Hearing this kind of question gave me very weird and complex feeling, and I didn't know what to say....Maybe they thought that we only speak English in the foreign country and we should have forgotten all the Mandarin .... It's like...there is a wall between us.... You don't even want to explain....I only went back for 2 weeks and everything seemed strange to me.

Jason did not feel like going home when going back to Taiwan; instead, it was like going traveling. When he was in Taiwan, he felt awkward doing many things, gathering with old friends, reuniting with relatives, or even just walking on the street. "There seemed to be a distance between me and everything in Taiwan, and people in Taiwan", Jason said.

> For those people who go back very often, they may think in different ways. Maybe they'll feel there is still a home in Taiwan. But for me, all of my life is here. So, as time went by, the bond with Taiwan will become weaker.... But my connection with Taiwan will never be completely cut off, because after all, I spent 17 years there. If anything happens in Taiwan, I would be very concerned too. But my center of life is here.

For Jason, home is where he places his center of life. And Vancouver is where his life center is now. "I live here, I go to school here, and friends I am close with are all here. So Vancouver is home for me now". That his parents still live in Taiwan does not

influence his sense of home because, he said, " I am a grown-up now, and I have my own life and my direction of future."

It is interesting to know that, in Jason's view, Vancouver is constituted of two societies: a society of white people, and a society of Chinese people.   Jason portrayed how he sees Vancouver through his eyes:

> I think for Chinese people who came during these ten years, integration is quite hard because the 'Chinese society' has already been established in Vancouver.   For example, no matter what you want to do, you can always find Chinese people to deal with in things like buying grocery, fixing car or trimming your tree.   Almost anything is available inside the Chinese society here.   So it's like there are two societies here, at least in my world.   Of course there are still Indian society or Japanese out there.   But for me, there are two societies, a society of white people and a society of Chinese people.   And there is little crossing or overlapping.

Although there is little crossing and overlapping of these two societies, Jason finds himself able to walk in both of them:

> I think I am more like half and half.   I can be there and I can be here.... I've been doing part time jobs in companies owned by white people, I have more chances to be in contact with white people.... On the other hand, I live in the Chinese society, too.   There are so many Chinese people here.   Friends I hang out with are Chinese; food I eat are Chinese.   I think I live half and half in each society...

Jason has been used to living "half and half in each society", depending on which aspect of his life is concerned.   In Jason's opinion, however, "these two societies are always separate and will not become one in (his) world."   That is one reason why regarding Vancouver as his home does not change Jason's self-identification as a Taiwanese, or more precisely, a Taiwanese who lives in Canada.   He indicated:

> I don't feel I need to confine to a Canadian identity.   In my memories, I belong to where I was born, and this will not change.

Gill.   Gill came to Canada in 1995 when she was fourteen years old.   Since then,

she has been living with her brother, who is five years older than her and came to Canada 10

years before Gill did.   Gill pointed out how having part of her family in Taiwan influences

her connection with Taiwan:

> Because my parents are still there, I would care more about the news in Taiwan. I
> would be much more sympathetic.   For example, when the 921 earthquake
> happened, I didn't have the mood to go to school at all.   I really wanted to cry
> because I couldn't get in touch with them at that time.   I worried so much while I
> was watching the TV news.

That her parents live in Taiwan not only makes Gill concerned with things in Taiwan, but

also increases her chances of taking trips back to Taiwan.   Gill has gone back to Taiwan

four times in the 6 years.   She enjoyed her trips back to Taiwan:

> I went back to Taiwan this summer.   And staying there gave me a feeling that I am
> really a Taiwanese.   It gave me a great sense of closeness.   I felt that people there
> are very hospitable and warm.... Their life style is different from people here.   And
> I like going back very much.... And by going back there, I would feel that there are
> many people taking care of me, my parents and my relatives, and it makes me feel
> that I have more support.

Gill feels comfortable staying in both Taiwan and Canada and she sees no problem

adjusting to the different types of lives in the two very different places.   Speaking in a

confident tone, Gill shares her ideas of home:

> Both places are home for me.   Both places are where I grew up.   One is where I
> spent my childhood; the other is where I lived through my adolescence.   In addition,
> I was born in Taiwan but educated in Canada.   So, I consider both places as my
> home.... And I think it's great to have two homes.   I have more choices.

