# Up in the Air: Examining the Experiences of Chinese Mainland "Satellite Children" in Vancouver

by

**Henry Li**

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# Approval

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| **Name:** | **Henry Li** |
| **Degree:** | **Master of Arts (Sociology)** |
| **Title:** | ***Up in the Air:  Examining the Experiences of Chinese Mainland "Satellite Children" in Vancouver*** |
| **Examining Committee:** | **Chair:** Pamela Stern<br>Assistant Professor |

**Barbara Mitchell**
Senior Supervisor
Professor

_____

**Wendy Chan**
Supervisor
Professor

_____

**Dan Cui**
External Examiner
Assistant Professor
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
Brock University

_____

**Date Defended/Approved:**  September 14, 2018

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# Abstract

This thesis seeks to better understand a unique migrant group, Mainland Chinese "astronaut" families, through an examination of the experiences of "satellite" children. Employing an interpretivist-idealist perspective and using grounded theoretical qualitative methods, this study critically investigates the family practices and identity processes of these migrants. Using data from eight in-depth interviews with young adults aged 21-32, this study explores how these actors practice complex cosmopolitan identities while alternating between "full" and "displaced" moments of family life. Results show that these individuals negotiate unique dual realities in which systemic alternation, or "world-switching", becomes incorporated into daily life planning. Furthermore, their lives are filled with moments of self-suspension and sacrifice as they adhere to their familial obligations. Moreover, these young adults actively accept the notion of uncertain and unsteady futures within their own lives. Indeed, these "satellite kids" creatively negotiate these uncertainties while also staying practical and with careful optimism.

**Keywords**: Overseas Chinese studies: Chinese immigrant identity; satellite kids; Mainland Chinese immigrants; filial piety; guanxi studies

# Acknowledgements

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# Chapter 1.  Introduction

Migration often means dramatic changes to family structure and networks. Family members are dispersed, traditional ties back home are broken, and new relationships must be reformed in the host country. During these physical and emotional moves, many families choose to form and practice non-traditional family units. Dominant discourses in professional fields such as marital counselling, family therapy, social work and psychology often view these non-traditional family units, especially among immigrant families, as problematic and dysfunctional (Kwok-bun, 2013). Past studies into migrant communities have argued that family dispersal is usually a form of family disorganization which must be fixed or corrected. These studies, however, take it for granted that the family unit is living in a physical space together (Cheal 1993; Bernades 1993 as cited in Kwok-bun, 2013).

Many social theorists argue that family dispersal should not be viewed as symptomatic or pathological, but instead, exists inherently as a logical extension of migrational practice (Man 1995; 2013, Skeldon, 1994; Waters, 2001; Tsang et al., 2003). Family dispersal is something that is anticipated, accepted and planned by emigrating groups. Families that rely on large and complex kinship networks in their daily lives must plan their exodus from these social circles carefully.  For many, losing these social ties can be a huge loss and a severe risk to their long-term futures (Man, 2013).  Maintaining ties with relatives provides an "exit route" for the families in case of disaster. This practice is particularly prevalent in traditional patriarchal societies composed of several generations of extended families (Stark, 1995). This does not mean however that family dispersal strategies employed by immigrants are not without its risks and costs. New ranges of ideas and expectations must be re-adjusted; coping mechanisms must be learned and put in place, and new identities emerge which challenge and erode traditional authority (Chan, 1994).

At the end of the late twentieth century, a unique immigrant community has emerged, particularly with migrants coming from within the modern Chinese diaspora (Kwok-bun, 2013). This new type of family organization follows along a globalized trajectory among modern business immigrants who reject a "complete model" of family relocation, instead practicing a more "up-in-the-air" style of family planning that incorporates and extends familial connections with both "origin" and "host" countries. In most cases, the primary bread-winner (usually the father) works back in the "origin" country while a "landed" spouse (Waters, 2002) lives with the children, aptly coined as a "satellite" kid (Irving, Tsang, Allagia, Chau and Benjamin, 2003). These "astronaut" or "shuttle" families have been given a presence by popular media discourse as well as limited academic studies within the past few years in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Skeldon, 1994; Lam; 1994; Boyer, 1996; Ong; 1999; Waters; 2001). Many of these studies were first conducted to document and prove the existence of these communities as the precise magnitude of this phenomenon among migratory populations was hard to identify, mainly because of methodological issues of identifying and recording "astronauts" from customs entry and departure data (Ho, 2007). Although "astronaut families" have been given attention by anthropologists such as Ronald Skeldon and Aihwa Ong since the early 2000s, very few studies within sociology or anthropology have been conducted to study and document the experiences of this unique family unit.

In light of these research gaps, this sociological study will seek to understand and document a unique migrant group, Mainland Chinese "astronaut" families by examining the experiences of a unique member of the family unit, the "satellite kid". Employing an interpretivist-idealist perspective and grounded theoretical methods this study will focus on the family practices and identity issues of migrant children growing up within these families. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted, with young adults aged 21 to 32, which explored how individuals practice complex cosmopolitan identities while alternating between "full" and "displaced" moments of family life. Furthermore, this study hopes to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the lives of modern Mainland Chinese migrants in North America. This study will be focusing mainly on Chinese-Canadians who have grown up in Vancouver, Canada and represents a small sample of larger Chinese Mainland diaspora communities that have emerged in "Western"

countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand since the early 1970's.

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## Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study is: **What are the experiences of "satellite kids" growing up in a mainland Chinese-Canadian astronaut families?**

This question is informed by the following (2) sub-questions:

1. How is family life practiced by "satellite" kids living in "astronaut" families?
   a) How are familial relationships maintained during the absence of the "astronaut" parent?
   b) What are the significant points of conflict and solidarity within the daily life of Mainland-Chinese shuttle families?
2. How are modern Mainland-Chinese identities enacted, practiced and transformed by Mainland-Chinese shuttle families?

## Outline of Thesis

This thesis is presented in five chapters. **Chapter 2** of this thesis will provide a comprehensive review of the Mainland Chinese literature. It will primarily focus on giving a historical overview of overseas Chinese studies and contemporary literature that address immigrant families, including the topics of "astronaut" family studies and Chinese "cosmopolitan" identities. **Chapter 3** will present the theoretical and epistemological foundations of the study and will provide an overview of the research methods employed in this study. I chose an interpretivist-idealist perspective as my central theoretical paradigm and employed a "grounded" theoretical approach for my methodology. **Chapter 4** will present the findings and results of the study, which will be

organized into five main thematic sections: *Family Relationships, Identity, Sites of Practice, Conflict and Solidarity,* and *Home and Belonging.* Finally, **Chapter 5** will discuss and summarize the grounded theoretical findings, identify the limitations, and present implications for future research.

# Chapter 2.    Literature Review

## Introduction

This chapter provides a broad overview of scholarly literature on the topic of overseas Chinese studies Chinese immigrant identity, family and youth studies and lastly an overview of past literature pertaining to astronaut families.  Specifically, this chapter will begin by summarizing the area of Overseas Chinese studies, its history, challenges, and limits as well as presenting some recent emergent topics and trends of contemporary Chinese migration to Canada. Furthermore, I will try and unpack the idea of a Chinese immigrant identity. Then, I will present an overview of family and youth research, with a particular emphasis on contemporary studies on immigrant children. Lastly, I will present an overview of recent studies that have been conducted on astronaut households, as well as outlining some fundamental challenges to studying this unique geographically dispersed family strategy.

## Overseas Chinese Studies

Overseas Chinese, often referred to in past literature as "Huaqiao", have been a recorded global phenomenon since at least the early twentieth century when large-scale migration of male Chinese labourers left ports in the South-East ports of Fujian and Guangzhou and made their way into North America to work as railroad builders and miners (Reid and Rodgers, 1996). These migrants presented a unique and complex understanding of migration which differed from other "permanent" migrant groups (Li and Li, 2013). Labeled as "sojourners" these resilient sons and husbands faced the perils and uncertainty of immigration with an unusual amount of resolve and risk as they gambled their lives to provide for their families back home. (Yang, 2013)). Research conducted on overseas Chinese comprised part of earlier oriental studies conducted under imperialist and colonialist traditions during the early 1900s (Beng, 2004). From this historical vantage point, most past studies and documents concerning Chinese

immigrants have been largely "colored" by the "politicization of the *Huaqiao* problem" where studies conducted on Chinese communities had been used as "proof" for the increasing encroachment of Asian immigrants in white settlements (Gunwu, 2003, p. 281). These studies and documents include policy reports written by colonial officials, historical treatises by academics and legal transcripts issued by translators. Gradually some studies were also conducted by Chinese officials and later on, by local Chinese immigrants themselves.

Modern academic discourse on Chinese immigration began with anthropological literature, starting with Maurice Freedman, William Skinner and the Willmott brothers in the early to mid-twentieth century (Peterson, 2012). Anthropological research has been considerably influential within the field of Chinese immigration studies and has been credited with a modern "self-vitalization" of local Chinese scholars and communities to reassert their local national identities, both back in China and in the new communities of settlement (Gunwu, 2003, p. 284). Contextually, most of the past and recent literature regarding the Overseas Chinese seem to focus entirely on the experiences of immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong (Kwok-bun, 2013). Studies on Chinese immigration cover a wide variety of topics and themes. These studies include examining marriage trends among established Chinese immigrant communities in Australia (Chan, 1999; Tan, 2001), intimacy and fatherhood in immigrant communities in Singapore (Kwok-bun 2013), mobility and entrepreneurial studies Chinese immigrants (Chan and Chan, 2011) and media studies on the portrayal of Chinese immigrants (Lee 1999). Studies and literature also expand upon methodological and ontological issues in studying overseas Chinese communities. In particular, they critically elaborate on issues relevant to comparing and documenting differences between Chinese and Western philosophies (Hamilton and Zheng, 1992; Beng, Storey and Zimmerman, 2007).

Fundamental problems of studying huaqiao

Celebrated Chinese Overseas scholar Wang Gungwu (2003) has stated that currently, two central problems exist which challenge the efficacy of studying overseas Chinese communities (p. 285). The first problem is that studies on overseas Chinese

lack *comparative* studies between different "local" communities as discourse usually produces an understanding of Chinese communities existing under a monolithic Sino-centrism (p. 286). For Gungwu, mainstream scholarship into the study of overseas Chinese communities tries to import an understanding of a "Chinese center" that has been lost or must be regained (p. 289). In the past, Chinese scholars have tried to use the idea of an internalized and intrinsic Chinese culture to stir up nationalistic and sentimental feelings towards what it means to be Chinese abroad. These served to build environments in which Chinese communities could feel safe to share culture and values. However, political dimensions, geography and personal characteristics of Chinese communities abroad are becoming exceedingly different and unique. To encapsulate a more thorough account of the extensive experiences of Chinese migrants abroad, more attempts must be made to produce a range of comparative studies which view how development, maintenance, and practice of different Chinese immigrant identities are and have been uniquely interpellated. Doing so would help these local communities to accept more responsibility for what they can achieve as well as allow for more critical review of questionable traditional practices and customs.

Secondly, within academic communities where immigrant populations are still regarded as belonging to a "special" citizenship group (hyphenated identities), ideological and political barriers exist to studying immigrant communities. This is especially a problem for Chinese communities because there is still "distrust for the sojourning characteristic of the Chinese" that produce stereotypical discourses that challenge the loyalty and community of these migrant groups. (p. 287). Furthermore, this process of "othering" is also not unique to the academic community. This can be seen particularly in how Asian communities in the West have been treated by popular media and discourse through ideas of the "model" minority as well as media stereotypes of the "sidekick" trope and "bamboo" ceiling faced by those pursuing jobs in popular media and entertainment industries.

This research study, which examines the experiences of Chinese-Mainland "satellite kids", will try to address both problems. Firstly, by attempting to produce

literature of a unique "Mainland" identity, this study hopes to contribute to expanding our understanding of a unique local Chinese community, which needs further academic study. It will examine how this Chinese community has experienced immigration and highlight unique practices and cultural traditions that have contributed to socialization experiences as well as the maintenance of familial relationships. Ideally, this study will contribute to Professor Gunwu's call for more varied research on "local" Chinese immigrant populations around the world.

This study attempts to break away from both popular and academic discourse which tries to group "immigrant" experiences into largely "problematic" and narrow categories seen in the qualification of Chinese experiences within the loose and open identities of Chinese-Canadians (-Americans, -Malaysians, -Australians, etc.) (Ang 1998; Gilroy 1987; Kibria 1998). It will attempt to gather and present the experiences of Overseas Chinese communities as a complex and continuously transforming process. Importantly it must consider how ethnic identities, such as the notion of "Chineseness" are formed, mainly how community relationships, socialization, and enculturation of future generations as well as subjective characteristics of gender, occupation, politics, and religion all work together to create differing and unique understandings of what it means to be Chinese (Lok-sun, 2013. p.138).

"Chineseness" as an Immigrant Identity

The notion of identity is an extremely tricky and complicated conceptual platform in which to generate a discussion regarding groups and individuals (Abercrombie, 2006, p. 190). On the one hand, it is critical for researchers and academics to present an overview of diversity in regards to collective identity and not fall into the trap of reinforcing and encapsulating any essentialist notions of belonging. On the other hand, ethnic identity as a "socially embedded essentialist notion [has] been and still [is] … a fundamental organizing principle [for] human beings" (Lok-sun, 2013, p. 139). One of these organizing principles is the issue of ethnicity.

Lok-sun (2013) states that ethnic identities are a "negotiated and unstable assemblage of perceptions" which can over time develop into essentialist categories of "truth" and authenticity which are perceived to be fixed and persistent over time (p. 139).

Ethnic identities can organize social relationships, complicates life decisions and even help to solve daily problems (p. 140). For sociologists, it is essential to examine the construction of these identities (how they emerged, where they are enacted and how they transform over time) because, although flawed, they help us understand and make sense of the decisions and choices that groups and individuals are making over their lifetime (Ngan, 2013, p. 138).

"Chineseness" can be understood as a unique identity that is produced and experienced by the Chinese diaspora community and is therefore different from feelings of "being Chinese" felt by those who live within China, Hong Kong or Taiwan (Kwok-bun, 2013). Before the late nineteenth century, the Chinese immigration experience was largely one of prohibition, both from the racist anti-immigration statutes enacted by the host countries, as well as the restrictive attitudes of their governments (Skeldon, 1994). This changed in 1893, when the Qing Empire officially lifted its official restriction policies to migrants coming in and out of China and "gave official recognition to diasporic Chinese for their contributions and encouraged them to identify not only with their provincial homes but also with China and the Chinese Civilization" (p. 137). For many Overseas Chinese, this was just an official sanctioning of something they had practiced and believed in for generations.

"Being Chinese" cannot be understood as simply a political category or as "belonging to an exclusive group" (Chan and Chan, 2013, 13). "Chineseness" or "to be Chinese" is "a negotiated, unstable assemblage of perceptions; an essentialist construct that has been critical in organizing notions of sameness and difference between out-group and in-group members" (Chan and Chan, 2013, 11). Furthermore, "Chineseness" must be understood as a "procedure of interpellation" which organizes, socializes and "transplants" symbolic identity into the "point of view of *the political"* (Ngan, 2013)*.* "Chineseness" becomes a "lived" moment of immigrant life when migrants from China

become "confronted and politicized" through a categorization of othering (Laclau and Badiou as cited in Ngan, 2013). Thus, as Chan and Chan (2013) point out, the word "Chinese" as understood by the global Chinese Overseas community, as well as within the larger Chinese ethnic fields of origin (Taiwan, Hong Kong and The Mainland) is an extremely diverse and broad category which is constructed out of divisions of "birthplace, language, gender, generation, occupation, politics, and religion" (p.9).

This thesis will be an attempt at deconstructing essentialist notions of what it means to be Chinese by examining the ontological formation of "Chineseness" among Chinese Mainland immigrants. Within academic studies, very little has been written about the experiences of modern Chinese Mainland immigrants. Most of the recent literature on Chinese Mainland immigrants have been conducted on migration waves from the PRC to Southeast Asia (Chiu and Wing, 1998; Gungwu, 2003) or Oceania (Skeldon, 1994; Lok-sun, 2013). Most of the literature on Chinese Mainland immigrants to North America have focused on politics (Liu, 1997; Ng, et al., 2015), globalization (Liu and Norcliffe, 1996) and health (Lai, 2004; Su, 2005; Zhou, 2012). Concerning identifying and classifying a Mainland Chinese immigrant identity, most researchers have grouped the "transnational identities" of Hong Kong and Taiwan immigrants with recent Mainland immigrants (Waters, 2001; Man, 2013). There have been attempts to classify the differences between modern Mainland Chinese identities and Hong Kong and Taiwanese identities, particularly in studies on the discrimination of Mainland immigrants in Hong Kong and vice versa (Ng et al., 2015). Yet there is a lack of literature which attempts to explore the historical differences between modern Mainland Chinese immigrants and immigrants coming from Taiwan and Hong Kong since the 1970s. At the outset, Mainland Chinese immigrants have far less experience with "Western" cultures and philosophies than their counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan due to the restrictive policies of the communist government within the PRC. Furthermore, having lived within the PRC, most of the migrants have lived in and still "live within" the networks of rural society (Becker, 1996).

Studying this unique population can help to diversify and expand our understanding of how modern Chinese immigrants experience (re)socialization and integration in their host countries as well as contribute to closing a research gap regarding the inclusion of more studies on Mainland Chinese immigrants.  Mainland Chinese immigrants face unique and complex challenges to socialization which are different from Chinese immigrants coming from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Mainland Chinese astronaut families must negotiate complex cultural shifts as they carry memories of living within the People's Republic of China, and at the same time, adjust to their fast-paced and increasingly globalized lifestyle. With the continuing trend of large-scale migrant flow of Mainland Chinese emigrants to Canada and the west, there is a definite need to fill this research gap.

# Chinese Immigrant, Family and Youth Studies

<u>Contemporary Chinese-Canadian immigrant studies</u>

Chinese immigration to countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and the United States has significantly grown in recent years (Yu, Lee and Perry, 2008). This trend is particularly significant in Canada where Chinese Canadians have become the largest non-Caucasian ethnic group in the country (p. 181). The growth of these ethnic groups has largely been attributed to new arrival immigrants rather than by the natural growth of past local communities (Kubat, 1993). Contemporary Chinese immigration studies have been conducted over a variety of disciplines and topics. Chinese immigration history has been a popular topic of study, particularly focusing on Chinese groups cities such as San Francisco and New York (Con et al., 1982; Chen, 1988; Anderson and Lee, 2005; Thuno, 2007). Chinese immigrant business models, as well as business customs are another popular subject (Wank, 1999; Gold, Guthrie and Wank, 2002). Specifically, these studies focus on the unique aspects of *guanxi*, or Chinese social relations, and how they affect Chinese business culture (Guthrie and Wank, 2002). *Guanxi* studies have also been conducted on immigrant families and has been traced to the writings of celebrated Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong (Hamilton and Zheng, 1992; Smart, 1993; Hamilton and Chang, 2011). Studies on Chinese immigration have also placed

considerable focus on methodological issues regarding translation, documentation and delineations of Chinese diasporic events (Tan, 2007).

Studies into Chinese immigration have largely focused on Hong Kong and Taiwanese immigrants, who have until recently, been the largest source of Chinese immigration to Canada (Welcome BC Immigration Data, 2014; Fong et al., 2016). Recently scholars have begun to move on to studying a newer population group, Mainland Chinese immigrants (Wank, 1999; Yu, Lee and Perry, 2008; Fong et al., 2016). Calls for the study of this population is very apparent because although Chinese Mainland immigrants make up more than 40% of the Chinese-Canadian population in Canada, Chinese-Canadian culture is still viewed almost entirely through the lens of older generations, particularly immigrants coming from Hong Kong.

Immigrant Family and Youth Studies

Family and youth studies focusing on immigrants is a vast area of research that encompasses many different disciplines. In past literature, immigrant families were viewed in narrow singular categories (Chinese-Canadians or Iranian-Canadians) possessing "naturally bounded" characteristics and undergoing "linear" journeys towards integration. (Creese, Dyck and Mclaren, 2009, p. 496). Recent sociological and anthropological literature on immigrant families have begun to move away from these types of deterministic assumptions. These studies argue that immigrant families are a fluid and constantly negotiated and reconstituted unit (Lawson, 1998 as cited in Creese, Dyck and Mclaren, 2009). Immigrant families were also found to be living between spatial and temporal locations. Increasingly immigrants choose to practice *transnational* identities (Mitchell, 2000; Chao, 2004; Kuhn, 2008) Furthermore, migrant groups often practice dynamic dispersal strategies, which incorporate planning, practice and risk as they try to maintain and develop social and kinship networks (Cheal, 1993). Furthermore, recent studies show that immigrant families are "heterogeneous, multiply positioned and stratified" in that each family differ in their composition, social class and experiences to each other (Creese, Dyck and Mclaren, 2009 p. 497). Various family members have also been explored as having different experiences of socialization

releated to enculturation and acculturation (Jimeno, Martinovic, Gauthier, Bouchard and Urquhart, 2010; Myers, Frias, Kwon, Ko and Lu, 2011; Kim, 2012) as well as differences in gender (Chuang, Moreno and Su, 2013) and generational gaps (Das Gupta, 1995 as cited in Creese, Dyck and Mclaren, 2009).

In recent studies done on Chinese-Canadian immigrant families, attention has been given to the father figure as a central and problematic role within the family (Con et al., 1982; Worrall, 2006; Cooke, 2007; Chuang, Moreno and Su, 2013) as well as economic integration of Chinese families (Worts, 2009; Guo, 2013). By far the most studied topic within Chinese immigrant family is on the role and experiences of women (Dasgupta, 1992; Man, 1995; Waters, 2001, 2002; Lam, 2004; Cooke, 2007; Man, 2009; Worts, 2009). Examples of these diverse topics include sexuality, stress, conjugal roles, economic decisions, child rearing and family planning. Studies focusing on children of immigrant families also revolve mostly around women and parenting. These include the effects of children on immigrant experience and marriage (Ambert, 1992), children's effects on traditional notions of "fatherhood" (Chuang, Moreno and Su, 2013), "satellite and parachute kids" (E-pual, Mitchell, Iredale and Castles, 1996; Irving, Tsang and Benjamin, 1999), racial discrimination of Chinese immigrant children in schools (Cui, 2011; Cui and Kelly, 2013) and the psychosocial adjustment of Chinese immigrant children in schools (Chiu and Ring, 1998; Leung, 2005).

## Astronaut Families

Astronaut families have been studied by anthropologists, psychologists, education theorists, economists, historians, and geographers. The earliest documented use of the term "astronaut" families can be found in early 1990's New Zealand media reports that were themselves translated from Hong Kong tabloid journals which described a new pattern of migrant movement from East Asia, in particular, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Skeldon, 1994). The origins of the term came from a common perception that families were choosing strategies whereby one or both immigrant parents were leaving the country of destination to return to the origin country for work. These

returnees were referred to as "astronaut" parents while the children who were left behind were labeled as "satellite" kids (Ivring, Tsang, and Benjamin, 1999; Skeldon, 1994; Ho; 2007). Documentation and research of these "astronaut" families began very early in New Zealand, followed by studies done in the US, Canada and Australia (Skeldon, 1994; Lam, 1994; Boyer, 1996; Ong; 1999; Waters; 2001). Astronaut families are sometimes referred and grouped into categories of "lone-parent" families, which some theorists have argued does not completely and accurately describe the term since although most of the time the family lives in a "split" or lone parent household, there are regular intervals where family life becomes complete or "full" (Tsong and Liu, 2008).

From the inception of these research studies, it was already evident that there were many problems with studying this unique migratory phenomenon. Firstly, the precise magnitude of this phenomenon among migratory populations was hard to identify, mainly because of methodological issues of identifying and recording "astronauts" from customs entry and departure data (Bedford, and Goodwin, Ho, & Lidgard, 1997; Ho; 2007). Secondly, further methodological issues were also found in trying to estimate astronaut households in census data (Skeldon; 1994; Ho and Farmer, 1994 as cited in Bedford, and Goodwin, Ho, & Lidgard, 1997). Moreover, many studies have completely abandoned the use of government census and customs data to investigate the experiences of "astronaut" households and employed survey methods instead (Boyer 1996). Astronaut households were also seen as very underrepresented in formal survey undertakings because of the prevalence of "underreporting" of families when the head of the household is absent (Boyer, 1996; Ho, 2007). Because of these difficulties, data on the number of astronaut households in Canada (and more specifically, Vancouver) is nonexistent.

A further difficulty in reviewing past literature on this topic is that research on astronaut families has been centrally conducted in New Zealand. Apart from the fact that a significant portion of data from these studies are restricted from access here in Canada, the data that is presented is mainly from past "astronaut" migration waves from Hong Kong and Taiwan over twenty years ago (Boyer; 1996; Ho, Bedford and Bedford,

2000 as cited in Ho, 2007). Furthermore, recent literature on astronaut families was found in popular discourse and media sources. Most of these media sources portray and "problematize" the astronaut family as being responsible for precarious economic conditions and identified potential problems for astronaut children growing up in absent or single households (Leung, 2005). As stated above, much of the academic literature on astronaut families consists of research done in America, Australia and New Zealand (Boyer, 1996; E-pua et al., 1996; Ong, 1999; Lok-Sun, 2013; Yang; 2013). Despite previous examples of research being done in Canada, specifically Toronto and more recently in Vancouver (Waters, 2001, 2009, 2013; Tsang et al., 2003; Lam; 1994; Man; 1995).

Most research done on astronaut families has been conducted on women (Lam, 1994; Man; 1995; