

**Mount Saint Vincent University**  
**Department of Family Studies and Gerontology**

**Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants**  
**with School-age Children**

by  
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**A Thesis**  
**submitted in partial fulfillment**  
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## Abstract

A growing number of Chinese immigrants come to Canada to better the future for their children. While raising children can be demanding at times, the struggles resulting from bicultural parenting may significantly increase the difficulties. To cater to the growing cross-cultural parenting needs, this study explored how the unique challenges such as race, culture, economic issues, language and social networks impacted the Chinese immigrant parenting experiences.

Phenomenology was used as the strategy to guide the research. Semi-structured interviews were used to discern how Chinese immigrants were making sense of their bicultural parenting experiences. Ten Chinese immigrant parents (mother and father) from five families were recruited as participants.

Ten main themes from “parenting philosophies, attitudes, and approaches of Chinese immigrant parents” to “needs in raising the children” emerged from the phenomenology data analysis.

In the main part of the Discussion, I used the phenomenological approach to describe the meanings of Chinese immigrant parents’ parenting and investigated how these meanings influenced the parenting methods they chose.

The study confirmed the significance of cultural and social systems of support for Chinese immigrant parenting. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Theory served as a foundation upon which the development and implementation of this study was built.

Finally, to initiate efficient programs for Chinese immigrant parents in the future, I put forward the recommendations to all the stakeholders who are interested in the bi-cultural parenting issues.

**Key Words:** Chinese immigrant parenting, phenomenology, ecological system theory, acculturation theory

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*Note:\*\* Followed by the forms (Chinese Version)*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### *Problem Statement*

According to Chinese immigrants themselves, one of the primary reasons they come to Canada is to secure a better life for their children (Meaney, 2008). Although Chinese immigrant parents share many of the same experiences as their Canadian counterparts, they also face unique challenges in areas such as race, culture, economic issues, language, and social networks. Unfortunately, up to this point there has been limited research documenting how these unique challenges impact the Chinese immigrant parenting experience in Canada. While raising children can be demanding at times, the struggles resulting from bicultural parenting may significantly increase these difficulties.

**Many immigrants have limited awareness of positive child development in terms of its contemporary reference to child's biological, emotional, social and psychological growth and well-being.** Due to their often being overworked at low-paying, high-stress jobs, some immigrant parents may neglect these vital components of their children's development and everyday needs.

**Cultural differences increase the likelihood of parenting misunderstandings.** Immigrants and native-born people may hold widely differing worldviews or notions of appropriate and effective parenting methods. For example, "Gua Sha", an ancient medical treatment, is widely used by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine for treatment of various diseases. Well-meaning practitioners of Western medicine, however, are sometimes shocked at the sight of the marks left on people's skin after "Gua sha" treatment and fear that a child with such marks has been abused.

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*Gua Sha involves repeated pressured strokes over lubricated skin with a smooth edge. Commonly a ceramic Chinese soup spoon was used, or a well worn coin, even honed animal bones, water buffalo horn, or jade. A simple metal cap with a rounded edge is commonly used. The smooth edge is placed against the pre-oiled skin surface, pressed down firmly, and then moved down the muscles ("Gua Sha, "). This causes extravasation of blood from the peripheral capillaries. This leads marks on the body.*

A movie called "Gua Sha treatment" (Zheng, 2001) was made in 2001 to explain this practice and to highlight the cultural misunderstandings it may cause. In the movie, a visiting Chinese grandfather who does not speak any English used this traditional practice to treat his grandson's fever while the child's parents were at work. The family was suddenly thrown into turmoil when the Child Welfare Agency threatened to take the boy from them on the basis of perceived child abuse due to the marks on the child's skin.

**Culture confusion can make it difficult for Chinese immigrants to know what is appropriate and what is not in terms of appropriate parenting practices.** Depending on their culture of origin, immigrants may maintain different and sometimes conflicting expectations, values, and beliefs regarding parenting. In European-American cultures, parents stress the development of independence in their children. Chinese culture, on the other hand, values mutual obligation, including strong parental responsibilities and children's obedience. Chinese culture deems verbally and emotionally expressive persons as socially immature and lacking in self-control. In contrast, expressiveness, including direct verbal communication, is a major behavioral component of the individualism valued by Western cultures (Wang, Wiley, & Zhou, 2007). Western parents spend much effort bolstering a child's self-esteem, but centuries of reliance on Confucian ideology makes self-esteem a less important issue for Chinese parents (Miller, Wang, Todd, & Cho, 2002).

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*Under the influence of Confucian codes of conduct and Confucian education, a person who behaved in a gentle and delicate manner or observed certain moral codes or followed in the steps of Confucian models, would be regarded as a follower of the Confucian way or a member of the Confucian society (Yao, 2001).*

Furthermore, the literature outlines that Chinese-American mothers tend to be more protective, supervise their children more, and think their children should be independent at a later age than do Euro-American mothers (Wu, 2001). For example, in China, children stay with their families until they are married, while in Canada many want to move out or to live with their friends. This can be difficult for Chinese immigrant parents to understand, let alone accept or agree to. Chinese-American parents constantly face the issue of whether to protect their children according to Chinese cultural traditions or to follow the Western practice of promoting independence (Wu, 2001). Such cultural confusion arising from culture differences often throws Chinese immigrant parents into a state of confusion and inner conflict about what is the correct thing to do.

**Different acculturation levels between parents and their children may increase tension and conflict.** In the process of growing up, children often experience many conflicts with their parents. Nevertheless, when an immigrant family moves from one culture to another, the parent-child relationship can be especially strained because the youngsters struggle to fit into the new culture and inevitably lose touch with past traditions (Assanand, 1998; Olson & Defrain, 2006, p.58). Likewise, immigrant parents feel they lose the authority to teach their children what is best for them. For instance, when Chinese parents' English is not fluent and they have to rely on their children to translate, the family hierarchical structure is reversed and the roles and boundaries in the family become confused. In addition, Chinese parents have to struggle to maintain and promote indigenous cultural values with their children that may be contrary to what their

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children are learning in their new country. One common situation involves conflicts in dating behavior. For instance, “Lily was sixteen years old and dating a boy from her school. Lily’s parents became uncomfortable about this behavior and accused Lily of being a ‘bad girl’” (Wu, 2001). While considered a cultural norm in the West, dating at the age of sixteen is not encouraged in China, where children are supposed to focus on their school studies and not start dating until they are at least 18.

In all, evidence from the literature suggests that immigrants who raise their children cross-culturally can suffer from a considerable amount of stress and anxiety associated with many challenges, some of which have been outlined above. In order to assist immigrant parents reach their goal of providing a better life for their children, and to help service providers initiate effective, community-based programs for immigrants, there is a pressing need to investigate immigrant parenting experiences in their complexity and socio-cultural significance.

### ***Purpose of the Research***

The purpose of this study is to investigate the parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants living with their children in the HRM (Halifax Regional Municipality), Nova Scotia. It is hoped that this study will increase understanding of Chinese immigrant parents’ experiences in raising children with a different cultural context.

### ***Research Questions***

The main research questions that guided the research were:

- What key philosophies, attitudes, and approaches do Chinese immigrant parents

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- associate with Chinese parenting practices?
- What key similarities or differences do Chinese immigrant parents associate between Chinese attitudes and approaches to raising children and those Canadian parents? (from Chinese parents' viewpoints)
  - Are the experience between Chinese mothers and fathers in parenting similar or different? What are the similarities or differences?
  - What supports or services do Chinese immigrant parents identify as available to them as parents?
  - What barriers if any do Chinese immigrant parents identify in terms of accessing such supports?
  - What key challenges do Chinese immigrant parents identify with raising their children in Canada?
  - What do Chinese immigrant parents identify as their most significant needs in raising their children?

### ***Significance of the Research***

#### ***Implicating key stakeholders.***

The policy statement, as outlined in the government of Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy, states that:

*Nova Scotia welcomes and embraces immigrants, recognizing the important contributions they make to our social, economic, and cultural fabric. The Government of Nova Scotia will take a lead role in engaging and working with partners to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants (Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy 2005).*

The question remains, however, how best to attract, integrate and retain immigrants.

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The Nova Scotia government recognizes that “people will come and stay only if they can provide for their families and can make personal contact and build supportive networks in their workplaces and communities.”(*Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy* 2005). But what specifically can be provided for the families? Certainly, assisting in their cross-cultural parenting transition would be a big help for immigrant families.

In the report entitled “Adult Immigrant Learning Needs in Atlantic Canadian Communities”, Meaney (2008) states that one of the primary reasons people immigrate to Canada is to secure a better future for their children. If service providers such as Family Centers or immigration service agencies could set up community-based “cross-cultural positive parenting” pre-education programs based on the findings of this study, immigrants would be able to access the required support to provide a better life for their children. Moreover, if immigrant families could be helped to make personal contacts, integrate into the community and build supportive networks, these families would be more likely to remain in Nova Scotia. Hence, the findings of this study have implications for key stakeholders such as immigration policy makers, immigration service providers, community centers, and public schools concerned with immigrant families and children.

### ***Catering to the growing cross-cultural parenting needs.***

Based on 2006 Census Canada, five percent (approximately 45,000) of Nova Scotia’s total population are immigrants, and approximately 2,500 new immigrants arrive in Nova Scotia each year. With its natural population growth on the decline, Nova Scotia can expect the majority of its future growth to be accounted for by immigration.

As stated previously, a growing number of immigrants come to Canada to better the future for their children. But raising children successfully does not mean simply putting a

roof over their head, food in their bellies, and clothes on their backs. Successfully raising a child – in other words, being a good parent – involves so much more and is further complicated when the parenting involves cross-cultural issues. As Nova Scotia's immigrant population expands, so too does its need for effective cross-cultural parenting education in order to cater to this immigration growth trend. Hence, a study on immigrant parenting experiences is imperative.

### ***Understanding other immigrant groups.***

Based on census data from Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006), prior to 1991, 2.1% of immigrants to Nova Scotia were from China; during the period 1991-1995, this figure increased to 4.6%; and, in the period 1996-2000, this number increased further to 10%. Although Nova Scotia's data is not nationally representative, the large number of Chinese families in the Maritime province provides an opportunity to understand other immigrant groups. This study of Chinese immigrant parenting experiences will thus also shed light on the immigrant experience in other Canadian cities with larger immigrant flows.

### ***Building a harmonious society.***

In Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy (*Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy* 2005), the Nova Scotia government calls for tools and actions aimed at making the province more attractive as an immigration destination. This immigration strategy is a five-year plan that recognizes that additional benefits will come from the success of immigrant children.

A child's family is their first learning environment, and parenting is the most direct way to nurture and educate a child. What are parents' responsibilities? A Chinese proverb

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says:

*If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. A harmonious community comes from harmonious families.*

Successful parenting is one of the key factors in building peaceful individuals, stable family relationships, and well-functioning communities. Society benefits from families' success but also suffers from their mistakes.

All in all, learning the experiences of immigrant parenting, finding out the challenges immigrants face in cultural conflicts, and initiating a series of intervention programs would benefit not only immigrant families but also for the building of a harmonious multicultural society, with a far-reaching significance.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### ***Parenting Duties***

Parenting is the process of raising children from infancy to adulthood in such a way as to provide continuity within the family for years to come (Olson & Defrain, 2006, p.331).

Parenting is a daunting task which lasts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for a minimum of 18 years. It is the responsibility of parents to provide for the physical, emotional and educational needs of the child. Children are raised by being provided with protection, shelter, clothing, healthy nourishment, health care, education, training, love and a sense of belonging (Patrick, 2008). A parent's duty is not only to supply a roof over a child's head, food in their bellies, and clothes on their backs. The psychodynamic theory of child development emphasizes the importance of providing a positive emotional environment for the child, who needs to believe that the world is a safe and good place and that parents can be trusted to be kind and consistent (Olson & Defrain, 2006, p.345).

When Chinese immigrants move to Canada, they often struggle with low-paying jobs to support their family's basic needs. This distracts their attention away from their children's emotional and social development. Because of their lack of awareness of the importance of their child's emotional and social development, and because there is currently no formal training provided to teach about this awareness, few Chinese immigrants are prepared for cross-cultural parenting challenges.

### *Importance of Parenting*

Parenting has been called the world's most difficult job, but the reality is that it is the last bastion of amateurism in our society (Olson & Defrain, 2006, p.330). Plumbers, bookkeepers, computer analyst all need some kind of formal training, certificate, or license, while the only job that does not require certification or education is nurturing the young to adulthood.

Parenting affects children's development for their whole lives. The physical and mental health problems of parents may lead to disruption to parenting, which will have a direct impact on children's development.

The association between parental mental health problems and negative outcomes for children has long been known. It has been estimated that children of depressed parents are between two and five times more likely to develop behavior problems than children whose parents are not depressed (Cummings & Davies, 1994). One of the main mechanisms by which parents' mental health impacts negatively on their children is through disruptions to parenting, and that the impacts of such disruptions on children are profound and persistent (Smith, 2004).

Immigrants face numerous challenges, such as isolation, culture conflicts, language, race, discrimination, unemployment, and cross-cultural parenting. It is not hard to imagine that immigrants who are raising children cross-culturally can suffer from a considerable amount of stress and anxiety associated with the challenges listed above. Sooner or later, stress and anxiety may lead to disruption to parenting, which may have a negative impact on children for the rest of their lives. But if parents play a positive role in raising their children, the resultant positive parent-child relationship will help children adjust to the transition to adulthood. Increases in relationship satisfaction across the

transition were related to better adjustment (Levitt, Silver, & Santos, 2007).

Rearing children is certainly a family matter. However, society benefits from parents' success and also suffers from their mistakes.

### *Different Parenting Styles*

Baumrind's theory on parenting style identified four main parenting styles in early child development. These are: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful (Baumrind, 1978).

According to Baumrind's parenting style theory, **authoritative parenting** is characterized by high expectations of compliance to parental rules and directions, an open dialogue about those rules and behaviors, and is a child-centered approach characterized by having a warm, positive effect. **Authoritarian parenting** is characterized by high expectations of compliance to parental rules and directions, the use of more coercive techniques to gain compliance, and little parent-child dialogue. This is a parent-centered approach characterized by having a cold effect. **Permissive parenting** is characterized as having few behavioral expectations for the child, and is a child-centered approach characterized by having a warm effect. **Neglectful parenting** is similar to permissive parenting but is a parent-centered approach characterized by having a cold effect.

With the growing number of immigrants the world over, numerous scholars have called for research on ethnically diverse samples to test the generalizability of past findings. They are finding that studies with ethnically diverse samples produce inconsistent results. Although some research demonstrated similar relations across ethnic groups among parenting behaviors, other studies showed that ethnic differences were

found in the strength of associations between parenting variables and developmental outcomes. These findings challenge the assumption that there are universally successful parenting (Wissink, Dekovic, & Meijer, 2006).

Western researchers had previously assumed that parents from Western cultures prefer an authoritative parenting style while Chinese parents prefer an authoritarian one. However, many researchers later found this was not true. Sorkhabi (2005) presented evidence showing that Baumrind's parenting styles have similar functions in both collectivist (such as Chinese) and individualist (such as American) cultures. A study which examined factors related to authoritative and authoritarian parenting practices in Chinese mothers with preschoolers also found Chinese parents use authoritative and authoritarian parenting both in some degree (Chen & Luster, 2002; Xu, et al., 2005).

Moreover, does authoritarian parenting really lead to a negative effect? In his study, Kim (2002) found that Korean-American children raised in “the Korean way” (at least at home), considered authoritarian parents to be positive parental figures, and even see authoritarian parenting style as appropriate, which was not what Baumrind’s theory had predicted. Whether a specific parenting style is positive or negative, the children’s reaction can be a good reference. Stevens, Vollebergh, Pels, and Crijnen (2007) found that Dutch children perceive parental discipline primarily as rejection, whereas Moroccan immigrant children perceive discipline to be, to some extent, attention or support.

Based on these researches, it seems clear that there is no one specific parenting style that is better than any other. Which parenting style is best to use will depend on the context, culture, age of children, and the general beliefs of parents.

### ***Key Contributors to Positive Parenting***

While there does not appear to be a universal “good” parenting style across cultures, some scholars have tried to find a causal relationship between parenting outcomes (such as children’s behaviors) and parenting characteristics, aiming to initiate intervention programs. It sounds reasonable that if we know which parenting factors can lead to positive outcomes, we can encourage those specific kinds parenting characteristics. Over the years, scholars have found a series of important factors which affect parenting outcomes, such as: social economic status (SES), parents’ involvement, parent-child relationship, parental role, parents’ mental health, parent’s education level, children’s age and gender, social support, culture, etc. Because of the limitation on the length of this paper, only some key contributors will be chosen. These are outlined below in a brief literature review.

#### *Social Economic Status (SES)*

A large body of studies indicated that socioeconomic status (SES) is correlated with children's academic achievement (Anderson, 2000; Peng & Wright, 1994). Peng and Wright (1994) found that parent's education level and family income were positively related to students' achievement, which confirmed the previous study findings that students with higher SES were likely to have higher academic achievement. In Steven’s research, it was found that while high SES parents raise their children with relatively high levels of discipline, low SES parents seem to be less involved in the upbringing of their children. Stevens et al. (2007) suggests that this is possibly due to low SES parents more often suffering from unemployment, low income, and uncertainty about the future, and therefore having to cope with more stress and psychological problems.

### Parents' involvement

Parental involvement is widely recognized as being an important part of children's academic achievements (Li, Holloway, Bempechat, & Loh, 2008; Ozaki & Koshino, 2008). Outcome-based studies show a positive correlation between parental involvement and students' academic performances as well as other positive outcomes. Kim's study (Kim, 2002) examined the relationship between parental involvement and children's educational achievements in Korean-American families. The findings indicate that parental involvement makes a positive contribution to children's educational success. In a literature review, the authors analyzed what accounts for Chinese-American children's high academic performance and highlighted two factors: home environment and parental influences (home-based parental involvement), which contributed greatly to children's school performance (Yang & Zhou, 2008).

### Parent-child relationship

The parent-child relationship seems to be the biggest parenting issue at the adolescent stage. In children's development process, adolescents have more self-identification issues compared to younger children. In a comparison study, Wissink, Dekovic and Meijer (2006) found the negative quality of parent-child relationship showed significant associations with negative adolescent outcomes in all ethnic groups. Elizur and his colleagues also found significantly higher associations between adolescents' emotional disorders and negative parent-child relationships in girls (Elizur, Spivak, Ofran, & Jacobs, 2007).

### Social support

Although parenting seems to be family matter, communities and societies can also play a positive role in supporting parenting. In a study on Chinese immigrants in America,

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the author found that young Chinese immigrants suffer from various kinds of life stresses in America, including alienation, lack of confidence, loneliness, and uncertainty about the future, all of which result from the dramatic transition from a Chinese setting to an American one. Kinship ties and social capital (It is a sociological concept, which refers to connections within and between social networks) become weak in the process of migration, and face-to-face interaction among family members decreases as both parents work for long hours outside the home. Familial support is largely absent, and these immigrant families suffer from tension, conflict, and frustration. This research analyzed the role of the church as a surrogate family for working class immigrant Chinese youth in America, and showed specifically how the ethnic church can play a vital role in promoting successful adaptation and upward assimilation to middle-class norms (Nanlai, 2005). Nanlai's study shows the importance of social support for positive parenting.

### Father's role

Traditionally, fathers play the role as breadwinner of the family. But with more women getting into the labor market, men are starting to share more domestic work with women (such as parenting). This is no exception for immigrant fathers.

In order to investigate the kind of role fathers play in parenting, Behnke, Taylor and Parra-ardona (2008) held a semi-structure interview with nineteen fathers of Mexican origin who had at least one middle-school aged child and were residents of lower income neighborhoods in San Diego, California, Hyrum, and Utah. Data from this study illustrated that despite the challenges of fathering as an immigrant, fathers in the sample remained highly committed both to their children and to their families.

However, if immigrant fathers play important roles in parenting, how do they share parenting responsibilities with their partners? How do they look at their and their

partner's roles in parenting? What are the similarities and differences of parenting between fathers and mothers? These answers do not exist in the current literature. This may be because, traditionally, the mother is thought to play the main role in parenting while the father is the breadwinner, and therefore these questions are not thought to be relevant in the research.

### Culture

Culture generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significance. A common way of understanding culture is to see it as consisting of four elements that are "passed on from generation to generation by learning alone"(Holt, 1969). **Values:** Values comprise ideas about what in life seems important. They guide the rest of the elements of culture. **Norms:** Norms consist of expectations of how people will behave in various situations. **Institutions:** Institutions are the structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted. **Artifacts:** Artifacts are things or aspects of material culture, derived from a culture's values and norms.

Several studies showed cultural parenting differences between Western and Eastern countries. The main findings are: 1) Chinese immigrants emphasized academic performance more than Americans(Huntsinger, Huntsinger, Ching, & Lee, 2000; Pearson & Rao, 2003); 2) Americans showed more emotional support to their children than Chinese parents(Camras, Kolmodin, & Chen, 2008; Porter, et al., 2005; Wu & Chao, 2005); 3) To Americans, self-esteem is a central organizing concept, believed to be crucial to many aspects of healthy development, while for the Chinese, self-esteem is believed to create psychological vulnerabilities rather than strengths(Miller, et al., 2002; Russell, Crockett, Shen, & Lee, 2008).

All of the cited research highlights the influence of cultural values on child

socialization and on the way these values are translated into practice (Pearson & Rao, 2003).

Besides the factors mentioned before, researchers also found other factors that affect parenting. These include children's gender (Raley, Bianchi, Cook, & Massey, 2006; Shek, 2008), parents' mental health (Elgar, Mills, McGrath, Waschbusch, & Brownridge, 2007; Leiferman, Ollendick, Kunkel, & Christie, 2005) etc. Generally speaking, parenting is a complicated social phenomenon affected by many inter-related and intricate factors.

To sum up this section, it is beneficial to know which parenting characteristics may lead to successful outcomes in children. However, in reality, it is impossible to keep all the factors optimum at the same time. For example, SES is important to parenting outcomes, but if immigrant parents simply try to improve their family SES by working hard, they may neglect their children's emotional development, which may lead to negative outcomes. Thus, parents need to explore their own strategies to rear their children in as positive a way as possible.

### *Parenting Adjustment in the New Culture*

Besides facing similar parenting challenges with child development at different ages as European-Canadians, Chinese immigrants also face parenting challenges arising from the new culture. Cultural differences, misunderstandings, confusion, and different acculturation levels between immigrant parents and children, as mentioned in Chapter 1, all call for immigrants developing their parenting strategy to adjust to the new culture.

When immigrants arrive in a host country, they invariably face acculturation tasks of coming to terms with two cultures – the culture of origin they were brought up with and the host culture they find in their new surroundings. Berry's acculturation model(Berry,

1980) indicates that there can be four types of acculturation outcomes, namely: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization, representing, respectively, one's identification with the host culture only, with the home culture only, with both culture and with neither culture (Zhang, 2005). Harmonious growth and maintenance of the Canadian society depends on the development of appropriate acculturation attitudes together with related socialization beliefs and practices of the various ethno-cultural immigrant groups.

Acculturation attitudes have been assessed in various cultural groups which demonstrated a different profile with regards to their preferences. For example, French-Canadians tended to prefer integration but also accepted separation and assimilation, while for Korean-Canadians, integration was the only acceptable strategy (Aycan & Kanungo, 1998).

In a study with Taiwanese groups, it was found that Confucian family traditions were difficult to maintain in the United States. Taiwanese practices of parenting that are based on Confucian notions of filial obligation are no longer effective on Taiwanese American children (Chen, 2006). Ebaugh and Chafetz suggest that this is for the following reason:

*Surrounded by what they see such as immodest clothing and demeanor, a consumer-oriented culture, beamed incessantly by TV and popular music, lax sexual standards, family breakdown, a lack of respect for authority and the elderly, guns, gangs, and drugs, immigrants want to 'do something' to inoculate their children (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000).*

Yet, given the context of their new culture clashing with their old one, how can immigrant children be helped?

It is hard to find research to answer this question directly, though some literature does provide some direction. In a study of parental roles in the maintenance of second generation Vietnamese cultural behavior, Killian and Hegtvedt (2003) found that parents do have an effect on children's cultural behaviors. Mothers' and fathers' frequency of

## Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants

speaking Vietnamese increases their children's cultural behaviors. In her dissertation, Zhang (2005) further analyzed the importance of home language maintenance in Chinese immigrant acculturation process in the United States. The maintenance of home language skills in Chinese children helps them to retain an ethnic identity, especially as they grow older and participate increasingly in mainstream culture. And given the generational discrepancy in language abilities, second-generation children with bilingual skills can become language and cultural brokers to the whole family, which facilitates their own acculturation and their parents' acculturation in the society.

Besides helping home language maintenance, parents also play an important role in introducing their children into ethnic networks. Parents who display cultural behaviors have children who are more involved in ethnic networks and, in return, peers and larger social networks (such as churches, communities and other relevant organizations) provide models of cultural behavior for immigrant children. For immigrant and refugee children, families are insufficient for transmitting culture; an ethnic community is also needed (Killian & Hegtvedt, 2003).

Thus, immigrant parents and co-ethnic networks, including extended family ties, children's co-ethnic peers and the co-ethnic community, are important forces that contribute to children's smooth acculturation into the new culture. Maintenance of ethnic values and traditions, coupled with economic assimilation, has replaced straight-line assimilation as the model of adaptation researchers advance (Killian & Hegtvedt, 2003). This is the key implication for those immigrants facing cross-cultural parenting issues.

### ***Limitations of Current Research***

#### Limitation of Canadian study

Even though Canada is one of the world's most diverse nations, it is hard to find parenting comparison studies between Canadian culture and other cultures. Conversely, many such studies were carried out in the United States. Although Canada is a neighbor of the United States, research showed these two countries do not share the same culture in many ways. In a comparison study of the political culture between Canadians and Americans, researchers found that Canadians in urban centers have substantially higher social trust and somewhat higher self-esteem than urban residents in the United States. The authors concluded that, in some very significant ways, the political cultures of the United States and Canada remain quite distinct (Moon, Lovrich Jr, & Pierce, 2000). Since there is cultural difference between the United States and Canada, how can we use the results of the American studies directly?

#### Limitation of research method

Most comparison studies asked the participants to fill out questionnaires which are supposed to investigate the perceptions, expectations and practices of parenting. But the problems are: (a) Do the questionnaires really test what they want to test? Specially, can they really test participants' parenting practices? (b) Are these questionnaires, developed in a Western culture, appropriate for the non-Western cultures? For question (a), For example, when a parent was asked what she would do in a specific situation, the parent knew she should be a nice parent and then she selected answer A. But in a real situation, if the children drive the parent crazy, the parent may lose control of her behavior and select answer B on the answer sheet (Stewart & Bond, 2002). How can we depend on the simple answers coming from questionnaires?

### Limitation of fathers' role in parenting study

Most of the parenting studies in different cultures only include mothers as participants while fathers are almost ignored. Someone may say this oversight is because fathers mainly play the role of breadwinner in the family while mothers are the main caregivers for the children and play a primary role in child socialization (Collins & Maccoby, 2000). But with the number of dual-earner families increasing exponentially, as well as the women's movement, high technology, etc., fathers are increasingly sharing the domestic workload with women by participating in the cooking, cleaning, and parenting. A few studies have already found that fathers play a key role in children's development (Mackey & Immerman, 2004). The study included fathers in the interview process and listened to their side of the story on how they played a role in parenting.

### Limitation of practical efficiency

While nearly all studies discovered the "fact" that a parenting difference does exist between Western and Eastern cultures, what are we to do with this information? We need figure out how such a difference arises and develop efficient strategies or intervention programs for parenting in different cultures. In the study, interviews were conducted with the qualitative research method to find out participants' parenting experiences.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Constructivist Paradigm***

To find a way to help Chinese immigrant parents who may be confused by their new culture, the first step is to figure out what their real experiences of cross-cultural parenting are, how they describe their experiences, and why they explain their experiences as such. Without understanding their experiences, the development of efficient intervention parenting education programs is impossible. What parents do with their children (action and behavior), why they behave in that way (perception, expectation), what they say and how they say it (language), and how they feel in the course of everyday life are all questions that need to be answered to get the whole picture of Chinese immigrants' parenting experience.

To do so, the research method has to be grounded in certain philosophical beliefs about how we know what we know, or what the nature of reality is (Donalek, 2004). Adopting the appropriate research paradigm will guarantee the quality of the research. A research paradigm which is a basic set of beliefs that guide action will answer three basic questions: (a) Ontology: What is the nature of reality? (In this study, I aim to answer what are the real parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants.) (b) Epistemology: What is the relationship between the knower and the known? (As for this study, I will investigate the relationship between Chinese parents and their bi-cultural parenting experiences, which means how the Chinese parents give the meaning and ascribe the meaning to their bi-cultural parenting experiences.) and (c) Methodology: How should the inquirer go about finding out about knowledge? (This point for me in this study means how I am going to

find out about the bi-cultural parenting knowledge from Chinese parents.)(Guba, 1990)

In this study, the constructivist paradigm guided my research. Social constructivists accept the presence of an external reality that is subjectively perceived and understood from the perspective of the observers. There can be no separation between the knower and the known because all knowledge is constructed through a meaning-making process in the mind of the knower. Parenting as a social event is subjectively perceived and understood from the parents' own standpoint. The different abilities, interests, attitudes, and values of each ethnic group provide a broad range of options and ideas that can improve the ability to solve problems and create new ideas (Olson & Defrain, 2006). For example, white families remain strong throughout the family life cycle when they find ways to spend time together and enjoy each other, while Asian families emphasize the importance of education, from nursery school through college (Olson & Defrain, 2006).

Constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed through people's prior experience (Daly, 2007, p. 32). The parenting knowledge of Chinese immigrants is constructed through their prior experience in China, either from their own experience or from the meaning transferred from their parents from Chinese culture. All the meaning of prior experience is instrumental in shaping the intellectual formulation of Chinese immigrants' parenting. As a result, in talking about parenting across cultures, we can view culture not simply as a symbolic representation of who these parents are, but as a source of social information that parents draw on in the process of constructing the meaning of parenting.

Constructivists also believe people construct meanings in the course of interaction (Daly, 2007, p. 32). There are multiple realities that can be articulated based on the values, standpoints, and positions of the author. Thus, for cross-cultural parenting (a social event),

there are multiple interpretation possibilities based on the values, standpoints, and positions of the author. For example, as a new Chinese immigrant and a graduate student majoring in Family Studies in Canada, I, the present researcher experiences culture conflicts and learns to adjust to the new environment; with my own experience and educational background, I am able to acknowledge and share similarities and common knowledge in my investigation of Chinese immigrants' cross-cultural parenting experiences.

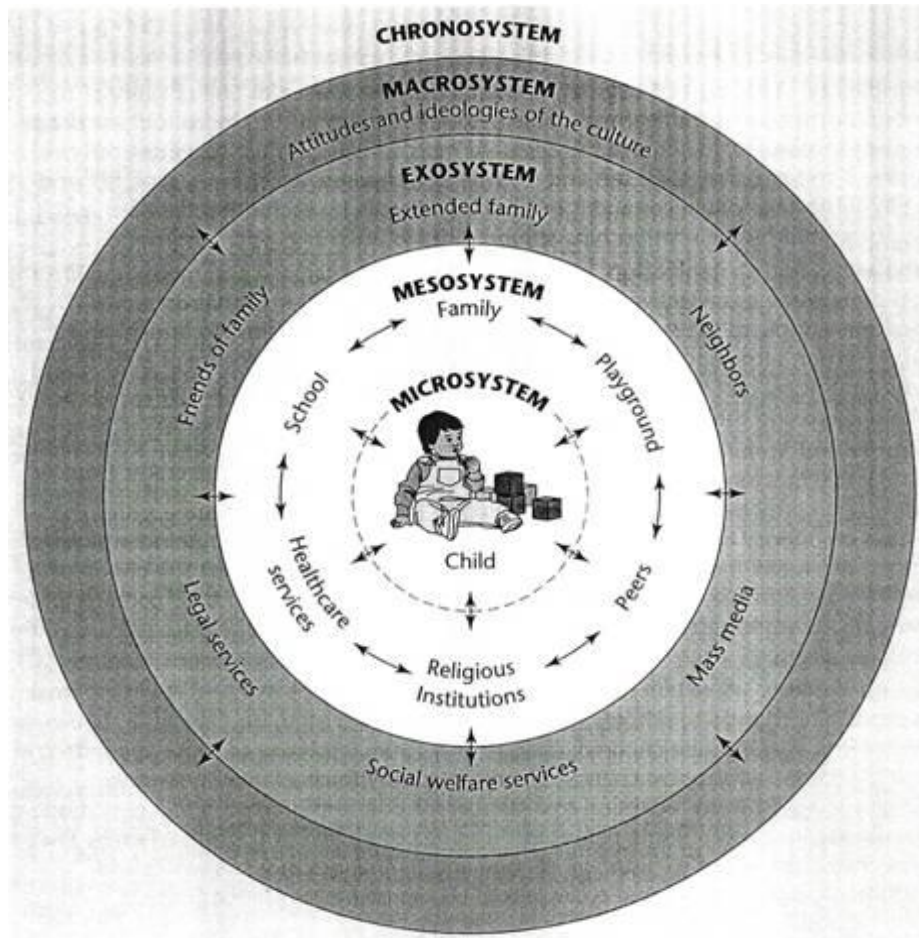
Finally, constructivists believe knowledge is subject to revision as a result of changing conditions and circumstances (Daly, 2007, p. 24). Thus, there is no unalterable parenting and Chinese parents can adjust their parenting to accord with their new conditions and circumstances. This research investigated how Chinese immigrants' parenting experience changed when they migrated from China to Canada.

With the guidance of constructivist paradigm, attention was paid to what Chinese immigrants' parenting experiences (perceptions, expectations, and practice) were, why they thought and behaved in this way, how they adjusted to their new circumstances, and how they felt about their parenting across cultures. I, as the present author of this study shared my similarities and common knowledge in the investigation of Chinese immigrants' cross-cultural parenting.

### ***Ecological System Theory***

With the guidance of constructivist paradigm, the parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants were explored. But parenting is a complex social phenomenon. From the literature review, we see factors from family (parental role, SES, involvement, etc.), school, workplace (SES, employment status, etc.), community (church, agencies, etc.)

and culture (Western and Eastern) all contributing to shaping parenting. How, then, can “Chinese parenting across cultures” be explored in a limited research time period when it is such a multi-dimensional phenomena? Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) provides a good framework to understand the complexity of parenting.



**Figure 1. Ecological System in Parenting**

From [homepages.ius.edu/kgsears/themes\\_and\\_theories.htm](http://homepages.ius.edu/kgsears/themes_and_theories.htm)

The Ecological System (see Figure 1) includes four types of nested systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem) with bi-directional influences within and between systems.

**Microsystem** means immediate environments (family, school, peer group, neighborhood, and childcare environments). **Mesosystem** does not mean an independent

## Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants

system but one comprised of connections between immediate environments (i.e., connection between the child's family and school). **Exosystem** only indirectly affects children's development (such as parents' workplace). The widest level of this ecological model, the **Macrosystem**, represents overriding cultural beliefs and values in any particular society (i.e., Eastern or Western culture, national economy, political culture, sub-culture, etc). Each system contains factors that can powerfully shape children's development, as can the interaction of factors across systems.

Children do not grow up in a vacuum. Rather, they both actively shape and are shaped by the social environments in which they live. Primarily, these relationships are focused on the immediate family environment. The family, in turn, is embedded within the wider community and cultural networks of an ecological system. Consistencies in the beliefs, attitudes and actions of particular social groups can be identified and can help us understand how children are treated, why they are treated as they are, and the impact of such treatment on the children themselves.

Based on the Ecological System Theory in Parenting, we know parenting is a complicated system, not a simple phenomenon. A specific factor from a specific level (Microsystem or Mesosystem or Exosystem or Macrosystem) does not affect parenting outcome individually. Any changing factor will influence others, and all the factors will affect parenting outcomes together. Much of the current quantitative research aims to find the causal relationship between a given factor and the parenting outcome. It is reasonable to design such experiments in the lab. However, when we transfer this knowledge from research into practice, it does not work very efficiently.

For example: when we try to improve factor "A" which is supposed to bring the positive parenting outcome, factor "B" may be deteriorated, and the final result may be a

“false” negative. Higher social economical status is supposed to bring a positive parenting outcome (Peng & Wright, 1994; Stevens, et al., 2007). However, in working too much, the immigrant parents overlooked giving their children enough emotional support, which is also supposed to bring positive parenting outcomes (Smith, 2004).

All in all, parenting is a complicated system affected by multiple factors on multiple levels. The Ecological System Theory tells us it is almost impossible to find one perfect parenting method in the real life. Likewise, we need to investigate and discover the whole story of cross-cultural parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants in order to understand this complex phenomenon systematically.

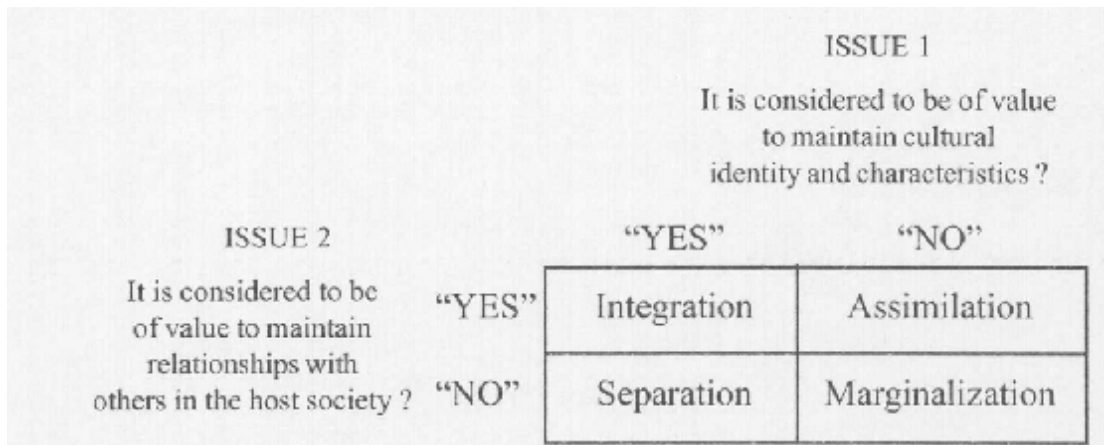
### *Acculturation Theory*

As mentioned above, the “Macrosystem” represents the overriding cultural beliefs and values in any particular society, while acculturation is the phenomenon of the value, attitudinal, and behavioral changes of individuals who come into continuous contact with another culture (Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008). There are two models of acculturation: the one-dimensional model and the bi-dimensional model.

The one-dimensional model posits that if a person becomes more affiliated with the host culture, his/her affiliation towards the heritage culture weakens correspondingly (Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Joy, 1996). Conversely, the more a person retains his/her heritage culture, the less that person adopts the host culture. We encounter the word “assimilation” frequently in literature on cultural issues. Assimilationists in the one-dimensional framework refer to people who adopt the host culture rather than their own (Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008).

The bi-dimensional model posits that a person’s affiliation with the host culture is

independent of his/her affiliation with the heritage culture (Berry, 1980). A common bi-dimensional approach creates a four-fold typology by placing the two cultural attitudes in an orthogonal arrangement (see Figure 2). Individuals can then be classified as acculturation towards both (integrationists) or neither (marginalists) cultures, in addition to acculturation towards only one's own (separationists) or the other (assimilationists) culture.



**Figure 2. Bi-dimensional model of acculturation**

When an individual is exposed to two or more cultures, he or she must negotiate and adapt to cultural differences (Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008). More recent studies indicate that greater involvement in the host culture was linked to positive adjustment, whereas greater involvement in the heritage culture was linked to more negative adjustment (Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008). If these findings are indeed true, then to achieve a positive parenting outcome, Chinese immigrant parents should have greater involvement in Canadian culture. However, if these findings are not true, how then should Chinese immigrant parents position themselves between Chinese culture and Canadian culture in cross-cultural parenting? These findings and their implications were explored in greater depth in the research.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### *Phenomenological Approach for Investigating Meanings*

As I mentioned before, I chose constructivist paradigm to guide my research. According to constructivist paradigm, ontologically, as a social event, parenting is subjectively perceived and understood from the parents' own standpoint. Epistemologically, the parenting knowledge of Chinese immigrants is constructed through their bi-cultural experiences. Based on these beliefs, methodologically, I used phenomenological approaches to fully explore and understand real parenting experiences in the context of parents involvements. Phenomenological approach enabled me to concentrate on the phenomenon under individual review.

Phenomenology is a philosophic school of thought and research method that attempts to make sense of and understand real life experiences in the context of human involvements and relationships (Johnson, 2000). In understanding Chinese immigrants' parenting experiences in the context of family, community and bi-culture, the philosophy of phenomenology was a good fit.

At the root of phenomenology, the intent is to understand the phenomena on their own terms – in other words, to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person him/herself (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) and to allow the essence to emerge (Cameron, Schaffer, & Park, 2001). As the researcher, I aimed to understand parenting phenomena within the context of bi-culture in Chinese immigrant parents' own terms, and to encourage parents to describe their authentic experiences in parenting across cultures.

To ensure in-depth descriptions, I viewed it from various perspectives, imaginatively

explored alternatives, identified potential emerging themes, entertained other possible configurations, and finally created the essential description. In this process, I played an important role in the dialogue with participants.

The two main phenomenological approaches evident in the literature include descriptive (eidetic) phenomenology and interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology (Cohen & Omery, 1994). The goal of descriptive phenomenology is to achieve transcendental subjectivity. Transcendental subjectivity means that the impact of the researcher on the inquiry is constantly assessed and biases and preconceptions neutralized, so that they do not influence the objects of study. While in relation to the study of human experience, interpretive phenomenology or hermeneutics goes beyond mere description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The hermeneutic phenomenologist, rather than seeking purely descriptive categories of the real, perceived world in the narratives of the participants, will focus on describing the meanings of the individuals' being-in-the-world and how these meanings influence the choices they make.

Although the purely descriptive approach has been demonstrated to be useful in uncovering essences of phenomena that have been incompletely conceptualized by prior research (Beck, 1992), the interpretive approach is useful in examining contextual features of experiences that might have direct relevance to practice (Svedlund, Danielson, & Norberg, 2001).

To help my research goals (to help initiate pre-education program for Chinese parents) come true, I used interpretive approach of phenomenology to carry out my research. As a new immigrant with professional training in family studies, I had dialogues with Chinese parents, tried to explore their real parenting experiences and further I tried to describe the

meanings of the individuals' parenting and investigated how these meanings influenced the parenting way they chose. To examine contextual features of experiences that might have direct relevance to Chinese parents' practice would help me and other scholars initiate the efficient parenting education programs for immigrant parents in the future.

What role does the phenomenologist play in their studies? In contrast to positivists, phenomenologists believe that the researcher cannot be detached from his/her own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise (Martyn, 2000). Rather, the researcher must 'bracket' her/his own preconceptions and enter into the individual's life world and use the self as an experiencing interpreter. The interview is reciprocal: both researcher and research subject are engaged in the dialogue (Groenewald, 2004). The progression of the interview will be influenced by the nature of the relationship/interaction that occurs between researcher and participants (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). In the study of parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants, I, the present researcher, a Chinese immigrant and a Master's student majoring in family studies with training in developmental and educational psychology, made a meaningful inquiry undertaken with my own experience, knowledge and skills. In the end, the meanings found in my research was a blend of the meanings articulated by both participant (Chinese parents) and researcher (I) within the focus of the study. Furthermore, I strived to interpret meanings for practice, education, research and policy to create informed and culturally-sensitive parenting knowledge for practical application.

### ***Method: Semi-structured Interviews***

The Constructivist emphasizes understanding the meaning of experience, and so social constructivists rely heavily on talk as the primary medium for research activity

(Daly, 2007, p. 33). Social constructivists accept the presence of an external reality (parenting) that is subjectively perceived and understood from the perspective of the observers (Chinese parents). Listening to Chinese parents' own stories and meanings they ascribed to their own stories was the appropriate way to understand the real bi-cultural parenting experiences. Phenomenology is such a methodology to guide my research because phenomenology concentrates on the need to study human consciousness by focusing on the world that the study participants subjectively experience (Frances, 2000).

With the guidance by Constructivist paradigm and phenomenology methodology, I used semi-structured interview as the specific method to carry out my research. Interviews are a good method for discerning how participants are making sense of their own experiential reality. In contrast with the positivist emphasis on causal explanation, the social constructivist is more likely preoccupied with the question of how participants have experienced a particular phenomenon. Qualitative research may not just be a process of finding, defining, or describing the phenomenon in question but also an invitation to both participants and researchers to experience the phenomenon in a context of non-judgmental curiosity (Schulz, 2006).

In this research, I investigated how participants had experienced cross-cultural parenting culture through semi-structured interviews. Participants (parents) were requested to tell their stories, activities and practices related to their parenting in the spirit of the narrative tradition. Interviews offered a "thick description" (Springs, 2008) of parenting that brought forward the detail and nuances of the experience. The main advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they can help to maintain a focus on the key research questions while at the same time allowing for the flexibility to follow the conversation as it unfolds uniquely in each interview.

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Reality is ever-changing and subject to interpretation by the participants themselves. As a result, there was less of an emphasis in this research on what “really happened” and more emphasis on how parents were making sense of parenting at this point in time, during their transition from Chinese to Canadian.

I played a significant role in the way meanings of parenting across cultures were created. First, parameters within which parents talk about their parenting realities were created by me, as Speer (2002) contends that we can think of these resultant data as “contrived”. Second, I participated in the construction of meaning of parenting across cultures. At this stage, understanding the broader patterns of meaning construction that existed within the project sample was of prime interest. This involved a shift from individual meanings of experience to the generic patterns of meaning that contributed to an understanding of the research phenomenon of cross-cultural parenting (Daly, 2007, p. 34).

The way in which interviews are conducted will be shaped by methodological orientation (Daly, 2007, p.147). Morse (1994) argued that different methodologies result in different kinds of interview questions: in phenomenological studies, meaning questions are directed toward understanding lived experience.

### ***Recruitment***

To carry out this research, five Chinese mainland immigrant families (family here meaning a traditional nuclear family) were recruited with ten participants (both mother and father from each family) with school-age children (aged six to ten) to take part in the study. Boyd (2001) regards two to ten participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation.

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Mainland Chinese family meant parents who were born on mainland China and immigrated to Canada after the age of eighteen.

Some points which need to be clarified were:

### Why focus on school-age children?

Children tend to have more contact with people outside of the family once they start going to school. In preschool years, parents spend most of the time with their children, raising children with their parenting skills. During this time period, there are not too many conflicts about cross-cultural parenting. However, when children leave home for school, they get involved in the outside world which is dominated by Canadian culture and is therefore different than the world at home, which is dominated by Chinese culture. Due to this exposure to the outside world, children will face more and more challenges with their parents. If parents learn how to handle the cross-cultural issues that arise, it will help their children get through the early school years smoothly and prepare for the next important stage in their lives – adolescence. Several studies found adolescents from immigrant families had conflicts with their parents which led to their maladjustment. If we want to prevent the maladjustment of immigrant adolescents, it is a good start to do something when they are younger. Therefore, the study focused on parents who had children aged six to ten.

### Why were fathers recruited in the research?

Fathers play an important role in parenting. Although mothers play a more important role in their children's development, fathers also play a part. Nevertheless, research on parenting seldom mentions fathers. Without investigating the father's role, information leading to intervention programs for parenting will be incomplete.

### How were participants sourced?

Participants were sourced through the Chinese language school Halifax and the Chinese Society of Nova Scotia. I had met the Executive Director of Chinese language school in Nova Scotia and the Chair of Chinese society of Nova Scotia and explained my proposed research with Chinese immigrants. They showed great interest and willingness to support this study. A letter was sent to these organizations to forward it to their list of members. Those who meet the criteria and were interested in participating in the research were solicited to contact me. In order to trace additional participants or informants, snowball sampling was used too.

Snowball Sampling is a method used to obtain research and knowledge, from extended associations, through previous acquaintances. A sampling procedure may be defined as snowball sampling when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants (Noy, 2008). Snowball sampling is a useful tool for building networks and increasing the number of participants. The success of this technique depends greatly on the initial contacts and connections made. Thus it is important to correlate with those that are popular and honorable to create more opportunities to grow, but also to create a credible and dependable reputation. .

In addition, notices were also posted in public places such as libraries and churches (see Appendix A and B for Introduction and Invitation Letters).

Need to mention here that all the ten participants in my study were recruited through snowball sampling, which seemed to be the most efficient way for me to get all the Chinese participants.

### *Sample*

Ten participants from five families participated in the study. Both the mother and the father from each family were invited to take part.

All the families had lived in Canada for more than six years, with one family having been in Canada for more than ten years. All five families lived in apartments. Participants ranged in age from early thirties to early forties and self-evaluated their English skills as medium or excellent. The income after tax of all of the families ranged between \$40,000 and \$100,000.

All ten participants had a post-secondary education. Three (three females) had a college diploma, two (one female and one male) held a bachelor degree, four (four males) had a Master degree and one female had a Doctoral degree.

All fathers, except one, had professional careers and were considered the family bread-winners. All mothers, except one, were still students and were in the process of earning a Canadian education certificate.

Three families had only one child and the other two had two children. None of the families had extended family in Canada to support them.

To help readers gain a sense of each participant as his/her stories unfold in Chapter five, I will give a brief introduction to all of them here.

In order to protect the privacy of the participants, their real names and potential identifying information will not be presented here.

The “Wu” family had one six-year-old daughter. “Mrs. Wu” was in her forties. Six years ago, she immigrated with her husband to a large Canadian city (their daughter was born there), and then moved to Halifax when her husband was accepted by a university here as a graduate student. She had been a full-time housewife since arriving in Canada,

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and her life got substantially busier after she entered college two years ago.

“Mr. Wu” was also in his forties. He had been an engineer in China. He brought his family to Canada six years ago but could not find a professional job without a Canadian education background. After two years of living in a large urban centre, he decided to go back to school to get the requisite education. A university in Halifax offered him a graduate student placement, prompting him to move his family here. Since completing his studies, he had been working as an engineer.

The “Yu” family had two sons. One was ten years old and the younger one was eight. “Mrs. Yu” was in her forties. Many years ago, she moved to a southern English-speaking country where her husband had been offered a job. During her time there, she earned her doctoral degree and bore two sons. However, as she and her husband did not like the natural and social environments of the country, she successfully applied for a job in Canada, and the family relocated to Halifax.

“Mr. Yu” was in his forties. He moved his family to a southern country when he was offered a professional job there. He was the family breadwinner at that time. When the family moved to Canada, his wife started working, and Mr. Yu took on the responsibility of looking after the children at home during their first couple of years here. When the children got older, he decided to go back to school to get a Canadian education. During leisure time, he spent a lot of time playing with his sons. When I interviewed his wife at the family’s home, I saw the happy faces of the children when they came back from the playground with their father. Perhaps due to their many years of living in English-speaking countries, both Mr. Yu and his wife evaluated their English level as excellent. They were the only two participants to do so.

The “Du” family had one seven-year-old daughter. “Mrs. Du” was in her late thirties.

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Ten years ago, she moved to an English-speaking country when her husband got a professional job as a senior researcher there. After her daughter was born, she quit the study program she was attending to look after her daughter full-time. When the company her husband worked for relocated to Halifax, the Du family also moved here. In consideration of their daughter's future, Mr. and Mrs. Du decided to become Canadian immigrants. After settling into their new country, Mrs. Du started attending a school program, but unfortunately had to stop due to health problems. At the time of the interview, she was a full-time housewife and mother.

"Mr. Du" was in his forties. He had earned his doctoral degree in China and got a job as a senior researcher at a big company in an English-speaking country. After a few years, the company relocated to Halifax, and Mr. Du also moved there and became a Canadian immigrant. As his job had been stable for many years, Mr. Du was able to spend a lot of time with his daughter.

The "Mi" family had one eight-year-old daughter. "Mrs. Mi" was in her thirties. She married her husband (who was already a Canadian citizen) and immigrated to Canada. She felt the most challenging time for her were the first five years. They lived in the countryside for a while and then moved to Halifax. She had been a full-time housewife since moving to Canada but joined a program of study two years ago to get a Canadian education. This change made her life very busy.

"Mr. Mi" was in his forties and was the family bread-winner. When he was thirty, he left China to immigrate to Canada. After graduating with a Master's degree, he started working as an engineer. He then applied for Canadian citizenship, went back to China to get married, and brought his wife here. He had to work night shifts once a while. During the past years, his night-shift work and his wife's busy school schedule kept their life like

a relay race, transferring his daughter to his wife in the evening and taking her back during the daytime when his wife was busy at school.

The “Ni” family had twin nine-year-old sons. “Mrs. Ni” was in her thirties. Back in China, she and her husband worked in different cities. To re-unite the family and forge a better future, they decided to immigrate to Canada. At first, they settled in a French-speaking city but later moved to Halifax. Mrs. Ni had been a housewife since coming to Canada and started taking a college study program two years ago.

“Mr. Ni” was in his forties. He was an engineer here as he was in China. His twin sons shared computer interests with him as he was an expert in computer science.

### *Process*

#### **Before the interview day**

I invited one Chinese mother I knew to join my study. She accepted it. Her husband was invited later too. And starting from the family, through snowball sampling, I got the other four telephone numbers for four families. I called them one by one to invite both parents of each family to take part in my study. On the phone, I told them the purpose of the research was to understand the experiences and meanings ascribed to parenting across culture using in-depth interview. They then were told about the criteria to participate in the study and also that the interview would be recorded. Due to the sensitive nature of the study they would be reassured that their responses would be completely confidential, within the confines of the research process and the law. They then were asked if they are interested in participating in the study.

I set a convenient time and place for the interview (in their home, at the Mount or a place of their choice) for participants who met the criteria and agreed to participate in the

study. Once a time and location had been set up, I explained to them the project and the procedure that would take place. A copy of the consent form (Chinese version which was chosen by all the participants) was sent to each participant before the interview date for participants to read ahead of time and become familiar with the form.

After setting up the interview date and location with participants, two copies of the Informed Consent Form in Chinese version (see Appendix C), one copy of Interview Guide (see Appendix D) and digital recorder (I used software called Goldenwave V5.55 on my laptop as my digital recorder) were prepared. Also, a \$20 honorarium was allotted to participants to offset any expenses they might incur by participating in the interview.

### **At the Interview day**

Interviews were “stage managed” in order to meet the purposes of the research (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). The six-stage interview identified by Legard, Keegan and Ward was rigorously adhered to in organizing the interviews with participants. Before the interview started, “small talk” was engaged in to put the participants at ease and got them comfortable with their surroundings. When they were ready to begin the interview, the following steps occurred:

Introducing the research: I reviewed the purpose, length of time and importance of the interview and study to participants and addressed any questions or concerns they might have. Each participant was asked to read carefully again and sign their names and date on the consent and audio forms if they still wished to participate. I signed my name on the consent form too. One copy of the form was kept by me and the participants kept their copies. On the onset of the interview and after preliminary introductions had been made, I ensured that appropriate time had been spent in relationship building with the participants waiting until the environment was suitably comfortable for the interview to

proceed. To help build the relationship between me and the participant, I showed them my professional background on developmental psychology and family studies, my own experiences in dealing with my little nephew and niece, and my willingness to hear their parenting stories without any judgement.

Beginning the interview: asking participants to fill Demographic Information Form (see Appendix E) and then easing into general questions about the research focus: cross-cultural parenting.

During the interview: An interview with phenomenological approach was intended to be in-depth. This approach is reflective of the open and accepting style of interviewing technique (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). Therefore, key questions were introduced that either followed the interview guide or explored domains of interest; using probes to get deeper information on an issue of importance; taking the opportunity to explore in greater detail emergent ideas deemed to be important. Guided by phenomenology principles, an interview commenced with “Please describe your experience of ...”, with clarification sought to enrich the description and illuminate that experienced. Face-to-face encounters enabled me to get some of the nuances of participants' experiences conveyed through, for example, facial expressions, blushing, gestures, tears, sounds, silences and other vocal dynamics (Kleiman, 2004). Interviews were recorded. Easton, Mccomish and Greenberg warn that equipment failure and environmental conditions might seriously threaten the research undertaken (Easton, Mccomish, & Greenberg, 2000). Therefore, I always tested my digital recorder (my laptop with software Goldwave V5.55) to record for 30 seconds before I started the formal interview. When I made sure everything worked properly, such as the voice of both me and the participant were clear enough, then I started the formal interview.

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Ending the interview: I provided the participant with a signal that I was nearing the end of my questions, such as “Was there anything that you were expecting to talk about today that I did not mention in my questions?”. Interviews would be continued until the topic was exhausted or saturated, that was when interviewees introduce no new perspectives on the topic (Groenewald, 2004).

After the interview: took time to thank participants and indicated how their contribution would help the research.

### **After the interview day**

After each interview, the audio file was typed up electronically with the help of the software Express Dictate V5.16. This meant each participant’s voice was completely showed in separate word files which were named as “number (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) \_parent role (**M**: mother or **F**: Father)”. For example: the file named as “1\_M.doc” means this is the transcript for the first Chinese family’s mother,” 5\_F.doc” means this is the transcript for the fifth Chinese family’s father. The numbers given to the participants were to protect participants’ privacy.

For the interview with Chinese parents, the transcribing was performed by me because of my proficiency in Chinese. After all the audio were transcribed, the transcripts were reviewed in conjunction with the audio to ensure they were consistent. After that, the transcripts were checked with the participants to make sure everything was correct before it was used.

### ***Data Analysis***

To prepare for data analysis, during the interview with participants, the method of Groenewald (2004) was followed as the way to prepare all the important documents.

These include:

- ✧ The informed consent agreement.
- ✧ The researcher's notes made during the interview.
- ✧ The researcher's field notes made subsequent to each interview.
- ✧ Any notes or sketches that the participant made during the interview, which the participant gave to the researcher.
- ✧ Any additional information that the participant offered during the interview,
- ✧ Any additional/subsequent communication between the participant and the researcher.
- ✧ The confirmation of correctness and/or commentary by the participant about the transcript of the interview.

Miller shared her successful qualitative data analysis experience with Colaizzi's model (Miller, 2003). Inspired by her analysis method, I also followed Colaizzi's model (Colaizzi, 1978) to do data analysis.

Stage 1: Protocols: read all of the subject's descriptions in order to acquire a feeling for them. As interviews were transcribed, read the text as a whole to become familiar with the content and formulate a general perception of the text (Sherrod, 2006).

Stage 2: Extracting Significant Statements: returned to each transcript and extracted from them phrases of sentences that directly pertained to the investigated phenomenon.

Stage 3: Formulating Meanings: tried to spell out the meaning of each significant statement.

Stage 4: Clusters of Themes: repeated the above for each protocol, and organized the aggregate formulated meanings into clusters of themes. Referred these clusters of themes back to the original transcripts to validate them.

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Stage 5: Exhaustive Description: integrated the results of everything so far into an exhaustive description of the investigated topic.

Stage 6: Fundamental Structure: formulated an exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon in as unequivocal a statement of identifications of its fundamental structure as possible.

Stage 7: A final validating step was achieved by returning to each subject and asking the subject about the findings thus far.

In stage 2 to 6, MAXQDA 2007 (installed in the computer lab at Mount Saint Vincent University) was used for qualitative data analysis. The data was first analyzed through “in vivo” coding that captured the “behaviors, acts, events, activities, strategies, states, meanings, participants, relationship, conditions, consequences, settings and reflective” pertained to the bi-cultural parenting issue. If the meaning (first level code) formulated was not in the existed code system, I would make a new first level code. After this initial line-by-line coding, with ongoing cross-comparison of the data, initial codes were clustered, collapsed, and thematically conceptualized through subsequent second and third level coding until the saturated data organized into major themes that explained the data for purposes of discussion. Finally, the code system of this research was conceptualized into 10 main themes (see Appendix G for Selected Sample of Coding).

In the analysis of interviews, according to constructivist paradigm, I, the researcher, played an active and deliberate role in organizing and assigning meaning to the data as a way of constructing higher order categories and theory (Daly, 2007, p.49). I kept the interpretive voice alive in the results section, reflecting how categories or themes were generated, and discussed the interpretive meaning.

### *Trustworthiness and Credibility*

Qualitative research tends to use exploratory approaches and produce textual data rather than numbers or measurements. If research is to be helpful, it should avoid misleading those who use it. When designing research projects, it is important to consider issues of trustworthiness and credibility from the outset (Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006) because the investigator runs the risk of missing serious threats to the trustworthiness and credibility until it is too late to correct them (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002).

Trustworthiness: In quantitative researches, reliability describes how far a particular test, procedure, or tool, such as a questionnaire, will produce similar results in different circumstances, assuming nothing else has changed (Roberts, et al., 2006). In qualitative research, reliability can be thought of as the trustworthiness of the procedures and data generated (Stiles, 1993).

To improve the trustworthiness of the data used and found in the study, I asked a third person who was fluent both in Chinese and English to help translate the sample of a) Introduction Letter; b) Invitation Letter; c) Informed Consent Form; d) Interview Guide; and e) part of the transcription of the interview. Translation comparison between me and this third person helped me keep eyes on my translation all the time, making sure carrying the study in Chinese and wrote it in English with high consistency. One thing need to emphasize here was this third person, as one of my research team who read the audios or read the transcripts was asked not to discuss the content of the tapes outside of the research project.

To overcome any researcher bias in the interpretation of data and as an auditing measure, interview data may be sent to an independent researcher to verify how much

agreement there is about findings and analysis (Weber, 1990). I asked my professor though not my academic supervisor (because she is familiar with the research and therefore may be affected by my thoughts during discussions) to help verify the agreement between the data and analysis. Additionally, keeping detailed notes on decisions made throughout the process added to the project's auditability and, therefore, reliability (Roberts, et al., 2006). Close attention was also paid to intensive engagement with the data – moving backwards and forwards between the data and the interpretation of it.

Credibility: is about the closeness of what we believe we are measuring to what we intended to measure (Roberts, et al., 2006). In the study, an attempt was made to minimize bias in the data collection, interpretation and presentation of findings. Research bias is avoided through the use of **bracketing**, whereby researchers attempt to suspend their experience, judgment and beliefs (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). Although bracketing is difficult to achieve, the credibility of findings is increased if researchers make explicit their presuppositions and acknowledge their subjective judgments (Ashworth, 1997).

The reduction of bias can also be facilitated by **respondent validation**. This refers to the practice of researchers sharing interpretations with the research participants, who can check, amend and provide feedback as to whether they are recognizable accounts consistent with their experience (Bryman, 2001). After analyzing the data, I shared interpretations with all participants, whether the meaning of their experiences was interpreted or not.

It was my creativity, sensitivity, flexibility and skill in using the verification strategies that determines the credibility and trustworthiness of the evolving study. It is

these investigator qualities or actions that produce social inquiry and are crucial to the attainment of optimal reliability and validity (Morse, et al., 2002).

### *Ethical Considerations*

#### Ethical risks and safeguards

There was minimal risk involved in this study.

1. Qualitative interviews on sensitive topics might bring out some emotional responses from participants. Discussion of parenting across cultural experiences, relationship with partners, children, school and communities might evoke memories of bad experiences which have been deeply buried.
2. Moreover, it was likely that discussion around the influence of social factors such as language barriers, race, class and unemployment, and income might lead to discussions of hurtful memories of the influence of these factors on participants. It was therefore important for me to listen carefully and actively and remain non-judgmental and open-minded during the interview.
3. I also watched for non-verbal expressions and show of emotions such as crying, sudden silence, sadness, or agitation. In such a case, I stopped the record and interview, and gave the participant time to get himself/herself back on track. Then, I asked if the participant wanted to stop or continue and respect his/her wishes. Also, I provided participants with a phone number to call if they wished to discuss their situation with a professional.
4. There was also a chance that individuals might be identified through the information provided in the report. While every attempt was made to ensure that this was not possible (On the transcripts, a pseudonym, rather than the real name, was used to

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identify anything the participants had said. Other identifying information (such as people's name the participants mentioned, where they lived, etc.) was changed on the transcripts too.), it must be acknowledged as a risk. Therefore, prior to conducting the interview, I discussed this with participants, and made sure they understood the risk involved.

### Free and informed consent

On the phone, I told the potential participants the purpose of the research was to understand the experiences and meanings ascribed to parenting across cultures using in-depth interviews. They then were told about the criteria to participate in the study and that the interview would be recorded. Also, due to the sensitive nature of the study, they were ensured that their responses would be completely confidential, within the confines of the research process and the law. They were then asked if they were interested in participating in the study.

As long as participants who met the criteria agree to participate in the study, I set a convenient time and place for the interview (in their home, at the Mount, or another place of their choosing). Once a time and place had been agreed upon, the interview commenced with me discussing the project and the procedure that would take place. A copy of the consent form was sent to each participant prior to the interview date in order for participants to become familiarized with the study.

On the day of the interview, before the interview starts, I reviewed with the participants the purpose, length of time, and importance of the interview and study, and addressed any questions or concerns they might have. Each participant was asked to reread and sign their names and date on the consent and audio forms if they still wished

to participate. I also signed my name on the consent form. One copy of the forms was kept by me and the participants kept the other copies.

## Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter presents the parenting experiences of Chinese immigrant parents with school-age children in the Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia. In keeping with the interpretive/constructivist framework of this study, first voice accounts are used to present parenting stories in the daily life of ten participants. The chapter is organized into ten main categories, the themes for which emerged from the narratives.

Ten main themes emerged from the data analysis of the five families. In the following section of this chapter, I summarize the first voice of the ten participants to answer the seven research questions. The details are found under each theme.

### *The Association between Chinese Parents' Philosophies, Attitudes and Approaches and Their Parenting Practice*

My first research question was: “What key philosophies, attitudes, and approaches do Chinese immigrant parents associate with Chinese parenting practices?” From the narratives of the ten participants, I found the following results.

Regarding their role as parents, the participants thought that parents should cooperate with each other, and they strove to do so, based on their jobs, availability, strength, energy, division of household tasks, and so on. Realizing the importance of their parental position as a role model, the parents endeavored to portray a strong, united and industrious model to their children.

Moreover, all the participants believed parenting was very important as it would affect the child's whole life. They regarded parenting as a process, through which, by learning and reflecting, they would eventually meet the goal as a qualified parent. During this process, they were also on the road to self-development.

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As for how they perceived their children, they believed a child was just a child with some, but very limited, abilities to do things independently. They also held that children needed to be highly protected and have decisions made for them. This resulted in strictly imposed discipline that manifested as criticizing and forcing. The parent participants had very high expectations of their children. In parenting, they were always on the look-out for any weaknesses the child might need to work on, whether in school work or in extra-curricular activities. They constantly supervised their children and measured their progress against their expectations.

The participating parents believed it was important for their children to have a healthy body. Thus, they encouraged their children to get involved in sports and cooked healthy food for them. They also believed that providing a comfortable material environment was important for them. In practice, the parents worked very hard to keep their jobs and support their families financially.

However, based on their own experiences and memories of overbearing parents, the participants did not want to push their children too hard so as not to discourage them. They did not want their children to suffer what they suffered when they were growing up. In practical terms, they tried to show their love to their children either by doing something for them or saying ‘I love you’ to them. However, due to feeling exhausted after work, many of the participants admitted they could not always give their children the amount of emotional support or quality time they wanted to.

Regarding education, all the parents firmly believed that education was of crucial importance to their children’s development. They also thought Canadian schools were too loose and that the curriculum here did not teach the children enough. To compensate for this, they tried to create a strict study environment for the children and also

complemented their children's educational training in different ways.

After-school programs were held in high esteem by the parents. They thought such programs offered a way for their children to gain additional or specific skills that would be to their advantage in the future. They took these after-school programs very seriously and became "after-school program supervisors". They also tried to help their children to become bi-lingual (English-Chinese) by encouraging them to speak Chinese at home, telling Chinese stories, teaching Chinese at home, sending the child back to China, or forcing them to go to a Chinese language school.

Finally, regarding cultural adjustment, the parents had a positive attitude to adjusting to their new environment. They worked hard to improve their English and raised their children by themselves, as Canadian parents did. But even after living in Canada for many years, they still did not have many Canadian friends. Additionally, all of them felt their English was not as good as their children's, though they were more than willing to be a learner in front of their children. They recognized the importance of social skills in Canadian society and so paid close attention to the social development of their children. While they admitted they thought their children were "bananas" (i.e., of Eastern or Asian appearance but holding Western or Caucasian values), they still hoped to instill the ideals of Chinese identity on their children. Transitioning through the two cultures, the parents hoped they could take the best of both worlds and transfer them to their children. In practical terms, they tried to balance their praise and criticism to keep their children from thinking they were either better or worse than everyone else.

The first voice of the participants was shown in the following two main themes:

***Theme 1: Parenting philosophies, attitudes and approaches of Chinese immigrant parents.***

**The role of parents**

Parent cooperation in parenting

When I asked the parents what roles parents should play in parenting, almost all of them answered that it was hard to separate the parenting role between the mother and the father. Rather, both parents should work together. Mrs. Mi offered her detailed explanation below:

[Parenting roles] should not limit which parent should play what role at home. It depends on their energy level, jobs they have, division of parenting. If the father is the main breadwinner, earning money, making decisions, he guides the direction of the child. That is fine. If the father has one idea, and the mother has another, and nobody wants to step back, it will lead to a big conflict. In a family, if one of the parents has a big idea, the other one should try to cooperate with it. It does not matter who will make the decision. Learning how to divide the work at home and cooperate with each other is more important for the parents.

Mrs. Mi maintained that each family is different and that many factors will affect the role parents play at home. She also emphasized the necessity for cooperation between the mother and the father. When it is time to make a big decision for the family, it is not important who makes the final decision. More important is whose idea is better for the family and the other parent should just follow and cooperate with it.

Model to the child

Parents realized their role as a model to their child, whether their behavior was good or bad. Mr. Mi offered me an explicit example. *“Sometimes, my daughter will yell at me*

*when she is in her bad temper. And then my wife will say 'Look, she learned this from you'.*"

### Sacrifice for the child

Chinese parents were willing to make sacrifices for their children, which was one of the ways parents showed their love. As Mrs. Wu explained: *"I enjoy parenting. I am willing to give almost anything to my daughter. The happiness I get from parenting is more than the efforts I give."*

## **Child development**

### The child is only a child

In the participants' eyes, a child was just a child. As such, a child needs discipline and protection. When the parents stated "The children are young", they meant the children had limited capabilities to understand what was right to them and to control themselves from being lazy, greedy, etc.

Mrs. Yu commented: *"I don't want [my son] to play video games full of violence every day.... The child needs discipline. He is only a child."*

When "the child is only a child" mantra was explored further, it revealed the parents as decision-makers for their children. Mrs. Mi explained: *"Chinese parents tend more to consider their children as their property than Canadians. Chinese parents make a lot decisions for their children.... Taking my daughter as an example, my husband told her 'This is what you should do, because that's what we did when we were young.'" It is natural for Chinese immigrant parents to make decisions for their children. "I am doing this for your benefit. You just don't understand it now. You will understand when you grow up."* (Mr. Mi)

### **Expectations of the child**

#### Expecting the child to be happy

One of the most impressive subthemes under the “expectations of the child” was “expecting the child to be happy.”

Like all the other parents, Mrs. Du expressed her highest expectation of her daughter. *“No. 1, I hope she is happy [and] with no burdens on her shoulders.”*

#### High expectations in all fields

In Chinese tradition, the “dragon” is the idealistic male animal while the “phoenix” is the idealistic female animal. “Hoping the son to be a dragon or the daughter to be a phoenix” is a vivid metaphor of the highest expectation of Chinese parents for their children.

Although all the parents in my interviews stated very clearly that they didn’t expect their children to be a dragon or a phoenix, I nevertheless found many clues in their narrative that they held very high hopes for their children.

Mrs. Du had a very bright daughter. Her daughter’s teachers constantly told her parents how impressed they were with her school performance. Mrs. Du was proud of her daughter. Although she said she would not push her daughter too much, she did have high expectations of her daughter in all fields. She said: *“Of course, I hope she is good at academic study, good at everything. But I don’t push her.”*

Mrs. Wu showed her high expectations of her daughter in a different way. She told me she was somewhat frustrated by always hearing one hundred percent praise from her daughter’s teachers without any mention of weakness. She did not believe her daughter was perfect. She really wanted to know what weaknesses her daughter had so she could work on them. *“If I don’t know her weaknesses, I won’t know how to help her to improve.”*

*Or if I know her potential, I will pay more attention to it. But unfortunately, I cannot get this information. Her teachers just tell me she is good at this, good at that....”*

While none of the participants openly stated they expected their children to be dragons or phoenixes, they did nevertheless offer some expectations. They hoped their children would be healthy and get along well with people. They hoped they would get a good education which would lead them to a professional and stable career. Participants also hoped their children would be independent and have the capabilities to face the cultural conflicts inside and outside of the home. All in all, my impression was that the parents had high expectations of their children in everything.

### **After-school programs**

#### Hobby should become a skill

The participants hoped their children would gain valuable skills by taking after-school programs. Mrs. Wu thought if she pushed her daughter to practice more on the piano, her daughter would appreciate it when she realized she had a good skill she could benefit from.

If I don't push her to practice harder, she will not gain the skills. If I push her a bit, she will gain the skills. When she grows up, she will appreciate me....The skills are good for her future, too.

In addition to knowing how to play the piano, the parents considered that knowing how to dance would become a strength for the children. As well, being multi-lingual, or at least bi-lingual (English and Chinese), would also bring their children more opportunities.

Bi-lingual will be the child's strength

*Mrs. Du explained:*

Because we are from China, she has to know about China. She should have some knowledge about China. China is becoming stronger and stronger now. There will be more chances to deal with China. As a child from a Chinese family, if she can speak both English and Chinese, she will have more advantages when she makes her career decisions.

The whole world has become more accessible due to new technologies and cheaper international transportation. The participant parents already foresee the added opportunities for their children in being bilingual in the future. Mrs. Mi mused about her daughter: *"If she has the chance to work in China some day, because she can speak Chinese well, it would be very convenient for her to work and live in China. My husband and I have similar thoughts about this."*

**Attitudes to the two cultures**

Parents' English is not as good as the child's

All the participants without exception admitted that their English was not as good as their child's.

Mrs. Wu: *"Because our English pronunciation is not as good as our daughter's, I'd rather teach her Standard Chinese than poor English."*

Mr. Du: *"We don't teach her English, because we both speak English with [a strong] accent. She learns English from the TV mostly."*

In front of their children, the parents were more than willing to be learners.

Adjusting to the new environment with a positive attitude

The Chinese immigrant parents had a positive attitude to learning their new culture

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and a very clear understanding of the importance of proper adjustment to the new environment.

When we talked about the relationship between keeping the original culture and adjusting to the new culture, Mrs. Du said: *“You are in this environment now. If you don’t accept the Canadian culture, why did you move here?...You should not just always complain about the environment. As you decided to move here, you have to learn to adjust to it.”*

### Social skills are very important in Canada

Chinese are not used to expressing themselves directly, while Canadians are good at expressing their opinions. Since moving to Canada, which is mainly an English-speaking country, the participants had to face challenges arising from communications in everyday life. Being sociable or not became one of the most important things parents cared about regarding their child’s behavior at school.

Mrs. Ni relayed her concerns about her sons being shy at school and her efforts to encourage and help them.

I hope they will be more sociable. They don’t like to show their ideas in class. I said to them: ‘I know you have lots of ideas, why not share them with your friends?’ They told me they did have some ideas but they did not share them in class. I guess they must feel shy. I think being sociable is very important in Canada.

### Chinese traditions are hard to remove from the mind

The participants had been in Canada or abroad between six and sixteen years. When they left China, they were all already in their thirties. Although they had been in Western countries for quite a few years, they felt there were still some Chinese traditions that were

difficult to remove from their mind.

Mrs. Mi explained her understanding of her husband's overprotection towards their daughter. *"You cannot remove this idea from your mind completely. Anyway, it has been in your mind since you were young. Some opinions are very hard to change at our age."*

### Don't want to lose Chinese roots

All the participants spent more than thirty years growing up in China. They had a tight connection to their origin.

Mrs. Du encouraged her daughter to learn Chinese because she did not want her to lose her Chinese roots. *"I think every Chinese person here should not lose his Chinese roots."*

The parents revealed their desire to transfer the idea of "Chinese roots" to their children. Mrs. Mi expected her daughter to identify herself as Chinese some day. *"We don't want her to forget she is Chinese. When she grows up, she will identify herself as Chinese. Of course, she was born here and had Canadian citizenship automatically."*

### The child is a banana

Expectation is expectation. The reality is that the parents have to admit their children are "bananas", which means the children have grown up in a Western country with an unchangeable yellow skin outside (one characteristic of being Chinese) and Western cultural influence inside (white color being one characteristic of Western culture).

Mrs. Du's daughter embarrassed her several times in front of Chinese people by calling the Chinese adults by their given names instead of addressing them as "uncle" or "aunt". Mrs. Du had to remind her daughter again and again about it. *"Your dad and I are both Chinese. No matter whether you think you are American or Canadian, you are still Chinese. When you deal with Chinese, you have to use the Chinese way." She is still*

*young, and she forgets it all the time. I have to keep reminding her. Or she will say 'I am not Chinese.'*”

### Combining the best of both cultures

Nowhere is perfect. For any number of reasons, such as a better social environment, less pressure, a relaxed education system, or a new job, Chinese immigrants left their extended family far behind and moved to Canada, a new country with different language and culture. As soon as they settled in, pressure from their new environment became a daily challenge to all the participants, and they quickly had to develop a more realistic attitude to the move. As Mrs. Ni commented: *“There are good things about being in China and good things about being in Canada. You cannot find perfection in one place.”*

Going through the two cultures by themselves with happiness and pain, the Chinese immigrant parents tried to absorb the best features from both cultures as much as they could and transfer them to their children. Mr. Mi explains: *“[My daughter] grows up in Canadian culture. We have the responsibility to transfer some good things about Chinese culture to her, but of course, we try to let her take the good things from Canadian culture, too.”*

## **Philosophies of parenting**

### Parenting is crucial

The parents in my study showed very strong parenting responsibilities towards their children. When, during our interviews, we talked about the pressure placed on children in China which led parents to having to push their children unrelentingly, I shared an example from a very famous Chinese child literacy author. He had taken his son out of school and educated him at home. After I shared this story, Mr. Yu responded: *“Normal parents could not take this risk; if the result of educating my son turned out bad, he would*

*blame me for the rest of his life.*” Mr. Yu expressed that, as his son only had one life to live, he had to ensure that he did not fail him as a parent. If his son failed because of his choice to parent him out of the mainstream, his son would blame him. Like many other Chinese parents, Mr. Yu took almost all the responsibilities on his own shoulders.

The reason why many Chinese parents are not able to be relaxed was explicated by Mrs. Yu. *“If you are living by yourself, no matter how bad the situation is, it doesn’t matter. You can take it by yourself. But as long as you have a family and child, your behavior will affect the child’s whole life.”* The recognition of how their parenting would affect their children’s whole life – not just their childhood – was a major concern for the study participants and consequently pushed them to take parenting very seriously. Mrs. Mi echoed the sentiments. For instance, when she did not know which way was the best for her daughter in parenting, she admitted she felt a bit of nervous: *“I am afraid that my doings will affect her whole life.”*

### Parenting styles

- **Many parenting opinions are from their Chinese parents**

Most of the participants confirmed that many of their parenting approaches were learned from their Chinese parents. Mrs. Wu stated: *“My opinions are still like how my parents raised me plus my own experiences from school.”* When I noticed Mrs. Yu did similar things as her mother did to her family when she was young, she admitted her parenting was really affected by her parents. *“Yes, gradually in my life, I am affected by the things I learned when I was young.”*

- **Disagreement with their parents on parenting**

Traditionally, Chinese parents play an authoritarian role in front of their children. They do not think children can really work on their own and so they discipline their

children strictly. Although the participants admitted their parenting was to a great degree affected by their traditional parents, they did not agree with their parents very much anymore. Ms. Wu still recalls some major conflicts between her and her parents: *“My parents and I think very differently. We have big conflicts. Basically, grandparents in China all spoil the grandchildren. Their parenting opinions are totally different than ours.”*

- **More open minds**

The Chinese immigrants in my study had been exposed to their new country for more than six years. They were trying to absorb new ideas into their own parenting practice and giving up the methods they had learned from their Chinese parents. Mr. Ni explained: *“Our generation connects to the outside world more and our minds are more open than our parents.”* He attributed his more open mind to the opportunities he had had to connect to the world outside of China.

- **Wanting to be their children’s friends**

All parents mentioned that, ideally, they would like to be their children’s friends, as that is what they believed Canadian parents are to their children. Mrs. Yu shared her thoughts on what she believed was the ideal relationship between parents and their children: *“I mean, parents and their children should be like friends. I don’t agree that parents talk down to the children and ask them do whatever the parents want them to do.”*

### Parenting duties

The Chinese immigrant parents in my interviews had a relatively broad understanding about child development. I found clues in their narrative about physical, financial, educational, emotional and social development concerns about their children.

- **Physical**

All parents in the interviews agreed that having a healthy body was important for their children. Mr. Mi showed me how much he cared about his daughter's physical safety. *"I worry about something happening to my child, such as falling down, being injured. I don't want her ever to get hurt. I don't want her to injure herself. But it's hard to avoid. When she plays with other children, she's always getting bumps and scrapes."*

- **Financial**

The parents also felt deep financial responsibilities towards their children. Mr. Ni tried to provide a regular material environment for his sons. He even anticipated financially supporting his children as they grew into adulthood. He explained it this way:

Canadian children leave home when they are only teenagers, working to support themselves. I think from staying at home to living on their own is a big transformation. Children can't support themselves very well at that age. It is a dangerous period for them. Becoming drug addicted, making bad friends or doing other things may pull them down. Parents should give them financial support somehow to help them through this transformation period, giving them the chance to adjust to society gradually. I think that's why teenagers here have so many problems. Their parents may spoil them too much and suddenly let them go when they are not really ready for it.

- **Emotional**

The parents reflected on their experiences of being raised by their Chinese parents. They realized the importance of the emotional development of a child. Mrs. Yu commented: *"As an adult, you will recall your childhood, and try to prevent your child from experiencing the unhappiness you experienced."* These participants underwent

intense pressure due to high competition growing up in China. They did not want their children to suffer as much as they did. Mrs. Wu said: *“I don’t want to put too much pressure on her. I don’t want her to feel obliged to become somebody she isn’t.”*

Putting themselves into their children’s shoes, these Chinese immigrant parents did not want to burden their children with their unrealized dreams. As Mrs. Yu put it: *“I think parents should fulfill their dreams by themselves. If you are not successful, don’t put it onto your child.”*

- **Educational**

The final but not in any way the least aspect of child development that the Chinese immigrant parents were concerned about was education. Ten out of ten participants expressed the same opinions about Canadian schools: Discipline was severely lacking.

*“It is too loose here. The pressure on the child is too little,”* Mrs. Wu complained. While she liked the educational environment in Canada, she still expressed her disappointment about how undisciplined the learning approach was in Canadian public schools.

Mr. Ni agreed, and suggested that schools should assume the responsibility to discipline the children. *“I hope the school can put some pressure on their shoulders. If both the family and the school let the children be, it will be too loose. It would be better to let the children feel some pressure.”*

Correspondingly, because the educational environment in Canada was too loose from their perspective, the Chinese parents thought that their children played too much at school and did not learn enough “real” knowledge, like math. Mr. Du commented: *“Chinese parents sometime joke about the schools here. They think the teachers teach their children nothing. It’s true in some cases.”*

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Mr. Yu likewise thought the learning pace in Canada schools was too slow. *“I hope Canadian schools tighten their education schedule and try to teach the children more.”*

Another big concern of Chinese immigrant parents regarding Canadian schools was the mathematics education. They did not think the school prepared the children with enough math knowledge. Mrs. Ni explained: *“The basic education is not good... [especially] math education...”* Even though Mr. Wu did not pay much attention to his daughter’s school work, he still expressed concern about his daughter’s math education at school. *“As for her math... I worry about it. Frankly speaking, Canadian schools don’t give enough training on math.”*

Although the participants had some concerns about their children’s education at school, they did not feel as if they had the power to change the current system, as Ms. Yu stated: *“You can’t do anything about it.”*

Ms. Du explained to me the reason why she did not communicate with her daughter’s teacher.

I heard one Chinese parent went to school to have a discussion about the school system with the teacher, hoping she could teach the children more as a Chinese teacher would. But the teacher was not happy with the parent’s suggestion. She said ‘I don’t think you trust me. That is why you talked about this with me.’ My experience is that Chinese parents have a hard time getting positive feedback from the teacher. Because of this, I don’t bother saying anything to the teachers anymore.

Some of the parents were also not very happy with the feedback about their children if it was only praise from the teacher. Mrs. Mi felt she could not get any useful advice about her daughter from the teacher.

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We Chinese really care about the academic development of the child. We pay attention to her marks. But the teachers here don't think high marks mean the child has higher capabilities. I think the big conflict is that I cannot explain my thoughts clearly to the teacher. At the beginning, I worried about a lot, but the teacher just said 'Don't worry.' I could not get any useful advice from her at all.

### *Theme 2: Parenting practice of Chinese immigrant parents.*

#### **Parenting as a process**

##### Ceaseless learning

The participant parents all had a high education background, yet they still realized that having a good education did not mean they knew how to be a qualified parent in a new environment. Since the day they found out they would have a baby, they started acquiring knowledge about parenting.

Mr. Du recalled how he first started learning about parenting.

When my wife was pregnant, staff at the hospital gave us a book to read. All parents with children up to age five should read this book. The most amazing thing is our daughter was just like a typical example in the book – physically, when she learned to crawl, when she learned to walk, she just did as the book showed us.

Nevertheless, the reality is that every child is different. Mrs. Mi found she could not just follow the book to learn how to be a parent. She said:

I always practice following what I learned from the books. But when you read the books from the hospital, you have to think, too. At the beginning, I did exactly what the books told me, but later I found I could not follow the books completely.

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Parents need a little bit adjustment based on their own situation.

Besides learning from books, the parents also learned about the experiences from other Chinese parents on the internet and put it into practice in their own daily life. Mr. Du said *“Sometimes, I will learn something on the internet. When you learn something from the internet or from books, you can try it on your own.”*

### Cooperating with each other

At home, most of Chinese immigrant parents shared the parenting duties based on their strength, time available, health status, etc.

Mrs. Du was happy with her husband’s cooperation all the time. She recalled the first couple of months after their daughter was born.

My routine was totally messed up. I could not sleep for two hours straight. I felt very tired during the first six months. For the first three months, my husband cooked every day. I did not have energy to cook at all. After work, he would cook for us. We cooperated very well. I was afraid for him if he slept with us. My child was crying a lot, and he would not have had a good sleep. So he slept in a separate room. So far, because we’re cooperating, I don’t find it difficult to raise a child by ourselves.

### Reflecting

Another part of the process of parenting for the participants involved reflection. When they dealt with parenting issues in a specific way, they would reflect on the outcome. Mrs. Yu commented:

I think people should always reflect. People are in the process of development all through their life. It is like rising in a spiral. In the process of circling, you should think about how the environment you grew up in affected your adult life. When

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you grow up, you just follow what you learned when you were young. Then, when you get to a specific age, you start to reflect. From that point, you will not change your ideas too much about what you have already learned. But for humanism, you start thinking whether what I learned is right or not, whether I absorb the quintessence from the whole world for the past thousands of years.... You always need to think. Never just follow the mainstream.

If the consequence of their own parents' parenting was not good, the participants would be very careful to avoid doing certain things when they dealt with their children. An instance of this was bad temper. The parents realized that displaying a bad temper was not good for their children and that it was unfair to treat their child badly just because, for instance, the parents had a bad day. But, as it was not always possible to follow through on good intentions, the process of reflection brought them to a place where they could hope to do better in the future. Mrs. Du confessed: *"My voice gets so loud, and I feel really sorry later for what I did. I know my bad temper will make her scared and she'll be afraid to do anything in the future that will bring it out. So I will try my best to control myself."*

### Learning and self-development

Being a parent was a learning and self-development process for the participants. Mrs. Yu explained: *"When you are parents, raising your child is also a process for your own development. You grow up with him together."*

Mrs. Du very much enjoyed her motherhood. She told me: *"My temper got much better with my daughter's growing up. I have a more forgiving outlook towards my daughter and my life now."*

### Setting a good example for the child

The participant parents wanted to set a good example and be a good role model to their children. Mr. Wu emphasized: *“I think it is very important to be a good model to your child. If you want your child to love to study, you have to create an air of study in your family.”* To train her daughter to be independent, Mrs. Mi took her daughter on the bus to go to Chinese language school, even in the middle of winter. *“My insisting to do so is also showing her a good model. Sometimes, the weather is bad. We are waiting for the bus. She can understand that although she doesn’t feel comfortable standing there, [it is important that] she should do something by herself.”*

### **Physical development**

To make sure their children have a healthy body, the participants encouraged their children to take part in sports.

Mrs. Mi expressed her regret about not giving her daughter enough physical exercise. *“I did not take her to the playground very often when she was young. We did not take her to join some programs to strengthen her body. Now, I think if you exercise a lot, you will enjoy your food more and have a good sleep. So I pay attention to two things, one is her body health and the other is outdoor activities.”*

Even though Mrs. Yu was a very quiet person, she always supported her husband taking their sons to get some exercise outdoors. When I was interviewing Mrs. Yu at her home, the children came running back into the house, pink-cheeked and radiant over being outside with their Dad. I was struck by how happy and healthy the boys looked.

Another way the participants worked to keep their children’s bodies healthy was paying attention to what they were eating. The parents tried to cook three healthy meals every day for their children. Mrs. Yu stated: *“Generally, I wake up, and prepare breakfast*

*and lunch for them.” Mr. Mi explained: “We balance the vegetables and meat for them.” Mrs. Ni confessed: “We still cook in the Chinese way. Lots of stir fries!”*

## **Discipline**

### Family routines

Each set of parents had their own unique principles when it came to imposing discipline on their children. However, all of the families highlighted the importance of establishing routines so their children would know what should be done at which specific time. Mrs. Yu described a typical day in her household:

Generally, I wake up and prepare the breakfast and lunch. [The children] go to school, I go to work. When I come back from work, they play the piano or go swimming, and then come back for supper.... While I’m cooking, they usually watch TV for a while. If supper is not ready when they get home, they will practice piano. If supper is ready, they will eat first and then play the piano.... They watch cartoons at 7:00. After that, they play the piano.... [As well,] they recently started reading every day.

### TV and computer usage restriction

Almost all of the parents in my study limited the usage of the TV or the computer at home.

Mr. Yu explained his reason for imposing limits:

Kids nowadays have too many things for entertainment, like video games, TV.... I think we should give them some boundaries. They can’t spend all their time on these things.... We didn’t buy a gaming machine for our boys. I did buy a palm game machine for them, but they are not allowed to play it anymore. Sometimes they play internet games, but we have a time limit on those. We put the timer here.

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When the time is up, they have to stop playing the game.

Instead of letting the TV or computer babysit his children, Mr. Yu spent a lot time playing with his sons outside.

Mrs. Mi also explained her reasoning for limiting the time her daughter spends in front of an electronic screen “*[I have to limit her] so she will not watch TV all the time. Her eyesight has been bad since she was born.*”

### Being consistent

Some Chinese immigrant parents consistently disciplined their children.

Mrs. Yu shared her experiences with me.

I think we have to stick to principles for some things. We have to insist. For example, when [my children] were young, I told them they had to tidy up after themselves. They will test you to see how serious you are. One time, I told them so many times to tidy up, but they didn't listen. So I said ‘I'll count to three. If you are still doing nothing, I will throw the toys away.’ After I counted to three, they still weren't doing what I'd asked them to do, so I threw their toys away. From then on, they never dared not to clean up after themselves. They knew there were consequences.

Although Mrs. Ni's and her husband did not discipline their child as much as other Chinese families, they still had some unbending rules and stuck to them. “*I tell them ‘You cannot play games until you finish your reading’.*”

Without exception, the ten parents expressed that being consistent helped them discipline their children with favorable results. In addition, they felt they were always in control. Mr. Yu told me confidently. “*Yes, we are in control. Since they were young, we've insisted that we cannot satisfy their whims all the time. If we say no, we will keep saying*

*no. We never break our rules.”*

In disciplining their children, the parents used different methods in different situations.

#### Different disciplining methods

- **Criticizing**

Criticizing was a common way for the participants to discipline their children.

Mrs. Du reflected: *“Our parents taught us this way. I always think if [my daughter] should do something wrong, I should talk to her instead of criticizing her. But unfortunately, the first word that comes out is still ‘No’.”*

Mrs. Yu also felt she was criticizing her child too much. *“We still feel we have to say something no matter it is a big or trivial issue. We might preach too much.”*

- **Forcing**

The participant parents stated that forcing was another method they used in their daily disciplining of their children. Ms. Du said: *“We Chinese praise our kids too. But when all is said and done, we were raised in the traditional way. So, we will also force our kids to do something, if we have to.”* Mrs. Mi had to push her daughter sometimes when she thought her child was too young to understand the importance of doing some specific things at her age. *“If we parents are right, and we see that our child doesn’t want to try something just because she is not interested in it for now, we need to push her. If she misses this chance, she will never be able to go back to get it again. So sometimes I do force her to do some things.”*

- **Reasoning**

Besides criticizing and pushing, the parents also tried to use reasoning in discipline. Mrs. Du said:

I will communicate with her. When she cries and screams, I will tell her that she is wrong to do that. Because I am angry, my voice will be loud. Afterwards, I will explain to her why I spoke to her like that. I will say things like ‘You are our only child; Dad and I always put you at the center to accommodate you even we know you are not right. But when you play with other kids, you should share with them.’ Because she is an only child with no other siblings to play with, I have to remind her all the time to share.

- **Time-out**

While the ten parents used discipline methods that were common in Chinese culture, they also tried to learn Canadian-style discipline methods, such as “time-out”. Mrs. Du used it frequently when her daughter was young. *“We learned a lot from people here. When she was young, we used time-out. We’d put her in the corner for one or two minutes, explain the reason to her, and then let her go. We also learned to give her a hug afterwards, which is something we picked up from Canadian culture.”*

- **Balancing between praise and criticism**

Mrs. Du believed parents should strike a balance between praise and criticism. People here mostly just praise their kids. But sometimes it is necessary for me to throw a wet blanket on [my daughter]. The teacher always says my daughter is the best looking, the best at reading, and has the best academic performance. But I will tell my daughter that everybody has his or her strengths, you cannot say you are better than anybody else. If you do that, you won’t have any friends. For the time being, because she is still young, I can only explain this to her in a simple way. When she gets a little bit older, I will explain this to her from a philosophic viewpoint. But I have to be careful not make her feel bad about herself, either.

- **Let it be**

In contrast to the other four families, Mrs. Ni and her husband built a free environment for their sons' development. Mrs. Ni said: *"The reason I let them go and don't try to control them is that I hope they can learn to do things on their own and become independent."* Ms. Ni and her husband both thought being independent was very important living in Canada, and so they gave their sons a free reign and hoped their children would learn how to live on their own.

### **Educational development**

#### Be helpful

In traditional Chinese culture, education is an important part of a child's development. The participant parents spent a lot of time helping their children with their studies, even doing homework with them. Mr. Mi explained: *"If she has the project to do, I will work with her. If she has no idea how to do it, we will help her. If she doesn't know a word, I will teach her how to look it up in the dictionary. If she has problems in math, I will teach her."*

#### Providing extra math training

Although the parents did not worry about their children's schooling, they all expressed major concerns about the math education at their respective schools. They did not think the math training currently being offered at school was sufficient, and so they all tried in their own way to teach their children at home.

Mr. Yu: *"In the evenings, I will sometimes make some math exercises for them. The math education here is way too simple. What the kids learn here in Grade Five is what kids learn in Grade Two in China."*

Mr. Du found a good website that offers academic help for immigrant children and

registered his daughter on it. *“There is an American website in Texas made by a Chinese person. The math is free, and you just need to pay ten dollars a year to learn Chinese. We registered an account for her. She can now do Grade Two questions even though she’s still in Grade One.”*

To train her sons to have strong capabilities to calculate without a calculator, Mrs. Ni taught her son the multiplication table, which is familiar to every child at a Grade Two level in China.

I saw that my sons’ knowledge of the multiplication table was really poor. They couldn’t even recite the table for me. I told them math was the foundation for all sciences and so it’s really important to learn it. Their skill level is now not too bad. They learn some from school, but it’s just a little bit. I asked them to memorize the multiplication table. They’re in Grade Four. I always give them tests about the multiplication table.

### Preparing a more strict study environment for the children

Although it did not pertain to the participants in my study, they did say it was common for Chinese immigrant parents to prepare a more strict study environment for their children.

Mrs. Du told me:

I have many friends who send their kids to private schools. They have to spend five to ten thousand dollars a year to do that, and that is just the tuition. They also have to pay for this and that besides the tuition. As I know, many Chinese parents are like this. They think the teachers at private schools will teach the kids more, give the kids more homework and be stricter with them.

Mrs. Wu confided: *“In choosing a teacher, many Chinese will pick Korean or*

*Russian teachers [because] they are all very strict.”*

Paying more attention to the weaknesses of the children

In one-to-one parent meetings with her daughter’s teachers, Mrs. Wu heard only praise about her daughter, which frustrated her. She said:

I know she does well at school. I still want to know what her weakness is, but I cannot get that information from the teachers. This is totally different from how it is in China. If I know what her weakness is, I will know how to help to strengthen it or if I know she has some potential, I can help her to extend it. But I cannot get this information from the teachers.

Keeping quiet about objections to school

Since Mrs. Du heard her friend’s stories, she kept her objections to herself about her daughter’s school and never said anything to anyone there. Her friend had requested that the teacher teach the children more, but the teacher got upset with her because she thought she did not trust her abilities.

Mr. Ni felt he did not have enough power to affect decision-making at the school. He wished the school would push the students harder, but he never talked about this with his son’s teacher, saying: *“This is unchangeable.”*

Changing school expectations

Believing it to be impossible to change the school system into what exactly Chinese immigrant parents wanted, Mrs. Wu gradually adjusted her expectations to her daughter’s school. *“Actually, at the beginning, I held the same expectation of the school here as for schools in China, hoping the school would take the responsibilities to educate my child. But I found out later I was wrong.”*

Mrs. Du shared slightly different thoughts.

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My understanding of the school here has undergone a long process. At the beginning, as other Chinese parents, I hoped the teachers would teach my child thoroughly, but they teach the kids very slowly. Now I think there's nothing wrong with that. Kids are trained to be fully-developed individuals. My child can learn arts, science, and many other things. She improves every day. That's enough.

### **To Chinese learning**

#### Creating a Chinese-speaking environment

Most Chinese immigrant parents asked their children to speak Chinese at home. Mr. Yu explained:

We keep them learning Chinese. We ask them to communicate with us in Chinese at home. [My two sons] may talk to each other in English. At the beginning, we wanted to push them to communicate with each other in Chinese. It doesn't work. You cannot force them to do it. But they have to talk to us in Chinese, we ask them to do so. At least, let them keep learning. I know a young child from China. He has only been here for two years, but cannot speak any Chinese at all any more. So I think that creating a Chinese-speaking environment is important.

If it was an option for them, the Chinese parents also tried to send their children back to China as often as they could to give them a larger Chinese environment.

#### Chinese language school

In addition to their regular schooling, the parents also sent their children to Chinese language school in Canada hoping the children would get some formal training in Chinese, as they found the children listened more to a teacher than to them.

The children did learn some Chinese characters at the Chinese language school. Mrs. Yu's son drew some cartoons in Chinese and sent them to his grandparents back in China.

Mrs. Yu told me: *“He learned that at Chinese language school.”*

For her part, Mrs. Yu planned to send her two sons to China for their summer holidays.

### Reading Chinese to the children

Mr. Yu was a patient man. To help his sons to learn Chinese at a high level, he read Chinese stories to his sons every night. *“Sometime, I need to tell them some stories from Chinese novels, for kids, such as Dalin and Xiaolin or The Adventures of Pinocchio, which are the stories I heard when I was young. I want to help them be sensitive to Chinese.”*

Mrs. Ni did similar things. She said that it helped her children have a good sense of pure Chinese pronunciation and a relatively deep comprehension of Chinese history and culture.

### Teaching Chinese at home

Mrs. Du did not think that Chinese education for only a half day a week at the Chinese language school was enough, so she started teaching her daughter Chinese at home.

Now, when she comes back from school around 2:30 in the afternoon and has some snacks, I will read the books from school to her first, and then I will teach her Chinese with the books my family sends me from China. I try to teach her one character each day, but it's not working out so well. I can only teach her two or three characters per week on average. When we were young, we learned the characters from each lesson, three or four every week. And we wrote one for one row or more to memorize it. I teach her in this way, too. If she forgets one stroke of the character, I will show it to her and explain it to her and ask her to copy it

four or five times.

### The results are not very good

Mrs. Ni and her husband did not want to push their children to learn Chinese as they did not see that Chinese learning turned out as most parents expected. Almost all the parents expressed their disappointment at the slowing or stunted progress in their child's Chinese learning. Mr. Yu suggested some reasons for this: *"I will urge her to write a character a couple of times and finish the exercise for each lesson. But, because it's only for homework and not practical usage, it doesn't turn out very well."*

### **Emotional development**

#### Showing love

Most of the parents participating in the study showed their love to the children by doing something. They were too shy, especially the Chinese fathers, to say "I love you" to their children face-to-face.

Mr. Wu showed me a typical way he showed his love to his daughter.

I show my love for my child every day in daily life. I love cooking. I can cook very well. So, I will ask my child what she wants to eat and cook it for her. I think she feels my love for her through what I do for her. Also, if she has some problems, I always try to help her.

Nevertheless, from living in a Western country, some parents learned to say "I love you" to their children directly because they did not want their children to feel any different compared with their Canadian counterparts. Mr. Du said: *"We always say: 'Dad loves you, Mum loves you.' And she will give us a hug and a kiss. We do this consciously, to fit in with the way people do things here."*

#### Not spending quality time with the children

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By spending quality time with their children, parents show a strong emotional support for their children. On average, I found all the immigrant mothers in the study spent a lot of time with their families, especially their children. Mothers cooked, cleaned, and took care of all the household needs. But the children also require their parents to spend time playing with them, too. In my study, Mr. Yu was a good example in terms of spending quality time with his children. He said: *“I spend a lot time playing with them. We three guys have similar interests. We play baseball, soccer or fly a kite. I take more responsibility to play with them.”*

A computer expert, Mr. Ni spent a lot time with his son on computer games. Mrs. Ni stated: *“[My husband] loves computers. And so he can share his joy of them by playing games on the internet with our sons.”*

When Mrs. Yu got the job offer that brought her family to Halifax, Mr. Yu assumed the responsibilities of taking care of the children at home. He said: *“When we first got here, I didn't have a job. My second son was still very young. And so I stayed at home to take care of the kids.”*

However, not every parent in my study spent quality time with their children. The most common reason for this was that they were too busy to do so.

Mrs. Mi complained: *“Her dad works the whole night. He doesn't have much time to care about my daughter. He doesn't understand about the child issues.”* Fathers were busy at work, while mothers were busy at school upgrading their career skills. Mrs. Wu explained: *“I am way too busy. I don't have time at all.”* Mrs. Mi also admitted to reduced communication between her and her daughter *“In recent two years, I don't have time to pay much attention to her. I have to deal with my things at school.”*

Being so busy at work or school, when they got home, the parents had a hard time

trying to summon the energy to play with their children. Mrs. Ni said: *“Coming back from work, you just feel exhausted. You’re not in the mood to play anymore.”*

While some parents did have a plan for themselves, they did not have an awareness of how important it was to spend quality time with their children.

### **Social development**

#### Encouraging the child to be independent

Through their own experiences and observations of Canadian’s lives here, Chinese immigrant parents believed it was important to be independent to live in Canada. Thus, they encouraged their children to be independent.

Mrs. Mi showed her pride when she saw the difference between her daughter and her relative’s children in China.

Three years ago, I brought her back to China. The child of my relative was a similar age to my daughter. I observed them. I noticed my daughter had a higher sense of independence compared to the other child. Her attitude said: ‘I can accompany you in doing something, but I will not do it for you.’ I think my parenting strategy works.

#### Encouraging the children to be ambitious

Mr. Ni said: *“I focus more on the ambition of my children. I don’t want them to be a street cleaner. I hope they have the motivation to study hard.”*

#### Creating a social environment for the children

The parents realized the importance of having of the abilities to deal with people in Canada. Consequently, they made great efforts to help their children achieve this goal.

However, as most of parents only had one child, it was hard for that child to learn social skills at home. Mrs. Wu explained: *“On the weekend, I either send her to play at*

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*friends' houses or invite her friends to come over."* By doing so, her daughter had the chance to learn how to deal with other children. Likewise wanting her children to learn socializing skills, Mrs. Du always encouraged her only daughter to share with other children *"We only have one child, so we tend to treat her like a queen. When she plays with other kids, sometime she forgets to share. If she does forget, I will remind her to do it."*

### Teaching the children strategies in solving conflicts

To help his sons solve conflicts with his classmates, Mr. Yu taught them some strategies.

We talked to him about this, telling him you cannot rely on force to solve your problems. If you're having trouble with somebody, please bring it up. Tell the person 'I don't like what you're doing.' Don't wait until things get so bad that you lose your temper. If you conquer by force instead of negotiation, you will just lose your friends.

Living in a multicultural society, the study parents also educated their children about how everybody was equal. Mrs. Du said: *"In talking about a school mate, her dad told her 'Don't call [him] a black boy. Everybody is equal.'"*

## **Children's after-school programs**

### Being the children's supervisor

After sending their children to after-school programs, Chinese immigrant parents automatically became "the children's supervisor".

Mrs. Wu sent her daughter to piano class. *"I supervise her piano playing. Playing the piano is a routine, a half-hour everyday. Because of her dawdling, you have to supervise her."*

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Like Mrs. Wu's, Mr. Du also did the same thing. *"We watch her at her piano class. With the teacher's permission, we can be there and take some notes. When we come back, we can supervise her. The days she doesn't go to piano class, we still ask her to play at home for half an hour."*

### **Conflicts between parents and children**

#### Different psychological development levels

Parents are adults while children are still children. Cognitive, emotional and social development speeds differ between parents and children, which brings a lot of conflicts between the two generations.

Mr. and Mrs. Mi were busy at work and school. They both had a very tight schedule every day. Fighting with their daughter about bedtime became a serious issue for them every night.

She doesn't want to wash up to go to bed, and I get impatient. I tell her 'If you delay one more minute in going to bed, you will not be allowed to sleep in even one minute tomorrow. You have to go to school and we have to go to work. We have no other choice; we have to stick to our routine.' We repeat this speech more or less every day. Sometimes she will listen and start getting ready for bed right away, but other times she moves slowly.

#### Different acculturation speed

A big issue between the parents and their school-age children was felt by the parents as different acculturation speeds. Mrs. Ni said she and her son, who grew up in Canada, was absolutely different in his acknowledgement of Chinese and Canadian cultures. *"For my child, the time he's been in Canada is much longer than the time he was in China. The ethnic or national identification is definitely different between him and us."*

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For his part, Mr. Du was confused about how to teach his daughter to adjust to the culture difference. *“When we were in China, some ideas were already in our minds. We parents want to try to adjust to the new environment. We teach our kids in the Chinese way at home, but they have to deal with people outside in a different way.”*

### **Adapting to the new environment**

#### Raising children without extended family support

Throughout my interviews with all ten participants, I felt they all had open minds to their new environment at some level.

The first thing they had to learn in their new country was to raise their children by themselves when they became the parents without any extended family support around.

Mrs. Du said:

We raise our child completely by ourselves. Our parents never come here to help us. When I was pregnant, my mother wanted to come over to help us. She felt it was her duty to do so. But I told her ‘This is my child, and it’s my responsibility to raise my own child. This is not your obligation. If you want to come here, you can come here. If not, that is ok.’ But personally, I prefer that she not come. If she is here, we will have more to deal with. She still insisted on coming. Twice we told her it was better if she didn’t come, and now she doesn’t have the chance to come. When I saw how mothers here didn’t think it was no big deal to have a baby, it changed the way I feel about it, too. You can go outside in less than one week after the delivery. I always see babies only three or four days old on the street. So I think I can do it too.

Their daughter grew up very happy and healthy.

Improvement in English

The Chinese parents worked hard at improving their English. Mr. Du said “*Our language has improved over the years. We do see a difference.*”

Do not have much communication with Canadians

When I asked the parents what they think about Canadians parenting philosophies and practice, they basically all said the same thing, that they do not deal with Canadians very much.

Mr. Mi had been living in Canada for sixteen years. He said “*Although I have been living in Canada for all these years, I don’t deal with Canadians very much. I know a few Canadian families, but I don’t really have clue how they’re doing with child-raising.*”

When I asked why they did not have any communication with Canadian families, Mrs. Ni said: “*[It’s ]because we live in an apartment. People don’t talk to their neighbors too much in an apartment building. If I had a house, it would be different. I could invite Canadian neighbors to come over and make friends with them.*”

Simple life

In the process of adjusting to their new environment, all the families felt their lives were simple. Mr. Wu stated: “*All in all, our life is very simple.*”

Mr. Du said: “*We do not feel too much of a culture shock, really not. Because my circle is relatively small, I’m just doing my work, my research, which is relatively simple.*”

It seemed the Chinese immigrant families isolated themselves from Canadian circles.

**Parenting problems by self-awareness**

Without exception, all the parents participating in the study wanted to be a good parent. They constantly reflected on their parenting. Below are some parenting problems

from their narrative regarding self-awareness.

### Parents help children to make decisions too much

Mrs. Mi said that *“like most Chinese parents, we help our kids make decisions a lot. I realize it sometimes. Since my child started going to school, I told her no matter whether you like it or not, you have to go to Chinese language school.”*

### Disagreements between the mother and the father

It was natural for the mother and father to have some disagreements, both minor and major. If the parents had an opportunity to sit down and talk it over, the conflicts from the disagreement usually resolved. But if a similar disagreement arose again and again, it would be a problem not only for the couples but also for the children.

The biggest disagreement between the mother and father in terms of parenting in my study arose either from their different values or from their different understanding and comprehension about child development.

Mrs. Mi did not want her daughter to spend too much time in front of the TV and the computer: *“After supper, if she has nothing to do, I teach her how to clean a room to train her do something by herself. I don’t want her to watch too much TV. Her eyesight isn’t good. I take her to do some household duties, keeping her away from the TV.”* While Mr. Mi thought: *“We bought the TV and the computer. People are all using them. It seems to be out of date if your kids don’t use the TV or computer.”*” In the Mi’s case, their values were different regarding leisure time.

As most of the mothers spent more time with their children, they thought they understood the children better than their husband did. Mrs. Wu complained about the way Mr. Wu taught their daughter math.

He just taught the child simple addition. And he didn’t really know how to

teach.... You should teach kids step by step, but he moved too fast.... For example, you should teach addition first and then move to multiplication. He sometimes taught the child something that was too difficult, and she didn't understand him at all. He didn't mean to teach the child. He just mentioned it in front of her. But she didn't understand it and it made them both frustrated.

Unfortunately, these problems and disagreements were persistent features of family life for most of the couples and their children. They could not find an efficient way to solve it by themselves.

### ***Differences between Chinese and Canadian Parents from the Chinese Parents' Point of View***

My second research question was "What key similarities or differences do Chinese immigrant parents associate between Chinese attitudes and approaches to raising children and those of Canadian parents? (From Chinese parents' view)"

To summarize the ten participants' first voice, I found:

Both Chinese and Canadian parents loved their children and hoped they were happy and healthy. However, there were big differences between Chinese and Canadian parents from the Chinese immigrant parents' point of view.

Canadian parents were like a friend to their children and they spent time happily playing with their children, while Chinese parents thought that children were children and that they were to act like an authority in front of them.

Canadian parents believed that children had independent personalities, and so they respected their opinions and communicated with their children before making a decision. Conversely, as the Chinese parents believed the child was a child and therefore too young

to form a proper opinion, Chinese parents always helped their children make a decision, sometimes even forcing the children to do something against their will with the explanation that it was “for [the children’s] benefit.”

Canadian parents think nobody is perfect, including young children, and so they constantly praise their children. However, as Chinese parents believe that a child is only a child, they do not tolerate mistakes. They criticize their children, hoping they learn their lesson and do better next time.

Canadian parents do not have very high expectations of their children and so they do not discipline them strictly, which was seen as indulging in Chinese’ eyes. Chinese parents hold very high expectations of their children and so they disciplined their children very strictly and encouraged them to have high ambitions.

Canadian parents think hobbies are just something you are interested in, and so they do not really care one way or the other about their children attending after-school programs. In contrast, Chinese parents believe that taking an after-school program is a good opportunity to gain specific skills which will serve as a strength in the future, and so they supervise and push their children to do better and better, even at their hobbies.

All the details can be found under the following two themes:

***Theme 3: Parenting philosophies, attitudes, and approaches of Canadian parents from a Chinese parents’ point of view.***

### **Being a friend to their child**

When I asked the participants what best described the relationship between Canadian parents and their children, they all mentioned one word: “friend”.

Mrs. Du said: *“I feel Canadian parents are more like a friend to their kids. We will*

*discuss with her, encourage her.... Although Chinese parents will praise kids, too, they are affected by traditional Chinese parenting. They still will force their kids to do something.”*

### **Forgiving embrace of children’s making mistakes**

Most participants thought Canadian parents had a very forgiving embrace of their children’s mistakes. Mrs. Wu said: *“When the kids are just learning how to walk, are still toddlers, we won’t say anything. Just when they get a little bit older, we will ask them: ‘Why do you make the same mistakes again and again?’ I don’t think many Canadian parents say that.”*

### **Child has independent personality**

Mrs. Wu revealed her impression of Canadian parents.

They make the kid realize he is an independent person. He can make his own decisions. Even though most of the decisions may not be right, the child is still completely independent. A child in China is totally different from a child in Canada. [A Chinese child] will think ‘I am a child. I can do nothing on my own. My parents have to help me.’

### **A hobby is for enjoyment**

Unlike Chinese immigrant parents, Canadian parents, according to Mr. Yu, *“... pay more attention to the happiness of their kids. They let the kids make their own choices and do things at their own pace.”*

Mrs. Wu echoed his sentiments: *“Canadian parents send the kids to learn how to play the piano. They just help them to have fun with their hobbies, while Chinese parents always hope the kids will do their best.”*

### **No high expectations of the children**

Mr. Wu was critical of Canadian parents not having high expectations of their children: *“Canadian parents think just to raise a baby to be an independent adult is good enough in terms of their parental responsibilities.”*

***Theme 4: Parenting practices of Canadian parents from a Chinese parents’ point of view.***

### **Playing with the children**

Although Mr. Wu did not spend much time playing with his child, he did note: *“Canadians play with their kids more happily than Chinese parents and their kids. Canadian parents are like big kids and they are like a friend to their kids.”* Chinese parents admitted they had difficulty to stand at the same level as their children.

Mr. Mi did not have much experience dealing with Canadian families, but he observed: *“For sure, Canadians take their kids to play outside a lot. Canadians love hockey. Parents here are always taking their kids to play hockey.”*

### **More praise**

Besides “friend”, “praise” was another word frequently used when I asked the Chinese immigrant parents to describe Canadian parents in their eyes. All of the participants used this word.

Mr. Yu said: *“The most impressive thing to me is that they praise their kids a lot. I see their words to their kids are all positive. They do better than us on this. Even if the kid didn’t do well, they still give them encouragement.”*

Mrs. Wu admired the way Canadian parents praised their children more than Chinese did. *“I admire how Canadian parents always praise their kids.”*

### **Indulging the children**

Chinese parents felt Canadian parents were indulging their children too much. In other words, Chinese parents did not think Canadian parents disciplined their children enough.

Mrs. Yu said: *“Sometime, I think they are spoiling the kids. They don’t discipline them at all.”*

From the observation point of her daughter’s piano class, Mrs. Wu said: *“Most Canadian parents don’t supervise or urge their kids to do better at all.”* This was in stark contrast to Chinese parents, who always accompanied their children to their lessons and pushed them to practice regularly.

Mrs. Ni gave me a typical example to show me the difference. *“Generally speaking, Canadian parents just leave the food on the table. They will not feed their kids. They say: ‘If you’re hungry, feed yourself. If you don’t want to eat, that’s your choice.’”* Chinese parents are always chasing after their children to feed them because they’re worried they’ll get hungry without proper nourishment.

### **Respecting the children**

Mrs. Du said *“Canadian parents treat their kids like an adult. They respect the kids. They are not like Chinese parents in China, who shout at their kids. I see so many Canadian parents at my daughter’s school. They talk to their kids in a respectful way.”*

In terms of taking some after-school programs, Mrs. Mi said: *“Canadian parents will communicate with their kids in advance, asking them if they are interested in it. They will see the kid’s reaction. Generally, most Canadian parents will communicate with their kids first.”* And after the children join the after-school program, Canadian parents are not like Chinese parents, who push their children. Mr. Yu said: *“They just support the kids to*

*fulfill their dreams if they have the talent.”*

***Parenting Differences between Chinese Mothers and Fathers***

My third research question was “Are the experience between Chinese mothers and fathers in parenting similar or different? What are the similarities or differences?” In summarizing the ten participants’ first voice, I found a significant difference between Chinese immigrant mothers and fathers, as shown in the following table.

<b>Mother</b>	<b>Father</b>
full-time domestic worker	full-time bread winner
daily life caregiver	direction guider
attention to everything	ignorant of details
closer to the child	more rational
Peacemaker	model to the son

More details would be found under the following two themes:

***Theme 5: Parenting experiences of Chinese immigrant mothers.***

**Full-time domestic worker**

All the Chinese immigrant mothers in my study did similar things every day at home. Mrs. Du shared with me her typical day.

After they leave home, I start cleaning. She has her lunch at school. I will pick her up after school in the afternoon. If the weather is nice, she will play with her friends for a while, for an hour or half an hour. I will wait for her on the side. When we get home, we have a snack first. If we get home early, she will watch her favorite show. I don’t allow her to watch other programs after that one. I give her that restriction. I am afraid that watching TV too much will harm her eyes. Then she will read her books and I will help her if she needs me. Then it is time to learn Chinese for half an hour. Sometimes, it may be a little bit longer. Then, at

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4:30, she practices piano. When she goes to her piano class, her instructor will put notes in her book showing her how to practice for the whole week, such as play this or that five or ten times. I ask her to practice by following the teacher's notes. While she is playing the piano, her dad will come back home. I will cook supper. Her dad will supervise her in playing the piano. When supper is ready, we will eat together. After supper, she will play with her toys or ask me to skip rope with her a little while. Then she will read books we borrowed from the library. Her dad is on the internet most of time. I will help her have a bath. She will go to bed around 8:30 or 9:00. She needs me to send her to bed, and just to lie down with her for a while to keep her company. She just needs me to stay with her. So, that's pretty much my day.

Most of the mothers in my study were either students or full time housewives.

### **Daily life caregiver**

It seemed to be the natural responsibilities of the mothers to take care of their children. Mr. Wu gave me his understanding of a mother's role at home: *"Mothers will teach the children about daily life."* Mr. Yu told me the way he looked at his wife. *"Mum takes care of the whole family's food health. She pays attention to the details. She can prepare something for today and something different for tomorrow. If I did it, being simple would be my answer. She is attentive while I am careless."*

The details of her typical day as revealed by Mrs. Wu showed her strong sense of responsibility towards her daughter. *"I wake up around 7. My child wakes up a little bit later. I try to give her more time to sleep. If I have class at 8:30, I have to leave home at 8. I have to send her to an after-school program. If I have more time, I will take her to school by myself."*

### **Attention to everything**

Mothers cared a lot and paid more attention to details than fathers. As a mother, Mrs. Yu noted: *“Mothers can’t help themselves – they’re always nagging about everything.”*

### **Closer to the children**

Chinese immigrant mothers took care of their children all day, preparing the breakfast everyday, sending the children to the school, picking them up from school, dealing with things that happened to the children at school, helping them with homework, cooking supper, and sending them to bed. Mothers showed their care and love to their children by everything they did. Mrs. Wu stated that *“My daughter really relies on me.”*

Mrs. Yu’s children liked sharing their experiences with her after school. She explained it as: *“Men may not be as attentive as women.”*

### **Peacemaker at home**

In family life, the mothers also played a role as a peacemaker.

Mrs. Yu gave me an example.

One time, he had an argument with his father. And I brought him to the bedroom and told him ‘When your dad says something, please don’t answer back like that. You should show your respect to him. When your dad is talking, you just listen to it. Later, I will talk to him about it. You see, what your dad said makes sense to him, and you should respect that. If you think you are right but can’t persuade your dad, you don’t need to argue with him. Mum understands you.’

She tried to show her support for her son while still wanting to maintain the father’s authority at home. She separated them first and talked to them separately by showing her understanding and support. This strategy worked very well, she said. Mrs. Mi also used a similar strategy when her daughter had conflicts with Mr. Mi.

***Theme 6: Parenting experiences of Chinese immigrant fathers.***

**Full-time bread winner**

The fathers in most families in my study were full-time bread winners for the whole family. When I asked what his typical day was, Mr. Wu said *“I wake up, have something to eat and then go to work.... I will be back around 5:20. By then, supper is ready. We have supper together. I wash the dishes and then go for a swim. When I come back, my daughter is already in bed.”* As with many other Chinese fathers in my study, Mr. Wu spent a lot of time at work. In other words, he was a full-time bread winner.

**Direction guider**

In contrast to how the mother’s paid attention to every detail, the Chinese immigrant fathers focused on the “big” issues, such as piquing the children’s interest in a future career.

Mr. Wu positioned his father role thus: *“As a father, I do more things to help prepare my daughter live on her own in society in the future.”*

Mr. Ni perceived that he took the responsibility for his child’s cognitive and psychological development while the mother took responsibility for child’s physical development. *“I think fathers should do something to help direct the children, to pique their interests and hobbies.”*

**Ignorance of details**

Because Chinese fathers applied most of their energies to their work and the “big” issues such as guiding the career direction of the child, they did not pay as much attention to details in daily life as Chinese mothers did.

Mrs. Yu explained how Mr. Yu disciplined their children: *“Dad usually will not be too particular about trifles. He only will say something at the key point and by then the*

*children will be quiet.”*

### **More rational**

Mrs. Ni thought fathers kept some distance with their children emotionally. Mrs. Yu summarized it as: *“The mother is more emotional, while the father is more rational.”*

### **Model to the son**

All the participants mentioned gender as a factor affecting parenting. They believed that fathers affected the son more and should therefore show a good model to the son.

Mr. Du said *“A father, of course, traditionally, he will affect his son more.”*

As the father of two sons, Mr. Yu automatically assumed strong responsibilities towards his sons, saying: *“To sons, fathers should be a model.”*

### ***Supports and Services Available to Chinese Parents***

My fourth research question was “What supports or services do Chinese immigrant parents identify as being available to them as parents?”

From my study, I found that Chinese immigrant parents identified hospitals, Family Centers and child benefits as services and supports that directly affected them as parents; all the children’s programs – ESL (English as a Second Language), YMCA (Young Mens Christian Association), ISIS (Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services), after-school programs, community recreation center, library, church, IWK (Izaak Walton Killam) Chinese Parents' Group, etc. – they considered as services and supports that affected *them indirectly as parents. More details can be found under Theme 7.*

### ***Theme 7: Services and supports available to Chinese immigrant parents.***

We live in a world based on new technology. With their high education background, all the participants had the ability to use the internet to explore the world. Indeed, the

internet was the most popular method for them to learn all kinds of news, including parenting information. As Mrs. Yu said: “*You can find anything on the internet.*”

Besides the internet, hearing from other Chinese friends was another important way for Chinese immigrant parents to find out information on parenting. During the process of the participant recruitment, I used the approach of snowballing – starting from one person I knew and finally getting ten. I felt that spreading the information through friends was a common and important way for the immigrant parents to access the world outside.

The services and supports available to the Chinese immigrants as parents can be divided into two categories. The first is the services and supports for the parents themselves. The second category involves services and supports for the children, which is an indirect way of helping parents in parenting.

### **For Chinese immigrant parents**

When I asked parents what kinds of services and supports they got for their parenting, they could not mention very many. Services and supports they felt available and helpful for them were: hospital, Family Centers, and Child Benefits.

#### Hospital

Children from four families were all born in Canada or other Western countries. It was the first time for these Chinese immigrants to be parents. They had not had any real experience with parenting before the birth of their first child, and their extended families were all back in China. The staff in the hospital (IWK in Halifax) became the first direct person to teach these new Chinese parents the basic parenting skills, such as how to feed the babies, how to change the diapers, etc. Parents felt it was very helpful.

Ms. Du recalled:

During the days I was in the hospital, the doctors there would teach me how to

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raise a child. There are pediatricians and doctors of obstetrics and gynecology. Especially the pediatricians, they not only checked up but also provided consulting services. Three months, getting vaccinations regularly, especially when the child was very young, the vaccination intervals were very short. They told me when the baby should get a vaccination, how parents should raise a child, what I should do as a next step, and how I should help the child sleep by herself – all this information I got from the pediatricians.

### Family Center

Four out of the five families had never heard of the Family Center before. They had no idea what it was for. Only Mrs. Mi and her husband mentioned the Family Center as a helpful resource for their parenting. When their daughter was born, they lived in a small community outside of Halifax in Nova Scotia because Mr. Mi got a job there. As a first-time mother, Mrs. Mi was very nervous and had no idea how to raise her daughter in a proper way. One day, she was walking her daughter and saw a place called the Family Center, but had no clue what this place was. On a whim, she walked in, wanting to kill some time. She was welcomed by the staff there and met another new Chinese mother she knew. Since then, they joined a lot of activities at the Family Center. Both Mr. and Mrs. Mi went to a workshop called “Nobody Is Perfect”, which was a big help when they were desperate for parenting skills. Mrs. Mi told me:

Later, I went to a Family Center by chance. We had been living there for about three years. A lady in her fifties came over and told me, ‘If you don’t know how to deal with something, just step back, observe first, and look at what the child will do. As long as you make sure she is safe, you just let her take you to explore this world. Give her the chance to try. You don’t need to make all her decisions for

her first.’ After that, any time I didn’t know what to do, I remembered this lady’s words, calmed down, and observed what my daughter was doing.

### Child benefits

In the study families, there was only one person (most of them fathers) who worked to support the whole family financially. The parents were grateful for the government child benefit support payment. Back in China, there was no such support offered by the government.

Mrs. Du explained the child benefits program to me:

Canada has a good welfare system. When we got here, we were not immigrants yet. But as long as you had been living in Canada for half or one year, you could apply for the CCTB (Canada Child Tax Benefit). All kids under 18 years of age are eligible. They also check your family income. If you have a very high family income, you won’t get it. When you get your permanent resident card, you can get another benefit, I don’t know what people call it, one hundred dollars a month – it’s for kids under 6 years of age.

Mr. Mi mentioned another kind of child benefit to me.

All these (recreation) programs are supported by the government. It doesn’t cost too much. You also can claim it for a tax return. Generally, you can claim around five hundred dollars. It depends on which age group your child belongs to. General speaking, it is for kids under fifteen years of age.

### **For the children**

In addition to the services and supports parents obtained, children received further support from a variety of organizations. Below are the services and supports mentioned by the Chinese immigrant parents in my study:

- ESL (for children at schools)
- YMCA (youth programs for children)
- ISIS (free daycare for young children)
- After school programs
- Community recreation Centers (activities for children)
- Library (activities for children)
- Church (activities for children)
- IWK Chinese parents' group (Chinese children can play together).

Parents tried to give their children a happy childhood by sending them to join the activities as much as they could. But, due to some barriers, the parents did not feel they received the continual support they anticipated. I will provide further details about barriers Chinese immigrant parents encountered in the following section.

### ***Barriers in Terms of Accessing the Supports***

My fifth research question was “What barriers, if any, do Chinese immigrant parents identify in terms of accessing such supports?”

From my study, I found limited information channels, a lack of geographically close places and facilities, time conflicts, age restrictions and language difficulties were significant barriers Chinese immigrant parents identified in terms of accessing the relevant services and supports. Further details can be found under Theme 8.

### ***Theme 8: Barriers to accessing supports.***

When Chinese immigrants tried to access services and supports for their parenting, they encountered some barriers which varied in significance levels.

### **Lack of information channels**

It was impressive when ten out of ten participants told me they did not know where to find the information for themselves and for their children in terms of parenting. When I asked them what were the difficulties for them in accessing some services and supports in terms of parenting, Mr. Yu replied: *“There may be some programs for parents, but we don’t know where they are and how to get there.”*

Although Mrs. Mi joined the Family Center in a small community they lived before, she told me she had initially had no clue what the Family Center was, even though she had passed it many times. *“I had known about [the Family Center] there for a long time, but I didn’t know what it was for.”* She had never heard of a Family Center back in China, and nobody here explained to her what it was for, either. If she had not walked in by chance, she might never have known about the Family Center and the supports it offered.

### **Lack of geographically close places and facilities**

Even if they knew where to go, the study parents felt it was too far. Mr. Mi’s family was the only one who accessed the Family Center. When they moved to Halifax because his job was here, they found some Family Centers, but gave up going, saying: *“It is too far to get there. The one we went to before was only a couple of minutes by car or ten to twenty minutes by foot.”* They did not bother to go after that.

Due to not having anywhere to go, Mrs. Ni explained why her sons did not spend much time outside. *“There is not very much to do outside. They have to stay in the yard, but doing what? It’s better if they stay inside watching TV or playing computer games.”*

### **Time conflict**

#### **Conflicts between parents’ time and activity time**

When I asked Mrs. Ni whether she joined any activities at her sons’ school, she said: *“I don’t have time. All the activities are during the day. His teacher called me asking me*

*whether I could come or not, but I have to go to school during the day. I don't have time."*

Conflicts between children's time and activity time

When both parents and their children had some time on the weekend, they could not find many activities to do. Mrs. Wu said: *"I only know there are some activities in the public libraries. But my child has to go to school from Monday to Friday. On the weekend, I don't know where to find programs."*

**Age restrictions**

Mrs. Wu had always brought her daughter to the Chinese Parents' Group before. But when her daughter turned seven, she was out of the service age (under 6). She said *"There is an age restriction for the Chinese Parents' Group at the IWK."* I could see the disappointment on her face.

Similar problems were encountered at the Family Center. Mrs. Mi and her husband had tried to access the Family Centers when they initially moved to Halifax, but they found the door was closed to them because their daughter was school age by then. Mrs. Mi commented: *"I went to the Family Center, but they only provided services to pre-school kids."*

**Language barriers**

Language has always loomed large as a barrier for immigrants from non-English speaking countries.

Mr. Du said: *"Honestly – a newcomer doesn't know where to start. Even if you go on the internet, it doesn't mean you'll find anything. I think language is a huge problem. You can't understand many things on the internet."*

Language also hindered the parents from getting further support at school. When I asked Mrs. Mi in what situation she would deal with her daughter's school, she replied:

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I don't deal with her school too much. I don't know how to express myself in detail in English. For example, we Chinese care about the marks of the kids very much. But the teachers here don't think a 100 necessarily means the kids have high capabilities. Sometime, I feel it is hard for Chinese parents to explain our minds to teachers here. At the beginning, I worried a lot, but the teacher just said 'Don't worry'. I don't think I can get any good advice from her.

### ***Challenges for Chinese Parents in Raising Children in Canada***

My sixth research question was "What key challenges do Chinese immigrant parents identify in raising their children in Canada?"

I discovered from my study the following key challenges that faced Chinese immigrant parents: English, adjustment to the new environment, being busy at work or school, discrimination, and a lack of close family and friend support. The details can be found under Theme 9.

### ***Theme 9: Challenges of raising children in Canada.***

#### **English**

Mrs. Ni tried to make some local friends, but said "*My English is so poor, it is very hard to communicate with the local people.*"

#### **Adjustment to the new environment**

Adjusting to the new environment was the most challenging thing for Chinese immigrant parents.

Mrs. Mi relayed her confusion.

The most challenging thing is how to adjust to this society. The stories I shared just now showed you the way I deal with things at home, but I don't always know

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how to deal with things outside, such as on the playground. If my child has conflicts with other kids there, how should I deal with it? If a child is monopolizing the slide so that my child cannot play on it, what should I do to that kid? Should I yell at him? I don't want to break any laws here.

The Chinese immigrants in my study had heard of a lot of family tragedies that had happened to other Chinese parents because of cultural differences. For instance, the Chinese consider it natural for parents to spank their children as a common discipline approach. But, in consequence, some children have been taken away by child protection agencies after getting reports of what they considered "beatings" by the parents. Hearing of such things happening to Chinese immigrants in Western countries, the parents became nervous about their parenting. As Mrs. Mi put it: *"I am kind of scared that somebody will call the police on me if he thinks I'm not dealing with things properly, and give me a bad record. I will be in a big trouble. I am really worried about this."*

### **Being busy at work or school**

As the only breadwinner of their respective families, almost all of the fathers in my interviews had to work very hard to earn more money and keep their job.

Mrs. Mi said: *"Parents are busy at work everyday, especially immigrant parents. We have to work harder to keep our position. All of our energy is expended at work. You want to think about parenting, but you just don't have time."*

Mr. Wu constantly worried about his job stability. *"Suppose I lose my job suddenly, how is my family going to survive? I have to think about that. I have to do a lot of thinking about that."*

One extreme example I recorded was Mr. Mi's family. The parents seemed to be running a relay race in taking care of their child. Mr. Mi had to work the night shift for a

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relatively long period and Mrs. Mi had to leave for school very early in the morning. Mrs. Mi described a typical day at her home:

If her dad has the night shift, I don't need to take care of her in the morning. Her dad will send her to school and I will take the bus to classes. Her dad will sleep during the daytime after the night shifts. In the afternoon, he will pick her up. Then she does her homework. He cooks the supper. He has to leave home at 5:30. If I get home before that, we will not have trouble. I will take over the care of my daughter. Then he goes to work, and I will stay home with my daughter at night.

As the mother left for school very early in the morning, she had to make sure her husband had come back from his night shift by then. Then she could leave without worrying too much. Mr. Mi got home in the morning and would stay at home the whole day. He was responsible for sending his child to school and bringing her back from after school programs. Later in the day, he had to make sure his wife came home from school on time so he could transfer his responsibility for his daughter to his wife. Their daughter was like a baton in their relay race.

To better fit into the new environment, getting a local education was necessary for Chinese. Many of the parents in my study had to go back to school at middle-age.

When their children needed some help, the parents did not always have the time to give them a hand. At the time of her interview, Mrs. Wu was in a two-year program at school. She said: *"Now, mostly she has to read by herself. I'm too busy. Her dad has to help her a little bit. I'm too busy to help her."* In addition to the English challenges from the classes they took, being students really took a lot of time and energy from these "Chinese mother students".

### **Discrimination**

Chinese immigrant parents had to deal with the discrimination issues brought back by their children from outside the home.

Mrs. Wu said her daughter once said to herself when she played at home: *“You Chinese don't know”*.

Mrs. Du sent her daughter to a summer camp one time. *“One day, a kid was playing with her and asked her where she was from. She said she was from China. And that kid said ‘stupid Chinese baby’.”*

When the children brought the discrimination issues back home, the parents always felt hurt. As Mrs. Du commented: *“I was very angry by then.”* But the parents did not have any concrete way to do something about it. After her daughter told her the story, Mrs. Du went to the summer camp the next day. *“I told them what happened to my daughter. The instructors were all teenagers. They were only fourteen- or fifteen-year-old kids. They did not know how to deal with such issues. They just told that kid not to say anything like that anymore.”* It seemed the instructors just treated this event as a general bullying issue between the children.

### **Lack of close family and friends support**

Living in Canada by themselves without any extended family members around them was a huge challenge for most of the study parents.

It took Mrs. Mi five years to get used to her new environment. *“In China, we have a close family relationship. My mother is from a big family. All the relatives get along very well. I like we get together with them. I like that atmosphere. But you don't have those close relationships here.”*

Mrs. Ni expressed the same feelings. *“I still feel that China is my home. Here, I don't*

*feel it's my home. You don't have close friends and extended families."*

Overall, the parents expressed sadness at the absence of close family and friend support, which was the most important external support you could get in China. All the pressure here was put on the parents' own shoulders.

### ***Significant Needs for Chinese Parents in Raising Children***

My seventh research question was "What do Chinese immigrant parents identify as their most significant needs in raising their children?"

To summarize the first voice of ten participants, I found family consultation services, language aids, help in adapting to the new environment, more information channels and more activities for the children with bi-cultural background were the most significant needs for Chinese immigrant parents in raising their children. More details can be found under theme 10.

### ***Theme 10: Needs in raising the children in Canada.***

#### **Family consultation service**

The participant parents were isolated from their families and close friends back in China. If they had been in China, they would have a lot of people to act as supports and they would not feel lonely. However, in Canada, they did not have any close relationships with anyone outside their immediate families. All the stress fell on the shoulders of the Chinese couples. Because of this, they needed to know where to get help for family problems.

Mrs. Mi was upset by the disagreements about parenting between her and her husband. For example, she wanted her daughter to eat something good for her health while Mr. Mi thought it was too harsh to force the young girl to eat something she did not

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like. Mrs. Mi said:” *I feel I am stuck here and can't find the way out.*” When the parents had some problems regarding parenting, they needed to know who could help them.

When Mrs. Mi's daughter turned seven years old, she became ineligible to take part in programs at the Family Center any more. Mrs. Mi felt she had been cast adrift:

Now if I have some problems with trying to help my child at her age, I don't know who I should talk to. I don't have the option to turn to the Family Centre anymore. As for other organizations that can provide such services, I don't know what they are. I cannot find an open door at all.

Although she could turn to her few Chinese friends here, Mrs. Mi said in reference to these: *“the source is limited. I don't feel I get the right advice or know how to do the next step.”* Everybody has their own understanding about the new culture and laws here. In contrast, the participant parents wanted to know what the people or experts here said about family issues.

### **Language aids**

As language was a very important tool for exploring their new world, the parents felt it would be very helpful to get a language aid.

When the newcomers arrived in Canada, their English was not very good. Recalling her own experiences, Mrs. Mi said *“If language translation services were provided, it would be very useful to new Chinese immigrants.”*

All the parents, without exception, still had a strong desire to get help with improving their English even though they had been in Canada for a while. Mrs. Ni said: *“Even now, I still hope to get some help with improving my English.”*

### **Help in adapting to the new environment**

The immigrant parents had a very high desire to learn their new culture from local

Canadian people. Mrs. Mi expressed her preference to learn from local Canadian people directly.

By then, I just wanted to get rid of my Chinese circle of acquaintances and learn from the local people how they raised their children. It helped me a lot. I don't want to work in a company owned by Chinese. I just want to learn more about the culture here, to see how the people deal with things, how they cope with some specific situations. You can never learn this in a Chinese circle.

The Chinese immigrant parents also needed the chance to get together with other parents to have a wide-ranging conversation about experiences adjusting to the new environment. Mrs. Ni said: *"I hope there is a chance for people to communicate and share. We Chinese parents are too busy to do so in our daily life."*

### **More information channels**

Chinese immigrant parents need more information provided specifically for them. Mrs. Ni wished there was more information available for newcomers. *"For newcomers, I hope there will be more information for them, all kinds of information, such as how to apply for different ID cards."* Applying for different kinds of cards may seem natural to native-born Canadians, but newcomers might not be familiar with it at all.

As the participant parents had a high educational background, they thought it would be useful if newcomers were able to visit some websites that included all kinds of information for family settlement in Canada. Mrs. Du said: *"I hope somebody can create a website where you can find all kinds of information for newcomers."* Although there were already some websites for newcomers, they were not specifically for immigrant families. Such websites as [www.elifelife.com](http://www.elifelife.com) were mainly for international students.

To the existing immigration organizations, Mrs. Yu advised they should collect

information for newcomers. *“I wish organizations such as ISIS (Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services) could update their information monthly.”* Because these organizations were well-known, if they provided this information, the website would be useful to newcomers.

### **More activities for the children with bi-cultural background**

One of the most important reasons Chinese moved to Canada was to get a better future for their children. Thus, anything that benefited their children, the Chinese immigrant parents would consider a big help with their parenting.

At home, the parents tried to keep a Chinese environment, teaching their children Chinese, cooking Chinese meals, arranging rooms in a Chinese way, and so on. However, as the parents knew the children had to deal with the world outside of the home, they did not want them to suffer from a disassociation between their home and their new outside environment. To counteract the problems that differences between the two cultures could bring, the parents were looking for some programs that specifically helped immigrant children build their own strategies to cope with cultural conflicts.

Mrs. Mi expressed her high hopes for these programs for the children from immigrant families. *“I really hope they can get some programs to help our children adjust to their new society. We parents can only help them with Chinese at home, but they have to learn how to deal with the local people.”* Mr. Mi had similar considerations:

Parents need to be taught how to raise their children in a bi-culture environment, especially for eastern-western culture conflicts. For children like ours coming from another country or being born here, we need to know how to help them adjust to the conflicts.

Chinese immigrant parents also wished for more recreation programs for the children

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from different age groups, more facilities, and more time options. Mr. Du remarked: *“I Hope my child could have more friends of her age and with a similar background. We could use more playgrounds.”* Mr. Ni agreed: *“They need to provide more varied facilities, so we can have more options.”* For her part, Mrs. Mi was confused about where to send her daughter to join some programs. She stated: *“I Hope there will be organizations like that soon. If our children can get involved in their programs more frequently, [it will help with] connecting to the world outside [and] opening their eyes.”*

## Chapter 6: Discussion

I used an interpretive phenomenology approach to carry out my research on the parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants with school-age child in the HRM. In Chapter 5, the first voice from Chinese immigrant parents in terms of their bi-cultural parenting experiences, their attitudes, perceptions, expectations, practice and meanings describing their bi-cultural parenting experiences from their own standpoint were shown in ten themes.

The interpretive phenomenologist, rather than seeking purely descriptive categories of the real, perceived world in the narratives of the participants, will focus on describing the meanings of the individuals' being-in-the-world and how these meanings influence the choices they make. Thus, in this chapter, as a Chinese immigrant with professional training in family studies, I, the researcher, who had the dialogues with the Chinese parents to explore their real parenting experiences, will describe the meanings of the individuals' parenting experiences and investigate how these meanings influenced the parenting method they chose.

The study confirmed the significance of culture-specific social systems of support for Chinese immigrant parenting. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory served as a foundation upon which the development and implementation of this study was built.

### *Parenting Duties*

It is the responsibility of parents to provide for the physical, emotional, educational and social needs of their children. The parents in my study seemed to focus most on their children's **physical** and **educational** needs.

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To make sure their children were physically healthy, Chinese parents encouraged them to engage in sports suited to their age and body types. Swimming, gymnastics and skating were common sports the parents chose for their children. As well, the participant parents – especially the mothers – took very seriously their responsibility to cook healthy Chinese meals for their family every day.

As for children's educational development, all Chinese immigrant parents in my study thought it was important for their children to get an education. While they did not want to push their children too hard, they did hope some day that the children at least would finish university, which they believed would lead to a bright future for their children in society. In their daily life, the parents paid a lot of attention to their children's schooling. They helped them with homework, gave them extra training in math at home, and read English or Chinese books to them. One mother even scheduled a regular time to formally teach her child Chinese at home every day.

Besides schooling, the parents looked to the after-school programs as a kind of special skills education opportunity. They supervised the children to practice the piano, and urged them to go to Chinese language school every Sunday afternoon. The parents hoped their children would gain some specific skills, such as bi-lingualism, through after-school programs. Being able to play the piano or being bi-lingual were thought by Chinese immigrant parents to be strengths that would help their children compete with their counterparts in the future.

All in all, the study parents paid significant attention to the educational development of their children, and their children had good academic performance at school. Researchers in Britain also noted that British-Chinese pupils stood out prominently as high achievers within the British education system. The authors believed the high value

placed on education by the Chinese in Britain was only one aspect which might contribute to their educational achievement (Francis & Archer 2005).

Why do Chinese parents value education so much? China is the most populous nation on earth. To get one's share of the limited resources, one must be able to compete. Moreover, in Chinese society, doing mental work instead of physical labor is an ideal. Based on this value, education becomes a means to obtain the requisite mental skills to prepare for a career in mental labor work. The parents in my study all went through severe competition in their thirty years living in China. I could say, at some level, they were examples of the success of education. Valuing education became a natural thing for Chinese parents. Also, as Francis (2005) suggested, this construction of 'value of education' also became a strategy in the face of difficult socio-economic conditions for immigrants, by which the British-Chinese could mobilize an ethnically particular cultural capital to progress social class mobility. Chinese parents all believed and hoped that their children would at least finish university, which would lead them to a bright future.

As for their children's social development, the Chinese parents, having lived in Canada for many years, realized the importance of social skills, and so they paid close attention to the social development of their children. They strove to train them to be independent as well as sociable to get along with people.

As for emotional support, the study parents did not openly or explicitly show their love to the children as much as Canadian parents did. General speaking, Chinese is an implicit culture; Chinese people do not directly express their feelings in daily life. The parents had lived in China for more than twenty years, and they were used to the way their own parents had not shown their love directly. They found it difficult to say "I love you" to their children, preferring instead to let the children feel their love.

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The immigrant parents did not spend a lot of quality time playing with their children, either. Most of the participants told me they were too busy to spend time with their children at home. As well, after a long day of hard work, they are too tired to play.

In all, the attention that the Chinese immigrant parents paid to the emotional and psychological development of their children was not as much as they paid to their physical and educational development.

### *Parenting Styles*

According to Baumrind's parenting style theory, Western researchers assumed that parents from Western cultures preferred an authoritative parenting style, while Chinese parents preferred an authoritarian one. Although Chinese immigrant parents admired the "authoritative" way Canadian parents dealt with their children, the authoritarian parenting style was still the favored and most "natural" learned method used by the Chinese immigrant parents in my study.

One mother said she admired the way Canadian parents had a discussion with their children before they made decisions, and she tried to deal with her child in that way, too. But in a real situation, her first reaction was still rejection. The Chinese parents willingly played the role of authority figure and easily refused their child permission to do something or forced their child to do something, if necessary. In my study, I found Chinese parents generally used more coercive techniques to gain compliance, with little parent-child dialogue, which were typical characteristics of authoritarian parenting style as defined by Baumrind (1978).

During the course of this study, an interesting Chinese word came to my attention. Instead of using the word "Parents", in Chinese, people frequently use the term "Jia

Zhang”, which means “family head”. Through this word, the relationship between Chinese parents and their children is explicitly made unequal. “Family head”, parents and “family follower”, children are inherently relegated not to be at the same level as “friend”. The child is just a child, a follower, while parents are a “family head”, an authority. Chinese culture values mutual obligation, including strong parental responsibilities and children’s obedience, which is the typical authoritarian parenting style as stated by Baumind in her parenting style theory.

I noticed that the Chinese immigrant parents in my study did also occasionally use an authoritative style in parenting, such as applying “reasoning” to discipline their children. But why did they prefer to use authoritarian style in their parenting practice? In their study, Xu et al., (2005) suggested that the aspects of a family’s eco-cultural settings, such as the mother’s endorsement of Chinese cultural values and perceived parenting stress, contributed to their parenting styles and interaction with their children. Thus, a Chinese mother’s parenting distress positively predicted authoritarian parenting. The author explained how mothers with high levels of parenting distress might be overwhelmed by their parenting responsibilities. Possibly, these mothers might feel incompetent or helpless when interacting with their children. As a result, these mothers might become easily upset by their children’s noncompliance and choose to use controlling and power-assertive methods in response to their children’s disobedience (Xu, et al., 2005)

The parents in my study were isolated from their Canadian peer parents. If Xu et al., (2005) explanation of a mother’s authoritarian style is correct, I could find the consistency in my study to explain why the Chinese immigrant parents preferred authoritarian parenting styles in practice. On one hand, the values from Chinese culture were still held mainly by them. On the other hand, without close family or friends’

support, without the necessary social support, they had to put all the pressure from adjusting to the new country on their own shoulders. As a result, these Chinese parents became easily upset by their children's noncompliance and chose to use "curse", "forcing" methods in response to their children's disobedience.

Baumrind's theory on parenting indicates authoritarian parenting styles generally lead to children who are obedient and proficient, but they rank lower in happiness, social competence and self-esteem. However, I had different findings through my research. All the Chinese parents in my study were proud of their children, who were good at almost everything at school as evaluated by their teachers. From the interviews and some observations, I had the perception that the Chinese children had a very close relationship with their parents (especially their mothers). It seemed that the authoritarian parenting style used naturally by Chinese immigrant parents did not have a negative impact on their children.

Other researchers also did not find the cold effect of authoritarian parenting on the children. Stevens et al. (2007) argued that Dutch children perceive parental discipline primarily as rejection, whereas Moroccan immigrant children perceive discipline to be, to some extent, attention or support. Kim's (2002) found Korean-American children raised in "the Korean way" (at least at home), considered authoritarian parents to be positive parental figures, and even see authoritarian parenting style as appropriate, which went against what Baumrind's theory had predicted.

Researchers and clinicians are aware good parenting involves more than just being warm and loving. Parents also need to set firm limits if their children are to develop into socially competent individuals. The obvious reality is good parents know when it is appropriate, and when it is not appropriate, to set limits (Greenspan, 2006). Parenting is an art, in which parents need to keep a balance between the "controls" and "warmths,"

depending on specific situations. It seems clear there is no one specific parenting style that is better than any other. Which parenting style is best to use will depend on the context, culture, age of children and the general beliefs of parents. For parenting practice, I believe it would be useful to educate parents to keep a balance between disciplines (controls) and love (warmth), rather than just label parents as authoritative or authoritarian.

### ***Father's Role in Parenting***

Most of fathers in my study played a traditional role as the breadwinner of the family. They were the only breadwinner to support the family financially without any extended family support, which made the responsible Chinese immigrant fathers very stressed. It might be one of the important reasons that they did not spend enough quality time with their children at home. Being busy at work also kept them uninvolved in the daily life of their children. That was why they might have limited understanding of their children and knowledge of child development, as their wives asserted.

Nevertheless, and in total contrast to their “more traditional” fathers in China, the Chinese immigrant fathers shared some domestic work with their wives. In my study, all the fathers helped their wives in domestic work actively. If the mother cooked, the father would help wash the dishes. If the mother went to school in the early morning, the father would take the child to school. I would say they mostly played an assistant role in taking care of the children. The main parenting duty for Chinese immigrant fathers was paying attention to the educational development and the direction of the child's future career. They had a serious and rational image at home. Chinese fathers played role models especially to the sons, showing them masculine characteristics such as being brave,

strong, etc.

In sum, in parenting, the Chinese immigrant father was a breadwinner, a household assistant, an authoritative parent, a direction guider of the child, and a role model for the son.

### *Dealing with Schools*

Chinese immigrant parents held a laudatory attitude to Canadian school system. They liked the loose education environment, which they found to be totally different to China's educational environment. They were happy with the social and practical skills their children learned at school. They loved how the teaching method in Canada shaped their children to be creative, independent, and earnest of public welfare. They were amazed to see the fast progress of their children's reading capabilities.

But every coin has two sides. Because the education environment was loose here, the Chinese parents felt it did not provide sufficient pressure to motivate their children. The school paid more attention to training in reading and social skills than in math, and the parents did not think the math education at school was enough to properly prepare their children.

Chinese immigrant parents expected the school to put some pressure on the children and teach them more knowledge. When they found the school would not change for them, they took the responsibility to "train" their children at home. As the children did quite well at reading, they focused more on math training at home by making some math exercises, teaching them multiplication tables, and joining on-line math training programs. As researchers found, it might be due to this high value put on mathematical education, children in China, Japan, and other East Asian countries outperformed their American age

peers on numerous mathematical tasks (Siegler and Mu 2008). Because they thought their children did not have enough pressure or homework, to keep their children busy, the parents sent their children to after-school programs to gain some skills. Gradually, the after-school programs became part of schooling for the children. Chinese immigrant parents sent the children to the programs, taking notes during the classes and supervising them in practicing everyday as a routine. They hoped their children would do better and better and gain skills that would benefit them in the future.

Although Chinese parents did have some disagreements with their children's schools, such as they hoped the teacher could teach their children more "real" knowledge like math, etc., they mostly kept all these objections to themselves and never argued with the school authorities. One parent told me the teacher was not happy when one Chinese parent tried to have a discussion with her about these disagreements. Poor English and different values of education from different cultures might be the reasons for the unfruitfulness of discussions between Chinese parents and the teachers. Perhaps recruiting Chinese parents into a parent-advisory group at school would be a viable way to allow the two sides to hear from each other and understand each other better.

### ***External Support***

In general, the Chinese immigrant parents described their life in Canada as "very simple". They had left extended family far behind in China and moved to Canada long ago. Coming from a society where extended family and close friends were the most important resources for help, the immigrant parents felt isolated from mainstream society in their Canadian apartments. Regardless of whether they had lived here six or sixteen years, they did not have any real Canadian friends to lean on. One mother attributed it to

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being the result of living in the apartment. However, if this were the real reason, my question is how is it then possible for Chinese immigrants to make some Chinese friends? Poor English, not knowing how to deal with Canadian people and their customs, and not actively having Canadian culture introduced to them seemed to be more viable reasons for their lack of Canadian friends.

The parents in my study did not belong to any groups here, either. Some Chinese (not my participants) went to the Chinese church regularly. The main reason was the Chinese church served as a Chinese network to help maintain their social life. But if you really did not share the faith, you were reluctant to go.

Having no extended family here, no way to make Canadian friends, and being reluctant to join religious groups, the Chinese immigrant parents in my study were truly isolated from mainstream society. They had been in Canada quite a long time, but they were still living on the sidelines. They had only made a couple of Chinese friends by chance. Their children faced a similar situation, the main difference being that they would get more actively involved in the world (such as at their schools) and outside the home.

Lack of strong back-up meant that the Chinese immigrant parents had to take all the pressures that happened to their family on their own shoulders.

Social support has been identified as a significant buffer for families during stressful situations. Chinese immigrants may be unfamiliar or may even hesitate to use the resources available because of their cultural differences or potential misunderstandings. For example, in my study, four out of five families never heard of a Family Centre and they did not know what Family Centre was for. Therefore, exposure of the Chinese family to various resources is an important component of their education (Lee & Weiss, 2009).

### *Culture Adjustment*

Based on the bi-dimensional model of Acculturation Theory, a four-fold typology placing the two cultural attitudes in an orthogonal arrangement, individuals can be classified as acculturated towards both (integrationists) or neither (marginalists) cultures, in addition to acculturation towards only one's own (separationists) or the other (assimilationists) culture (Berry, 1980).

Investigating the attitude of Chinese immigrant parents to Canadian and Chinese cultures in my study, I would categorize them as integrationists.

Chinese immigrant parents in my study all held a positive attitude to adjusting to their new environment. They believed that adapting to one's environment was the first principle of life. They tried hard to improve their English since the day they landed in Canada. They observed the way Canadians did things, hoping to learn from them. They sometimes shared some experiences with other Chinese friends here or on the internet. They also helped their children adapt to their new country, too. For instance, they learned to show love to their children by hugs, kisses, or saying "I love you", methods which are not common for traditional Chinese. They did not discipline their children by beating them anymore, which is the traditional Chinese punishment. Instead, they learned to use time-out techniques to discipline their children. They encouraged their children to be sociable, which they believed to be very important for living in Canada. All in all, they wanted to help themselves and their children to adjust to their new environment as quickly and as perfectly as possible.

However, as they had all grown up in China and had lived there for at least thirty years, some traditional ideas were already engraved deeply in their mind. Hsu (1985) asserted that an immigrant family took three or four generations to become acculturated.

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Marin (1992) suggested that acculturation occurred at three levels: consumption of foods and use of media; changes related to social interactions such as language use; and changes in values, norms, and worldview. The Chinese immigrant parents in my study might have been relatively acculturated in terms of this first level of acculturation, but less so in terms of the third level.

How to adjust to the new country was a huge issue for the Chinese immigrant parents, as was helping their children adapt to the new environment while at the same time keeping the good sides of their heritage culture alive. Parents could play an important role in helping their children maintain their heritage culture by speaking Chinese at home or encouraging them to know some other Chinese friends, but compared to the bigger environment outside of the home, the influence of one family and two parents was insignificant.

### *Services and Supports Available*

Services and supports available to Chinese immigrants as parents were limited. They could not mention very many. The staff at the hospital showed them some skills in being a new parent. The Family Center was another resource of supports, but it was mentioned by only one family, who only got the support for a short period. Financially, all families with only one breadwinner said they got support from Canadian child benefits.

Upon closer examination, I noticed that the services and supports the Chinese parents got were limited to physical and financial support and only for a short period. Staff in the hospital showed the new parents how to feed their babies and how to help them to go to sleep, etc. For other parenting issues, including the biggest one of how to adapt parenting to a bi-cultural context, the Chinese parents did not have a clue where to go for the help.

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While the Family Center supported one family a lot when their child was young, but the door was closed to the family as soon the child turned seven because of the program's age restriction.

Nowhere to get emotional support in parenting, nowhere to get information on parenting for school-age children, and nowhere to get advice on bi-cultural parenting, the Chinese parents were left to their own devices.

### ***Barriers***

There were limited services and supports available for Chinese immigrant parents. Moreover, even though some supports were available, the immigrant parents were still blocked from accessing them.

First of all, having not been informed that they could get social support for parenting, Chinese parents did not know they could ask for such help from Canadian society. In China, there was no social support for parenting. Young parents would lean on their extended family to get parenting support. The young mother in my study passed by the Family Centre many times, but because there was no such organization back in China, she had no idea what a Family Centre was. This was a barrier created from cultural differences.

Second, poor English stopped the parents from voicing their concerns to the school. The parents did not know how to express themselves sufficiently clearly to explain the culture difference to the teacher. Third, being busy at work during the daytime did not allow the parents to take part in many activities with their children. Fourth, age restrictions prevented the Chinese parents from accessing many services for parenting.

In sum, compared to their Canadian counterparts, in terms of accessing the services

and supports for parenting, Chinese immigrant parents had to face two significant barriers: language and culture differences.

### *Challenges*

Language was always a big challenge for Chinese immigrant parents. For a middle-aged person to learn to speak in a different language was not easy. Chinese immigrant parents were willing to be a learner in front of their children in terms of English learning.

Discrimination issues were brought back home by their children and Chinese immigrant parents had no efficient strategies to cope with these issues.

Adjustment to the new environment was an ongoing process for Chinese immigrant parents. They wanted to adjust to their new culture, but the challenge was that they did not know Canadian culture very well. One parent said she asked her Canadian colleague an improper question (she realized later from other people that it was improper), but the colleague just had a nice smile on her face. The fake information she got from her Canadian colleague led her to a wrong understanding of Canadian culture. In addition, learning a new culture with poor English and adjusting to a new culture was difficult.

Due to lack of external support, all the pressure had to be put on their own shoulders. This was another challenge for Chinese immigrant parents since moving to Canada.

### *Needs*

To face to the challenges above to adapt to their new environment, Chinese immigrant parents were desperate for help in learning English and learning Canadian culture.

Although Chinese immigrant parents could go to ESL school to get the English help, all the classmates were immigrants with different accents. Personally, I do not think it is a

very good idea to learn English from other English learners with non-Canadian accents.

The organizations providing parenting or family consultation services would be more attractive if they could provide language aid, such as translation services in Chinese. Although I knew that some organizations (such as the IWK) did provide translation services, my participants did not know how to access to them.

Chinese immigrant parents wanted to learn Canadian culture from Canadians directly. They wanted to see how Canadians deal with specific parenting issues.

Chinese parents also need more information related to their life from all kinds of channels. The information they could access was very limited.

Although the parents in my study did not have any extended family or other continual back-ups, the strange thing was they did not mention social support as being part of their needs at all. I guessed there were two reasons for this – objective and subjective. Objectively, they did not have extended family here and so it was useless to expect their help; subjectively, in Chinese tradition, they were not used to turning to external support beyond their family for parenting help. They did not mention social support as a major need, but continual social support was what they really needed in the process of adapting to their new environment.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

### *Conclusions*

Parenting is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Based on the findings, discussion in the earlier chapters, I summarized the parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants in my study as:

Duties: Chinese immigrant parents gave more physical and educational than that of social and emotional support to their children.

Styles: Although Chinese immigrant parents admired the “friend” relationship between Canadian parents and children, in the practice, they still mostly chose authoritarian parenting style to raise their children.

Parent-child relationships: Chinese immigrant fathers had less of a close relationship with their children than that of the mother’s.

Parenting outcomes: Chinese children had good academic performance at school and they were more independent compared to their Chinese counterparts in China.

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) provides a good framework to understand the complexity of parenting. It guided me to initiate the interview questions to explore the bi-culture parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants covering the issues from microsystem, to mesosystem, to exosystem to macrosystem. Up to now, I had analyzed the Chinese immigrants’ bi-culture parenting experiences by these four systems separately.

In this Chapter, I tried to investigate how the interaction of structures within a system

and interaction of structures between systems affect Chinese immigrants' parenting experiences.

**Microsystem:** This is the closest layer in Ecological System to the child and contains the structure with which the child has direct contact. The microsystem encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with her immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000). Structures in this layer include family, school, neighbors etc. What is the “bi-directional influences” between parents and children in this layer?

Parents to children: Chinese immigrant parents held high value of education and put a lot of time in helping their children in schooling especially in math training, which lead to the children's high academic performance at school.

Children to parents: If the child's was noncompliant and disobedient, Chinese parents were easily to be upset and chose criticizing and forcing to discipline the child.

**Mesosystem:** This layer provides the connection between the structure of the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000), such as the connection between the child's parents and his teacher, the connection between his neighbors and his parents. How did these connections affect Chinese immigrant parenting experiences?

School to parents: Chinese immigrant parents did not think the math education at school was adequate to properly prepare their children. And so Chinese immigrant parents had to take the role as a teacher to train their children at home even they had so many other things to deal with in their daily life.

Parents to school: Chinese parents' voices were not heard by the school. With fluent English discussing with the teachers about some education issues from culture difference, Chinese parents were thought to lack trust to their children's teacher. Such kind of unhappy, unfruitful negotiation made Chinese parents keep quite with their

objections to schools.

Neighbors to parents: Chinese immigrants did not have close relationship with their Canadian neighbors. They did have a few good relationships with their Chinese neighbors. Chinese neighbors provided a social situation not only for parents to have somebody to talk to but also helped Chinese children make friends with similar backgrounds.

**Exosystem**: This is the layer defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structure in his microsystem (Berk, 2000).

Workplace to parents: Chinese fathers' workplace schedules kept them busy. They were the only breadwinners at home. They could not afford to lose this only job which supported the whole family. Being away from home at work, they did not have chance to spend time with the children. After a long busy day, they were too tired to play with their children.

Social welfare services to parents: In the view of only one member of the couple supporting the family financially, social welfare services such as child tax benefit did help the study families financially, but only slightly.

Community-based Family Centre to parents: Back in China, Chinese parents never heard of a Family Center and did not have any idea what it was for. Nobody here in Canada actively introduced it to Chinese parents. Even Chinese parents learned about and benefited from the programs at the Family Centre, because of the age restriction, they had no clue where to get help for their school-age children. When they had problems in terms of parenting, marriage, they just closed themselves in their apartment, grasping pieces of information on the internet to work on their own. Unfortunately, the disagreement on the

parenting between the mother and the father was still there.

Extended family to parents: Obviously, a huge challenge for Chinese immigrant parents was lack of extended family support which was the biggest support in Chinese culture. Chinese parents had to learn how to ask for the external parental support in the new environment.

**Macrosystem:** This layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk, 2000). The effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers.

Language to parents: Canada is an English speaking country. Living in Canada, Chinese parents had to face the fact: English was the key to open the door to the new environment. All the programs and services were provided in English. Without capable English skills, the accessibility to any services would be challenging.

Cultural value, laws to parents: Although Canada is a multicultural country. The society was still divided by majority and minorities at some level. It is still a long way from turning Canada into a real multicultural integrated country. Lack of the policy for educational credential acknowledgement and equal opportunities to the labor force, the Chinese immigrant father had to live with great care to keep his jobs to support the whole family. It was hard for him to be relaxed to spend quality time with his child to show his emotional support.

After going through each layer in the Ecological System, checking the interaction between structures of each layer and Chinese immigrant parents' parenting, I highlighted two main problems in terms of immigrant parenting in the existed social system in HRM.

**Lack of external support:** Checking all the potential external support from neighbors, schools, hospitals, community-based Family Centers, the workplace, the

extended family, the government, and the whole Canadian society, there was only limited financial, physical support and only in a limited period.

**Parents' voice was hard to be heard:** The key to Ecological System is the interaction of structures with a layer and interactions of structures between layers. But through analysis above, I could not find much evidence to see how the Chinese parents affected the other structures in the whole system. Their voices were not heard by the other stakeholders, besides the limited support, they just suffered all the pressure from all the other structures in the Ecological System.

### ***Recommendations***

In consideration of analysis of the affection from structures in Ecological System to Chinese immigrant parenting experiences and the problems highlighted in the existed social system. I listed the following recommendations as the implantations for practice for all of those stakeholders who are interested in Chinese immigrant parenting issues.

#### **Families and parents:**

- Continually improve English
- Be open to any opportunities to learn Canadian culture
- Help children join Chinese groups
- Encourage the children to speak Chinese

#### **Schools and teachers:**

- Recruit Chinese immigrants into parent advisory groups
- Enlighten student to acknowledge and appreciate the difference, instill the ideas of equality to the students

#### **Community-based program and service planners and developers:**

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- Develop practical English training for Chinese immigrant by local English speakers
- Develop mentorship program to match Canadians or senior immigrants with Chinese immigrants to guide them to learn about the Canadian culture
- Develop series of Canadian culture education to Chinese immigrants
- Provide language aid for the programs to Chinese immigrant parents
- Develop support programs for immigrant fathers to help them balance work and life
- Add more information channels for the programs and services for Chinese immigrant parents
- All the relative organizations should build close partnership in terms of supporting immigrant parents consistently
- Chinese community should play an active role in keeping the Chinese heritage culture for Chinese children and supporting Chinese immigrant parents emotionally.

### **Government and Policy makers:**

- Dismiss discrimination among different ethnic groups, and provide an environment where everyone including immigrants has the equal opportunity to enter into the labor force and access to the relative services
- Devote major efforts to promote culture integration
- Create public policy that eases the work/family conflict
- Develop political and economic policies that support the importance of parents' roles in their children's development.

Although this study was to explore the bi-cultural parenting experiences of Chinese

immigrants, it also would shed light on the other ethnic groups. If this study will help foster societal attitudes that value work done on behalf of children at all levels: parents, teachers, extended family, mentors, work supervisors, legislators, that would be the most rewarding part of all of my efforts put into this research.

### ***Limitations and Considerations for Future Research***

One notable limitation is that the participants were not selected really randomly. There were five families participated in this research. Four of them introduced by the first participant were limited to either her school or neighbor circles. Thus, the structure of four families was highly similar: the husband was the only bread winner and the wife was student or housewife. It is acknowledged that the sample was too small and similar to be representative of the Chinese immigrant population in HRM.

Due to time limitations, this study only involved interviews with parents regarding their experiences in cross-cultural parenting. The evaluation of parenting outcomes only from parents was therefore incomplete. The family mentioned in this study refers to the so-called nuclear Family, as defined by Murdock (Murdock, 1949). A Nuclear Family consists of a husband, wife, and their children. In the 1980s, a strong consensus was developed by child development researchers regarding the need to study bidirectional effects – both the effects of the child on the parent and those of the parent on the child – in order to understand parent-child dynamics. The parent-child relationship in parenting is an interactive cycle, a circular process of mutual influence (Olson & Defrain, 2006, p.345). Future research may seek to include the perspectives of children, in order to evaluate parenting outcomes and gain greater understanding how the interaction between parents and children influence the parenting of the Chinese immigrant parents.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the Ecological System (detailed in Chapter 3), the ideal way to explore parenting is to consider input not only from inside the family but also from outside of the family. Input includes influences from schools and communities. Again, due to time limitations, teachers and community members were not interviewed for this study, though their input is hoped for and anticipated in future studies.

It would be beneficial to recruit the Chinese immigrant parents with younger (preschool) and older (high school) children to better understand issues related to bi-cultural parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants. Through the comparison between different age groups, it would help researchers to understand how the bi-cultural parenting experiences change with the children's development.

### ***The Advantages of the Researcher, Me, Being Chinese***

When I looked back at this valuable research journey, I feel my professional training in Family Studies, Developmental and Educational Psychology has prepared me to initiate, design and implement this research in a professional manner. Meanwhile, I believe being Chinese has helped me to get a lot of advantages in investigating Chinese immigrants' parenting experiences.

First, being Chinese, it was easy for me to build a trusting relationship with the Chinese parents in a short time period. Speaking the same language and coming from the same country, naturally gave the Chinese parents confidence that I, the researcher, could understand them. Building a good relationship is a good start to the interviews.

Second, using Mandarin, the native language for both Chinese parents and myself, helped the Chinese parents express themselves freely, with little language limitations, and helped me understand them better.

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Third, being Chinese helped me better understand the Chinese parents' stories and the meanings described by them. Before we moved to Canada, both the Chinese parents and I had lived in China for more than twenty years. We all knew the Chinese system well so, when they expressed their confusions about living in Canada, I completely understood where their confusions were coming from. Feeling my deep understanding of their stories, they would share more with me. For example, when the parents talked about the long process and having no idea about the Family Center, to realizing the external parenting support they could get from there. I could relate to the difficulties they went through because I knew in China there were no such agencies to support parents at all.

Fourth, being Chinese reduced my prejudice to the Chinese parents. Coming from the same culture and going through similar difficulties and frustrations, with deep understanding of their situations, I was not judgmental to their stories, which may seem awkward to some Canadians. For example, one parent taught her daughter very strictly to call the elder people by adding a title in front of their names, instead of calling them by their name directly. This is the Chinese cultures way for the younger people to show respect to the elders. It was very natural for me, and I would not be judgmental to this parent's behaviours at all. I can imagine it may be confusing for a Canadian researcher if he/she heard this story. He/she might ask why this parent was so hard to his/her child on such insignificant things.

Last but not least, being Chinese helped me have a keen insight into key information in the Chinese parents' stories. For instance, during the data analysis on the parenting styles of the Chinese parents, my attention was drawn to a Chinese word "Jia Zhang" (meaning "Family Head"), which was more frequently used than "Fu Mu" (meaning parents) by the Chinese. I believe the word "Jia Zhang" is very important in helping

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people understand the relationship between Chinese parents and their children. Researchers from other cultures might not notice this small, but important, word to understand Chinese parenting in the interviews.

In summary, being Chinese helped me build a good relationship with the participants, to listen to their stories with a non-judgmental attitude, to understand their parenting experiences better and to grasp the key information from their stories related to the research theme.

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## **Appendix A: Introduction Letter**

To understand parenting across culture experiences and develop training programs for Chinese parents in HRM (Halifax Regional Municipality), Nova Scotia, I invite you to take part in my study.

### **Who can take part in this study?**

Chinese parents who

- Came from mainland of China
- Should have at least finish high school
- Have at least 1 school-age child (6-10 years old)

### **Process**

- Both mother and father from the same family will be interviewed separately by researcher about the benefits as well as the challenges of parenting across culture in HRM.
- Each interview approximately 90 minutes and you will get \$20 for your active cooperation.

### **Contact information**

Please call or email Xiaomei Tian for registration and leave your contact information.

Tel: (902)488-0079 Email: [xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca](mailto:xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca)

**Appendix B: Invitation Letter\*\***

Title: Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants with School-age Children

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am a Master's student at the Department of Family Studies and Gerontology at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, N.S.

*The purpose:*

I am requesting your cooperation as a voluntary participant in this study, which I hope is going to help generate a more in-depth understanding of parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants with school-age children.

*Importance of study:*

Little is currently known about parenting across culture experiences and coping mechanisms of Chinese immigrants in Nova Scotia. Knowledge and awareness of the issues and concerns through research will provide evidence-based information which can help prioritize their needs and plan programs, advocate for relevant policies and services where necessary, and develop a framework for anticipating their parenting across culture needs. Understanding the immigrants parenting experiences and the way they integrate into society will also help with Nova Scotia's mandate of attracting, integrating and retaining immigrants in Nova Scotia.

Agreement and confidentiality of information: Should you agree to participate, I will call you to schedule a one-on-one interview, to take place sometime in May, 2010, at a place convenient to you. The interview will last about 90 minutes and will be tape-recorded. It will focus on your thoughts about your experiences of parenting across culture.

## Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants

Participation in the study may involve answering questions on parenting. You may choose not to answer any of the questions or stop the recording at any time.

All information gathered during this study will remain confidential. Your name will not appear on the tape, in presentations, or in any publications related to the study. All participants will be given a code number to protect their privacy; only the researcher (myself) will have access to the primary data, and I will strictly adhere to confidentiality rules. All data, including observation notes and audio files, will be destroyed once the study is concluded. You may withdraw at any time if you choose. Please be assured that you are under no obligation to agree to participate in an interview.

If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca) or telephone (902) 457-6296 / (902) 457-6390. Thank you for your consideration. Please send your participatory response via my e-mail:

[xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca](mailto:xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca) or contact me at (902) 488-0079.

Sincerely,

Xiaomei Tian (Master's student)

Department of Family Studies and Gerontology,

Mount Saint Vincent University

附录 B: 邀请信

研究课题: 中国移民的跨文化亲子教育经历

尊敬的女士/先生:

我叫田晓梅, 是 Mount Saint Vincent 大学 Family Studies and Gerontology 系的研究生, 正在进行一项跨文化亲子教育的研究, 希望得到您的支持。

研究目的:

希望您能自愿地参加这项跨文化亲子教育研究。依据研究的结果, 我希望能让人们对家中有学龄儿童的中国家长的跨文化亲子教育经历有更深刻的了解。

研究的重要性:

我查阅了大量文献, 却找不到多少当前关于中国移民在加拿大的跨文化亲子教育问题方面的文章。我期望通过这个研究能引起大家对跨文化亲子教育的关注, 倾听来自中国移民家庭的真实声音, 从而开发相应的教育项目, 影响相关的政策和服务, 建立起一个行之有效的社会支持模式满足中国移民的切实需求。深入了解中国移民的亲子教育经历以及他们融入新社会系统的方式, 开发有效的服务项目将使新斯科舍省吸引更多的移民在这里安居乐业。

协议书和保密措施:

如果你同意参加研究, 我会联系你安排今年 5 月份的某一天对你进行一对一的访谈, 时间和地点依你方便而定。整个访谈大约持续 90 分钟。为了日后分析, 我们的访谈过程将被录音。这个访谈将围绕着你的跨文化亲子教育经历而展开。你有权回答或不回答某些问题。所有我们访谈期间收集的数据(我做的笔记和录音)将完全对外保密。你的名字绝对不会出现在录音, 讲座和出版物上。我会为所有参与研究的家长分配一个编号来保护你的隐私。只有研究者(我)有权接触原始数据, 我将恪守保全被访者的隐私的责任。研究结果完全得出后, 所有数据将会被销毁。请记住: 你有完全权利自主决定参加或不参加这个访谈。

如果你想知道这项研究是怎样实施的, 想和不介入这项研究的第三方讨论一些相关的问题, 你可以与我们 Mount Saint Vincent 大学研究伦理委员会联系。他们的 email 是 [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca), 电话是(902) 457-6296 或 457-6390。

感谢您对这项研究的关注, 如果你确实有兴趣参加, 请发邮件或致电给我。我的联系方式是: 邮件: [xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca](mailto:xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca) 电话: (902) 488-0079

研究生: 田晓梅, Family Studies and Gerontology 系, Mount Saint Vincent University

**Appendix C: Informed Consent Form\*\***

**Study:** Parenting Experiences of Chinese immigrants with School-age Children

**Principal Researcher:**

**Xiaomei Tian\***

MA student, Family Studies and Gerontology

Mount Saint Vincent University,

166 Bedford Highway

Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3M 4J4

Tel: (902) 488-0079

E-mail: [xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca](mailto:xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca)

**Researcher Supervisor:**

**Dr. Felicia Eghan**

Associate Professor, Family Studies and Gerontology

Mount Saint Vincent University,

166 Bedford Highway

Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3M 4J4

Tel: (902) 457-6432

E-mail: [felicia.eghan@msvu.ca](mailto:felicia.eghan@msvu.ca)

**Contact person:** Xiaomei Tian\*

\*If you have any concerns, questions or comments during the course of this research, please feel free to get in touch with me using the information listed above.

## Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants

To understand parenting across culture experiences and develop training programs for Chinese parents in the HRM (Halifax Regional Municipality), Nova Scotia, I invite you to take part in this study.

### **Purpose of this form**

Please read this consent form carefully, as it gives you information which will help you decide whether or not to be interviewed. You may ask questions about the study, risks and benefits, your rights as a participant, or anything else that is not clear.

### **Purpose of this project**

The purpose of this study is to investigate Chinese immigrants' parenting across culture experiences in the HRM. This will help the researcher to develop training programs for new Chinese immigrant parents in the future.

### **Process**

The following will happen:

- a) You will be interviewed by the researcher;
- b) Questions will be asked about your parenting across culture experiences in the HRM to discuss the benefits as well as the challenges, etc.;
- c) The interview will last approximately 90 minutes;
- d) The interview will take place at a location of your choice, such as your home, Mount Saint Vincent University, or in a quiet, private location without family members or friends present;
- e) The interviews will be transcribed verbatim;
- f) Following the interviews, you may also be asked to describe your experience of the interviews (this will not be taped, but some notes may be taken);

- g) After the transcription is complete, you will be allowed to check the information for accuracy before it is used;
- h) At the end of the research, a summary of the results will be sent to you, if you choose.

**Possible benefits and risks**

Benefits:

- a) Even though you may not benefit directly from this study, sharing your experiences will allow educators and policy makers to understand the parenting across culture experiences, which will allow researchers to develop training programs to help Chinese immigrant parents in the future.
- b) You will get \$20 for your time and cooperation.

Risks:

There is minimal risk involved in this study:

- a) Qualitative interviews on sensitive topics may bring out some emotional responses from you. Discussion of parenting across culture experiences, relationship with partners, children, school and communities may evoke memories of bad experiences which have been buried deep.
- b) Moreover, it is possible that discussions about social factors such as language barriers, race, class, unemployment and income may lead to hurtful memories of the influence of these factors on you.
- c) There is also a chance that individuals may be identified through the information provided in the report.

- d) When both parents in the family participate in separate interviews, it potentially risks your spouse saying something bad about you.

To minimize the above risks, it is therefore important for me to:

- a) Listen carefully and actively, and remain non-judgmental and open-minded during the interview.
- b) Observe non-verbal expressions and shows of emotion, such as crying, sudden silence, sadness, or agitation. In such cases, I will stop the tape and interview, give you time to get yourself back on track, ask if you want to stop or continue, and respect your wishes. Also, I will provide you with a phone number to call if you wish to discuss your situation with a professional.
- c) Before starting the interview, I will tell you that the interview is confidential and voluntary.

### **Confidentiality**

- a) Your name and contact information will not appear anywhere in the research report or in any presentation which may arise from the results of this study.
- b) The second reader, a bi-lingual (English and Chinese) teacher at Halifax Immigrant Learning Center, will help me do the translations, either from Chinese to English or from English to Chinese, and check the accuracy of my own translation. She will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement and not to discuss the content of any documents outside of the research project.
- c) On the transcripts, a pseudonym, rather than your real name, will be used to identify anything you have said. Other identifying information (such as the names of people you mention, where they live, etc.) will be changed on the transcripts.

## Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants

d) Recorded audio files and electronic copies of the transcripts will be password protected and kept in my computer, and the hard copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Eghan's office.

e) The recorded audio files, electronic copies of the transcripts and all hard copies will be destroyed after my graduation.

f) Although every effort will be made to protect your identity, please note that there is a slight risk that you may be identified (through information that you provide) in the results or presentation of this study.

g) A copy of your interview transcripts, in the language used at the interview, will be sent to you by email. By email or phone, you can clarify with me any issues in the transcripts to make sure that your responses were interpreted as intended. You also have the opportunity to change whatever you feel is necessary to protect your identity.

**\*\*Please note** that in some situations (e.g., cases of suspected elder abuse or self-abuse.), interview information cannot legally be held in confidence. The researcher is required by law to report such cases to the appropriate authorities.

### **Voluntary participation**

Please note that your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time. If you withdraw, audio-taping will stop and your responses will not be transcribed. You may refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer.

If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at 457-6350 or via e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).



**CONSENT FOR AUDIO-TAPING**

I understand that the interview will be audio-taped.

---

Signature of participant

---

Date signed

---

Signature of researcher

---

Date signed

附录 C: 协议书

课题: 中国移民的跨文化亲子教育经历

研究者:

田晓梅\*

研究生

Department of Family Studies and Gerontology

Mount Saint Vincent University,

166 Bedford Highway

Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3M 4J4

电话: (902) 488-0079

E-mail: [xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca](mailto:xiaomei.tian@msvu.ca)

导师:

**Felicia Eghan 博士**

副教授

Department of Family studies and gerontology

Mount Saint Vincent University,

166 Bedford Highway

Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3M 4J4

电话: (902) 457-6432

E-mail: [felicia.eghan@msvu.ca](mailto:felicia.eghan@msvu.ca)

联系人: 田晓梅\*

\*如果在研究进行过程中你有任何问题, 请利用上述给出的联系方式与我联系。

为了解中国移民家庭的跨文化亲子教育经历, 以便为 Nova Scotia 省大 Halifax 地区的中国家长提供更合适的培训教育项目, 我诚挚地邀请您参加这项研究。

### 本协议书的目的是

请仔细阅读本协议书，根据这些信息你自主决定参加或不参加这项研究。如果对这项研究，存在的风险，可能的受益，作为受访者的权利或任何不清楚的地方，请及时澄清。

### 研究的目的

这项研究旨在调查研究大Halifax地区中国移民的跨文化亲子教育现状。日后研究者将根据研究的结果开发系列的针对中国移民家庭的亲子教育培训项目。

### 过程

- i) 研究者本人将对你进行深入访谈
- j) 访谈将围绕你在大Halifax地区的跨文化亲子教育经历展开，包括你所面临的困难和挑战等
- k) 访谈持续大约90分钟
- l) 访谈地点以你方便而定，你家，Mount Saint Vincent大学，或其他任何私密安静的场所（没有家人或朋友在场）
- m) 访谈结束后，你可能需要描述一下你对整个访谈的感受
- n) 访谈的录音将被逐字地转换为方便进行分析的电子文档
- o) 研究者对你的录音进行电子文档转录后，将邀请你对其进行核实
- p) 整个研究结束后，根据你的意愿，研究结果报告将会发送给你

### 可能的受益和风险

受益:

- a) 虽然你可能不会从这项研究中直接受益，但是你所分享的跨文化亲子教育经历将使相关教育者，政策制定者，服务提供者等深入了解跨文化亲子教育的问题，从而帮助他们开发系列的教育培训项目，以帮助面临跨文化亲子教育问题的中国移民家庭。
- b) 面谈结束后，你将收到\$20作为你积极配合参加研究的酬谢

风险:

- a) 当述说你的亲子教育经历时，你可能会重新体验记忆中的不愉快甚至伤心的经历可能会使你感觉不舒服。
- b) 当讨论有关的社会因素，比如语言障碍，人种，社会地位，失业，收入等可能导致你受伤的记忆。
- c) 提供在报告中的个人的信息存在被辨识的可能。
- d) 当你和你的配偶参加分别得访谈时，你的配偶可能会说一些你的一些不好的话。

为减少以上的风险，我会:

- a) 认真倾听你的声音，保持开放的头脑，不对你的言论做评判
- b) 观察你的非言语表情和情绪变化，比如哭泣，突然沉默，难过和生气等，我会停止录音，给你时间让情绪平静下来，然后询问你是否还愿意

继续，尊重你的意愿。同时如果你认为需要专业的帮助，我也会提供你相应的组织和联系方式。

- c) 在访谈开始前，我会跟你强调本研究完全是保密的和自愿的。

### 隐私保密

- a) 你的姓名不会出现在任何与此研究相关的报告，讲座，出版物中
- b) 第二读者，一位 Halifax 移民学习中心的中英双语教师将帮助我做一部分翻译，或者将英文文档翻译成中文，或者将中文翻译成英文，这样做的目的是协助我检查我翻译的准确性。她将和我签订保密协议，保证不在研究以外讨论任何与本研究有关的内容。
- c) 在所有的电子文档中，一个假名（取代你的真实姓名）将出现在任何与你的访谈有关的信息中。其他你在访谈中提及的姓名地点等也将被一些假名所替代。
- d) 录音文档和电子文档将保存在我的电脑中并密码保护，其他书面文档将锁在 Felicia Eghan 博士办公室的柜子里。
- e) 所有电子及书面文档在我毕业后将全部销毁。
- f) 虽然我们尽力保护你的隐私，但一些信息仍然存在暴露你身份的危险。
- g) 录音转录成电子文档后，我会邮件发送给你。通过电话或邮件，你可以澄清任何转录中不确切的地方。你也有机会修改任何你认为必要的信息来保护你的隐私。

**\*\*\*\*请注意：**在某些特殊情况下（比如：怀疑你对孩子有虐待），访谈信息法律上将不能保守你的隐私。

### 自愿参与

请注意你的参与这项研究应该是完全自愿的，你可以拒绝参加或随时退出这项研究。如果你退出了，录音将立刻中止，之前的访谈信息将不会被转录成电子文档。你可以拒绝回答任何你不想回答的问题。

如果你想知道这项研究是怎样实施的，想和不介入这项研究的第三方讨论一些相关的问题，你可以与我们 Mount Saint Vincent 大学研究伦理委员会联系。他们的 email 是：[research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca)，电话是：(902) 457-6350。

协议书

我下面的签名表明我明白了在此协议书中描述的访谈过程。我明白访谈信息转录成的电子文档，经过分析，将被用于开发适合的跨文化亲子教育培训项目，以帮助中国移民家庭。我愿意参加这项研究分享我的跨文化亲子教育经历。我明白我将保留一份由我和研究者共同签署的本协议书拷贝。

\_\_\_\_\_  
受访者签名

\_\_\_\_\_  
签署日期

电子邮件 \_\_\_\_\_  
(仅用于研究中跟你联系-----参见本协议书隐私保密部分)

\_\_\_\_\_  
研究者签名

\_\_\_\_\_  
签署日期

请勾选下面的选框如果你想在研究结束后收到研究结果的报告。

我想收到研究结果的报告。

(根据你的这个要求，研究结果报告将在研究结束后寄送给你。)

录音同意协议

我明白我们的访谈将被录音。

\_\_\_\_\_  
受访者签名

\_\_\_\_\_  
签署日期

\_\_\_\_\_  
研究者签名

\_\_\_\_\_  
签署日期

## **Appendix D: Interview Guide**

### **Part 1: Interviewer's Introduction**

- Review goal of project
- Review structure of interview
- Check for informed consent
- Ask for permission to make an audio recording
- Discuss purpose of note-taking, if necessary

### **Part 2: Interview Questions**

#### *General:*

1. Why did you immigrate to Canada?
2. What are your attitudes about Chinese and Canadian culture?

#### *With partner:*

3. What role do you think fathers and mothers should play in parenting?
4. How do you play your parental role, now and previously? If your role has changed, what drove this change?
5. How does your partner play her (his) parental role, now and previously? If her (his) role has changed, what drove this change?
6. In terms of parental roles, what do you think are similarities and differences between Chinese immigrant parents and Canadian parents?

#### *With children:*

7. What are your expectations of your child(ren)?
8. What do you do with your child(ren) on a typical day?
9. How do you discipline your child(ren)?

## Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants

10. How do you support your child(ren)'s academic achievements?
11. How do you show your love to your child(ren)?
12. What are the challenges for you to deal with your child(ren) in Canada besides the general challenges all parents have to face?
13. What are similarities and differences in the way Chinese immigrant parents and Canadian parents deal with their child(ren)?

### With school:

14. What are your expectations of your child(ren)'s school?
15. How do you deal with your child(ren)'s school (situation, action, results), and what do you feel are challenges?
16. As parents, have you ever received support or services from your child(ren)'s school?  
If yes, what are they? What are the barriers, if any, for you to access these services?
17. What are the significant differences between schools in China and schools in Canada?

### With extended family and community:

18. Have you ever received support or services for parents from your extended family, community, or society in China? If yes, what are they? If not, why not?
19. Have you ever received support or services for parents from your extended family, community, or society here in Canada? If yes, what are they? If not, why not?
20. What are the barriers here for you to access social supports or services in parenting?
21. What are your expectations of your community or society in general in terms of parenting?

As a whole, how do you feel about your parenting now?

Was there anything that you were expecting to talk about today that I didn't raise in my questions?

**Part 3: After the Interview**

- Thank interviewee for participating
- Give him/her \$20 honorarium for co-operation
- Invite interviewee to inquire in the future regarding the research report

**Appendix E: Demographic Information Form**

Family number: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?     Female  Male

What is your age?        25 or under   26-30   31-39   40 or older

How long have you been living in Canada?

less than 1 year

2-5 years

6-10 years

more than 10 years

How is your English proficiency?

fluent

medium

poor

What is your highest level of education?

high School or equivalent

vocational/technical school

some College

Bachelor's degree

Mater's degree

Doctoral's degree

What was your occupation in China? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your occupation here? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current household after-tax income in Canadian dollars?

## Parenting Experiences of Chinese Immigrants

- 20,000 or less
- 20,000-40,000
- 40,001-100,000
- more than 100,000

How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

How old are they? What are their genders?

1<sup>st</sup>: age \_\_\_\_\_ gender \_\_\_\_\_      2<sup>nd</sup>: age \_\_\_\_\_ gender \_\_\_\_\_      3<sup>rd</sup>: age \_\_\_\_\_ gender \_\_\_\_\_

Do your parents live with you?

- Yes ( only mother  only father  both of parents)
- No

Do your spouse's parents live with you?

- Yes ( only mother  only father  both of parents)
- No

## **Appendix F: Selected Sample of Independent Transcript Translations**

### **Original transcript from the interview with Mrs. Yu in Mandarin:**

我是觉得人是一直应该反思的。螺旋成长的，在转圈的过程，你想你小时候的成长环境，它对你长大后的发展有什么影响。长到一定年龄，你要反思。数理化方面没有太多的调整。人文方面的，开始想我学的是对还是不对，我是被洗脑了。我是否吸取了这么多年世界的精华……你要经常去想，永远都不要跟着大流走。

### **Translation by the researcher:**

I think people should always reflect. People are in the process of development all through their life. It is like rising in a spiral. In the process of circling, you should think about how the environment you grew up in affected your adult life. When you grow up, you just follow what you learned when you were young. Then, when you get to a specific age, you start to reflect. From the science aspects in your study, you will not change your ideas too much about what you have already learned. But for humanism, you start thinking whether what I learned is right or not, whether I absorb the quintessence from the whole world for the past thousands of years.... You always need to think. Never just follow the mainstream.

### **Translation by the independent translator:**

I believe that one should review all the time. Growing-up is a spiraling. Think of how much your surroundings impacted your growing-up. You should review yourself. From the science aspects in your study there is little margin that you can adjust while in social science aspects, you can always review whether I am on the right track or not, if I have been brain washed or I have take the proper knowledge that human being has created... You need to think all the time and never just follow the majority.

## Appendix G: Selected Sample of Coding

The following selected Coding System depicts the theme1 and the relevant sub-themes used in this research.

### **Theme 1: Parenting philosophies, attitudes and approaches of Chinese immigrant parents**

#### **The role of parents**

- Parent cooperation in parenting
- Model to the child
- Sacrifice for the child

#### **Child development**

- The child is only a child

#### **Expectations of the child**

- Expecting the child to be happy
- High expectations in all fields

#### **Philosophies of parenting**

- Parenting is crucial
- Parenting styles
  - Many parenting opinions are from their Chinese parents
  - Disagreement with their parents on parenting
  - More open minds
  - Wanting to be their children's friends
- Parenting duties
  - Physical
  - Financial
  - Emotional
  - Educational

#### **After-school programs**

- Hobby should become a skill
- Bi-lingual will be the child's strength

#### **Attitudes to the two cultures**

- Parents' English is not as good as the child's
- Adjusting to the new environment with a positive attitude
- Social skills are very important in Canada
- Chinese traditions are hard to remove from the mind
- Don't want to lose Chinese roots
- The child is a banana
- Combining the best of both cultures