To Gill, having two homes is an advantage, as it brings more opportunities.   Gill has equal

affection toward these two places, in which she has spent important stages of her life.   She

considers herself as "a Taiwanese with Canadian background". She elaborates on this idea:

> If I had been born and received all my education in Canada, I would have said I'm a Canadian. But now I think I am a Taiwanese....But it's not that I only came here to benefit from what Canada has to offer, or that I don't like this country or the people here, or that I don't care whether this country is growing or not.... It's not like that. It's just that I was born on the land of Taiwan, and I have the blood of Taiwanese. That's why I think I'm a Taiwanese.

Throughout our conversations, Gill speaks of her sense of home and identity with no confusion. Her experiences of relocating, being away from her parents and adapting to life in a new society do not make her feel lost when she situates herself in the global context; instead, she sees herself clearly in relation to the worlds surrounding her.

Discussion

"Where Is Home for You" ?

The concepts of home, belonging and identity are ones that are always complex for people who have experienced the process of uprooting and relocating to another country. These concepts are even more complex for these children whose lives are influenced by subsequent movements after migration. Among the eleven students interviewed, three of them regard both Taiwan and Vancouver as home for them now; five of them Vancouver; two of them Taiwan. One student expressed uncertainty about where home is for her. It is important to note that, whatever the children's answers are, they did not just give a fixed answer about where their home is. Instead, their concept of "home" is a complex one.

There are several conditions that influence these students' sense of home. First, through time and the process of adjustment to living in Vancouver, these students feel at home in Vancouver. Accommodation to life in Vancouver includes appreciation of the living environment and the establishment of various networks here. These students go to school here; they make friends; they live through summers and winters one year after another. They are inevitably influenced by Canadian society internal cultural pattern, "the Canadian ways of thinking", in the students' words. As the students change from wanting to return to Taiwan to feeling comfortable living in Vancouver, "home" has become "the lived experience of a locality..., the varying experience of the pains and pleasures, the terrors and contentment, or the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture" (Brah, 1996, p. 192). Secondly, the fact of having family and a home base in Taiwan makes the students' emotional attachment to Taiwan strong and enduring. In many cases, students express strong sympathy and involvement with current events in Taiwan because members of their family are still there. In the cases of Tim and Alice, where their parents live directly affects where they consider their own home to be. Moreover, transnational networks with Taiwan offer the security of a place to which they can return. Some students view the possibility of return as a "back up" plan; some students see it as an alternative. Either way, having another home in Taiwan reminds the students of the potential of return, whether they contemplate it on the basis of practical concern or family concern.

Having part of their family living in Taiwan also increases these students' chances of going back to Taiwan. The experiences of taking trips back to Taiwan force many of the students I interviewed to reflect on where home was for them. For some students, they enjoyed gathering with family and friends and visiting around, and they still felt at home in Taiwan. For others, however, experiences of revisiting the home country ended in frustration and made them realize that Taiwan was not home for them anymore. Instead, Taiwan has become nothing more than a "homeland", and Vancouver is where their "home" is. The disappointment the students experienced in Taiwan mainly resulted from two shocking experiences. Some students found that the homeland in the present reality was different from the homeland in their memory. They felt lost in the chasm between what they remember about the place and what they discovered when they returned. For example, the familiar landmarks or a favorite restaurant in Taiwan may no longer exist when the children go back years later.

Some of the students were shocked finding themselves at odds with the home culture. These students were also shocked to notice how others saw them . According to many interviewees, some of their friends and relatives in Taiwan no longer regard them as "real Taiwanese"; instead, these students were viewed as "foreigner" or "half foreigner". All of the terms indicate that they are "different from people in Taiwan", an image that is both perceived by themselves and by people in Taiwan. As McHugh indicates, "you can go back. But you do not start from where you left. To fit in, you have to create another

place in that place you left behind" (McHugh, 2000, p. 77). Some students struggle in creating "another place" for themselves in the place once they saw as home; some students still feel at home in Taiwan. Either way, experiences in revisiting the home country have influenced where the students consider their home to be.

Between Being a Canadian and a Taiwanese

Although many interviewees claim that Vancouver is their home, the majority of them identify themselves as Taiwanese. Various phrases they adopt to describe themselves, in terms of self-identity, include: "I am from Canada, but originally from Taiwan" (Joan); " I live in Canada, but I am from Taiwan. I grew up in Taiwan" (Elaine); " I am a Taiwanese living in Canada" (Tim); "I am a Taiwanese. I was born in Taiwan, but I grew up in Canada" (Alice); "I am a Taiwanese Canadian. I am from Taiwan, but I am a Canadian, too" (Jayde); "I am both Taiwanese and Canadian"(Jerry); " I am from Taiwan but living in Canada" (Tony); "I am a Taiwanese, with Canadian background" (Gill); "I belong to the 'third group' (Nelson)"; " I am a Taiwanese, who lives in Canada" (Jason), and "I am a Taiwanese, and sometimes I feel I am a Canadian, too" (Karen). It is interesting that a simple phrase does not seem sufficient for these students to precisely express who they are. Is their sense of identity a state that requires additional explanation? What these students picture here is a "state of between-ness" (Lawson, 2000, p. 174), a state that is somewhere between a Canadian and a Taiwanese.

Through their self-descriptions, these students reveal a persistence of Taiwanese

identity over time and at the same time a fluctuation in the intensity of their Taiwanese

identity. Two important factors contribute to the persistence of these students' Taiwanese

identity: the large Taiwanese population in Vancouver and a primordial attachment to the

place of origin. The Taiwanese community is large in numbers in Vancouver. In a

multicultural context, the stigma of being different is reduced by a critical mass of the

ethnic population. The students do not feel that they need to conform to a Canadian

identity. According to many interviewees, the majority of friends they are close with are

Taiwanese people. Very often the language spoken, the food eaten, the information

circulated is within Taiwanese community. The students are comfortable being Taiwanese

or being both Taiwanese and Canadian in Vancouver. The large ethnic population also

contributes to easy access to ethnic culture. In Vancouver, there are various kinds of

Chinese or Taiwanese restaurants, drinking places, retail shops, and bookstores. There are

Taiwanese news programs on cable TV three times a day; there are Chinese broadcasting

stations playing the latest popular music from Taiwan six days a week. As a student

pointed out, the latest entertainment shows that played in Taiwan appear in Vancouver after

only a few days of waiting. The compression of time and space between Vancouver and

Taiwan makes Taiwanese culture well sustained in these students' lives.

The second factor contributing to the persistence of Taiwanese identity is the

primordial attachment to the place of origin. For many students interviewed, the

primordial attachment has "continually formed the foundation upon which identities have

been constructed in relation to [their] everyday lives" (Windland, 1998, p. 557). Some students experience a struggle between a loyalty to the memory of the primordial ties of home country on the one hand and a day to day notion of home on the other hand. Joan, for example, expressed her contradictory feeling: "I don't want to admit the fact that I don't consider Taiwan to be my home anymore. After all, that's the place where I was born and where I had lived for 18 years". Another student declared that, though feeling more at home in Vancouver, "I belong to where I was born" (Jason). Moreover, several interviewees evoke the idea of "blood" or "black eyes and yellow skins" to explain why they still identify themselves as Taiwanese. The students have decoded what it is like to be a Canadian. Their physical appearance and the *ineffable significance* of the tie of blood (Edward Shils, 1957, quoted in Scott, Jr., 1990, p. 150) will always remind them of where they are from.

The two factors—the large Taiwanese population in Vancouver and the primordial attachment to the place of origin—account for the persistence of a Taiwanese identity in these students. Nevertheless, the intensity and the nature of their Taiwanese identity fluctuate as the students are influenced by the daily contacts with different cultures in Vancouver. After years of residing in Vancouver, these students' attachments to Canada grow day by day. Some of the students interviewed have developed a Canadian identity and identified themselves as both Canadian and Taiwanese. Some students talk about feeling more of an affinity with Canadian values although they do not abandon "the

Taiwanese part inside [them]" (Jayde).   When the students visit Taiwan, some of them

experience a cultural gap between people in Taiwan and themselves.   In some cases,

students feel estranged from their friends in Taiwan as a result of the tension of the

authenticity of being a "real Taiwanese".   Terms that these students chose to refer to

people around them reveal the tension of the authenticity of not only being a "real

Taiwanese", but also being a "real Canadian".   The students used words such as

"foreigner", "insider" and "outsider".   For example, in the students' discourse, people in

Canada who are not of Chinese origin are referred to as "foreigners".   People in Taiwan

who are back from abroad are viewed as "foreigners" or "half foreigners", too.   The

confusing and overlapping uses of terms indicate the blurred boundary these students draw

between "others" and "we".   The blurred boundary between being "foreign" and "native"

reflects these students' state of being somewhere between a Canadian identity and a

Taiwanese identity.

This chapter has shown that, situated in the context of transnational migration between

Canada and Taiwan, these students no longer experience a radical break from their place of

origin.   Instead, both the society in which they have relocated and their ethnic origin have

continually informed the processes of their home-making and identity development.   The

next chapter will close this thesis by discussing the implications of transnational

connections in the "astronaut" families and suggesting possibilities for future study.

Chapter Six: Beyond a Physical Home:

Transnational Connections in the "Astronaut" Families and Their Implications

> The man who finds his country sweet is only a raw beginner; the man for whom
> each country is as his own is already strong; but only the man for whom the whole
> world is as a foreign country is perfect.
>
> (Eric Auerbach, quoted in Featherstone, 1995, p. 86)

When migration has gradually become the quintessential experience of the age (Rapport and

Dawson, 1998), it is becoming increasingly common for family to have individual members

scattered in different geographical locations. The "astronaut" children I interviewed have

experienced their daily life under the influence of transnational migration between Canada

and Taiwan. In order for a family to live its life across national borders, the family has to

develop strategies to reconstitute and reorganize. The families of the students I studied

have established various connections linking family in Taiwan and family in Vancouver.

In their own various ways, the students have reconstructed the meaning of "home" and have

negotiated their identity in response to the transnational reality of their lives.

Transnational connections binding members in the "astronaut" families I studied take

several forms. First, overseas communications are built through intense contacts between

Vancouver and Taiwan by making international phone calls, writing e-mails, or, in one case,

families talking face to face through the Internet. Secondly, families reunite on periodic

visits. Not only are parents "aerial flyers" between Vancouver and Taiwan, but also

children have many chances to go back to Taiwan because they have family there. Furthermore, the frequent transnational commuting increases the flow of goods and information from Taiwan, such as pop culture, books, foods, CDs, and news about people and events in Taiwan.

The transnational movements and connections established by the family members play an important role in the lives of children in the "astronaut" families. The transnational networks, which Rouse (1995) calls the "transnational migrant circuit", have significant implications on understanding the issues of "family", of "home", and of "identity".

The Reconfiguration of the Traditional Family Structure

In response to the reality of spatial distance between parents and children, the "astronaut" families are operating within a different mechanism than that of traditional families. As discussed in Chapter Four, the students I interviewed pointed out various forms of familial organizational arrangements. These arrangements allow parents in the "astronaut" families not only to keep in touch with their children frequently but also to "contribute to decision-making and participate in family events from a considerable distance" (Clifford, 1994, p. 303). The "astronaut" parents may not be able to perform their roles in a traditional sense: take care of the childrens' daily lives, talk to the children face to face, or help children solve their problem at any moment. However, the "astronaut" parents of the students I studied are still active actors in their children's lives.

Moreover, the new way of operating a family in a transnational context gives rise to new forms of independence and dependence between parents and children and between siblings (Creese et al., 1999). Throughout the conversations with the interviewees, the students expressed the idea that they had developed independence, maturity and a sense of responsibility. In charge of their daily lives, these students have found themselves growing up because they are dealing with practical responsibilities and also day-to-day life decisions. Many of the students have acquired a variety of practical life skills. In some cases, they learn to gain perspective on different things by helping out parents or even assuming parents' roles. In other cases, they learn to grow mentally strong and independent by confronting real life instead of waiting for parents' help. Moreover, in possession of greater personal freedom, the students realize the responsibility of commanding control over their own lives, the decisions they make, and the way they behave. Children are no longer dependent only on parents. They now have the ability to take care of the family, and even the parents in certain contexts.

A reconfiguration of the traditional family structure is also manifested through changing family relationships in the "astronaut" families. In contrast to what previous studies suggest about a "disruption to family structure and functioning" (Pe-Pua et al, 1998, p. 291) or a breakdown of parent-child relations (Pe-Pua et al, 1998; Waters, 2001a) in these "astronaut" families, what I found is a changing relation between family members. The family relationships are, in many cases, closer. There is no doubt that there is a decreasing

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amount of face to face interaction between parents and children in families operating in a transnational context. However, for the majority of my interviewees, the bond connecting families living in different locations does not need to depend on physical presence or face to face interaction. Instead, it is maintained by a new way of interacting and by support shown in a number of ways: frequent phone calls, connection through the internet, and by a new attitude of cherishing shorter, more intense family times.

In many families of this study, the parent-child relationship has transformed to a more egalitarian friend-like relationship. The physical distance placed between parents and children has created a space for both sides to reconfigure a better way to get along with each other. Many students I interviewed indicate an improved quality of communication and mutual understanding between parents and children. In some families, a better quality of communication emerges from a new pattern of interaction. In some cases, it is achieved because children have become more responsible and independent through their experiences living with frequent absence of parents. Because of the maturation of their personalities and abilities, the students have gained the trust and respect of their parents.

Children living in the absence of parents are commonly viewed as "abandoned children" (Ong, 1999, p. 128; Waters, 2001a, p. 12) because their families are not functioning in a traditional or conventional way. The transnational family structure challenges conventional notions of family as confined to a national and local place. A better way to understand these "astronaut" families is to see "the family as fluid and

constantly being negotiated and reconstituted both spatially and temporally" (Creese et al., p. 5). The eleven students that I studied meet the challenge of space and time and have successfully reconstituted the meaning of family for themselves.

The Reconstruction of the Meaning of "Home"

Transnational movements and consistent connections between Taiwan and Vancouver have affected how the children in the "astronaut" families define "home" and where they consider "home" to be. Traditionally, "home" is conceptualized as "the stable physical center of one's universe—a safe and still place to leave and to return to…, and a principal focus of one's concern and control" (Rapport and Dawson, 1998, p. 6). These students in the "astronaut" families challenge the conventional notion of "home" as physical and stable. Through their narratives, "home" comes to be defined by these students as where the immediate family is, where the center of life is, where one feels most comfortable, or where one's future career will be built. As the concept of "family" is no longer confined to a national and local place, the concept of "home" expands beyond a physical space, too.

If "home" no longer refers to the physical place of residence, where is home then? Avtar Brah (1996) points out two referents of "home" that co-exist in experiences of most migrant people:

> On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy

summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowball, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day...all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations.   (p. 192)

"Home" is simultaneously referred to one's place of origin and one's place of everyday lived experience.   In the latter sense, "home" also "connotes our networks of family, kin, friends, colleagues and various other 'significant others'" (Brah, 1998, p. 4).   However, for students in the "astronaut" families, the two referents of "home" often overlap and contest with each other.   On the one hand, Vancouver is the location where the students spend and experience their everyday lives.   On the other hand, these students have their various "significant others" living in Taiwan, and they are continuously influenced by the transnational movements and various connections established between the location of residence (Vancouver) and the place of origin (Taiwan).   "Home", in the sense of the place of origin, is more than a "mythic place of desire", "a place of no return"; instead, it plays an active role in these students' everyday lived experience.

This encounter between the two referents of "home" forms the basis upon which the students I interviewed develop their various constructions of the meaning of "home" and draw their border between where is home and where is abroad.   Indeed, when movements, overseas communication, and dense connection with homeland become part of daily life, in Auge's (1995) words, "no place is completely itself and separate, and no place is completely other....And in this situation, people are always and yet never 'at home'" (quoted in Rapport and Dawson, 1998, p. 6).   No matter that these students now

consider Vancouver or Taiwan as their home, or consider themselves as having two homes,

these students' senses of home are influenced by the encounter and interaction between

their quotidian experience in Vancouver and transnational connections with Taiwan.   These

students' perception of "home" challenges the conventional notion of "home" and calls for

a new understanding of home, "a far more mobile conception of home...as something

'plurilocal' (Rouse, 1991), something to be taken along whenever one decamps" (Rapport

and Dawson, 1998, p. 7).

The Search for An Identity

In searching for an identity in the place of settlement, these students do not develop a

simple shift from one identity to another.   Their senses of self are shaped by the interaction

between the "encountered" community (the local), and the "imagined" community (the

global) (Brah, 1998, p. 196).   Instead of declaring an either-or identity, which contrasts

with the reality of their lives, these students have situated themselves somewhere between

being a Canadian and a Taiwanese.   Students had a variety of responses to their condition

of being in an ambiguous realm somewhere between being a Canadian and being a

Taiwanese.

For some students interviewed, the "fluid forms of subject position" (Lawson, 2000, p.

174) have yielded a sense of confusion and uncertainty.   Although the students have access

to both the places of origin and settlement, no place seems truly secure to them (Glick

Schiller et al., 1992).   Nelson, for example, feels marginalized as "the third group".   He

described himself as "living in a third world, where [he is] already away from Taiwan but

not into Canada yet".   Joan also speaks about a "familiar but strange feeling".   In their

relation to both Canada and Taiwan, these students are "near and far at *the same time*"

(Simmel, 1950) and are becoming a familiar stranger in both the home country and the host

country.

Some of the students interviewed have created a special but secure self-concept.

They consider themselves as both a Canadian and a Taiwanese.   These students are

comfortable maintaining a double identity and moving fluidly between their different

identities (Rouse, 1995).   These students are happy with the alternatives they have,

including the ability to live in both Canada and Taiwan, and the convenience of invoking

different identities depending on the situation, as suggested by Jerry.   Faced with the

interaction between the local and the global, the "encountered" community and the

"imagined" community, these students are flexible members of two societies—the host

society and the home society.   The students have developed "a cultural bifocalism that

enable them to draw on whichever view seemed more appropriate at a given moment"

(Rouse, 1995, p. 371).

Some other students interviewed declare a Taiwanese identity.   At the same time, they

also stress the reality that they now live in Canada or that they grew up in Canada.   Their

Taiwanese identity is well sustained in these students' minds; however, the intensity of their

Taiwanese identity and the essence of being a Taiwanese may change as these students have been influenced by their day to day life experience in Vancouver. As a student pointed out, "I am still a Taiwanese....But I am not a Taiwanese in the way I used to be" (Karen).

For these students I interviewed, their quotidian experiences are informed by both the local and the global, and by both the national and the transnational (Mitchell, 1997). As a result of the large ethnic population in Vancouver and the transnational connections built in the "astronaut" families, the relationships between the elements of the local and the elements of the global are complicated. For example, transnational movements and connections between Taiwan and Vancouver provide the students with points of reference that take them back to the place of origin. The students have many chances to revisit Taiwan. Therefore, they can combine their experiences in Taiwan with their experiences in Vancouver in the process of negotiating their identities. Moreover, the large Taiwanese population in Vancouver has made Taiwanese culture well sustained and easily accessible in the students' daily lives. In this context, the persistence of a Taiwanese identity in these students is not in contradiction to, but in conjunction with, quotidian experiences in the host society (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, p. 11).

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters and discussions, I have tried not only to examine the presentation of the "astronaut" families in literature, but also to explore the implications of

transnational family arrangements on the meaning of "family" and on children's senses of

home and identity. In contrast to the conceptions in previous studies of "astronaut"

families as families of disruption and of "satellite" children who are abandoned children or

children at risk of behavioral problems, my interviews with eleven children in "astronaut"

families suggest a different, more positive, view. In order to adapt to the demands and

challenges posed by the spatial separation between members of a family, the families of the

individuals I studied undergo a variety of reorganizations of family life. Reconfigurations

of the family organization are based on the establishment of various transnational

connections linking the family in Taiwan and the family in Vancouver. The maintenance

of transnational connections allows for the development of a new family structure that is

operating within new forms of interdependence between family members and within

changing family relationships. These children develop independence and maturity and live

within new patterns of interaction and communication inside the families. In several

families of the students I studied, the traditional Chinese family relations, (which stress

obedience to patriarchal authority), have been transformed to ones that involve more

interdependence between parents and children and allow more room for communication and

mutual respect within the family.

Transnational movements and connections in the "astronaut" families affect the

children's perceptions of "home" and "identity". In terms of children's perceptions of

"home", the impacts of transnational commuting and connections are more obvious and

direct.   For children in the "astronaut" families, where they consider their home to be is influenced by the interaction between their quotidian experiences in Vancouver and transnational connections with Taiwan.   The two referents of "home"—"home" as the place of origin and "home" as the everyday lived experience—become overlapped in these students' experiences.   As the transnational connections extend and blur the physical boundaries of "family", so do the boundaries of "home" become extended and blurred. Both the day-to-day experiences in Vancouver and the various connections with Taiwan inform the students' constructions of the meaning of "home".

In terms of children's perceptions of "identity", transnational commuting and connections between Canada and Taiwan exercise their influences on these children's identity in more subtle ways.   As discussed earlier, the students interviewed situate themselves somewhere between being a Canadian and being a Taiwanese, although each student has a different position in that continuum and a different response to the reality of their lives.   The main factors affecting the students' senses of identity are cross-cultural contacts they have experienced in Vancouver, the significant flow of people and cultural items from Taiwan to Vancouver, and the primordial attachment to their place of origin. The transnational family arrangement appears to be less influential in children's sense of identities.   There are, however, still minor impacts of the transnational family arrangement. The transnational travels of parents increase the flow of goods and information from Taiwan. Moreover, the transnational family arrangement increases children's chances of going back

to Taiwan. Visits to Taiwan provide the students with points of reference back to the place of origin, which they can integrate into their experiences as they negotiate their identities.

Globalization, diaspora, and difference are three main concepts that came together in this study. These concepts reveal some implications for policy and practice. There are limits to a simplified multicultural policy, which overemphasizes "culture" as a somewhat coherent, place-oriented set of practices that each group needs to learn about the other's way of life. Instead, what I have learned from this study is that stereotypes about traditional non-Western cultures and the relationships between parents and children, men and women, and so on are not necessarily what they seem to be to the outsiders. In the situation of the "astronaut" families, though the external forms of deference to authority of the parents may be upheld, substantial aspects of their relationship have changed. This emanates from the shifting locus of decision making due to the new residential arrangements and the younger members of the family having to be responsible for everyday family choices. Consequently they constantly renegotiate their relationship with one another.

What I have also learned from this study is the fluidity of identity for these students, who are constantly renegotiating their identity as they travel back and forth from one place to the next; live with and without their parents for extended periods of time. Schools and teachers need to be more aware of the processual aspects of identity constructions. They also need to be more aware of the limitations of understanding "cultural difference" through

a set of practices and celebrations.

Possibilities for Future Study

Drawing upon the empirical data of children's experiences, this study has offered some

insights into the changing meaning of "family", of "home", and the identity development in

the context of transnational migration. There remain several areas that are worth future

investigation. First, future studies could address the impacts of transnationalism on gender

roles in traditional families. How does transnationalism influence the traditional gender

roles of fathers and mothers? Meanwhile, as children assume parents' role in many cases,

how does transnationalism influence the socialization of children as conforming to certain

conventional roles associated with being girls or boys?

Future studies could also examine schools' responses and public opinion around the

issues of the "astronaut" phenomenon. It would be careless to disregard the reality that the

"astronaut" or "satellite" situation may result in negative experiences of individual family

members. However, it is important to examine the process through which the "satellite"

phenomenon is constructed and portrayed as potentially posing social problems. It is also

worth investigating what makes the difference between children who meet the challenges of

parental absence and children who suffer from the adverse effect of the "satellite"

arrangement.

Another possibility for future study is a longitudinal study of the "astronaut"

phenomenon.   After the "astronaut" parents retire and the "astronaut" children finish their

education in Vancouver, how will the family formation transform?   Is transnational family

arrangement a strategy of the first generation migrants only?   Will it or how will it transmit

to the next generation? A longitudinal study of the "astronaut" phenomenon can explore the

question of how long a transnational family will conserve its distinct family structure or will

conform to a conventional family style.

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APPENDIX A: Initial Contact Letter

My name is Wei-Shan Hsu.   I am an MA student in the Department of Educational Studies

in University of British Columbia.   I am doing this research for my MA thesis in EDST

degree.   Being an immigrant, I have been interested in the issue concerning migrant

activities of immigrants.

In recent years, it is becoming increasingly common for families to experience a great

deal of international mobility due to the changing nature and the demands of work.   This

poses new challenges for children and families.   Our interest is in understanding how

traditional family structure adapts to these new demands.   We would like to learn how

students accommodate through the acquisition of new skills faced with greater

independence, and how they define their own sense of identity and place.

We would like to invite you to participate in this study if you are a student who is older

than 18 and has experience living in the frequent absence of parents (either one or both of

your parents frequently travel between Taiwan and Canada).

If you are willing to participate in this study, I would like to interview you individually

at your preferred location and time.   The interview should last about 45 minutes.

Interview questions will focus on such major themes as your contacts and relationships with

other family members in Taiwan, and how these contacts influence your sense of home and

identity.   A shorter interview (for about 15 to 20 minutes) will follow for clarification or

APPENDIX C: Sample Interview Questions

I . How does your life change by having parents who come and go?

A. What kinds of changes in your family have you experienced because your father/mother is not here all the time?

    1. When your parents (or one of them) are away, who takes responsibility for everyday chores? (for example, who prepares the meals?)

    2. Who makes decision about the household or your education, career and etc?

    3. How does it differ from what it used to be in Taiwan?

B. In which context would you feel that you wish your father/mother be here all the time?

    4. Did it ever happen that when school sent you a note that required your parents' signature they were not here? Or was there any occasion that your parents were expected to attend and were not here? How did you feel about this?

C. What's the good part?

D. How is your life different when your father/mother comes back?

E. Did you ever find it difficult to explain to people that your father/mother is away?

    1. Do your teachers know about this? How did they find out? Are you comfortable talking about this with them?

    2. Do your friends know about this?

II . Contacts with family members in Taiwan

A. How do you stay in contact with your family in Taiwan?

    1. Do your parents regularly travel to and from Taiwan?

    ----What do you look forward to having when they return? Do you ask them for something special?

    2. Do you travel to and from Taiwan often? How often?

    --- For what reasons do you usually go back to Taiwan?

--- How do you like it when you stay in Taiwan? Does it feel different every time you go back to Taiwan?

B.   Do you still keep up with things going on in Taiwan?

    1.   News, music, TV shows, magazines….?

    2.   Do you still keep in touch with old friends in Taiwan?

    3. What do you miss most in Taiwan?

III. Lives in Canada

A. How do you like your school life?

B. How did you make friends in this new country?

    1. If you think back to your arrival here, how did you make your first friend?

    2. In which context did you find it easiest to make friends here?

    3. Do you hang out with friends of other ethnic background?

IV. Sense of Home/ Identity

A. What do you consider to be your home?

    1. Where is home for you now?

    2. What is important for you in considering where your home is?

    3. How has the balance been shifting in these years?

 B. Can you tell me about your plan for the future?

    1. Do you consider returning to Taiwan or staying here in the future?

    2. What are your considerations when making the decision?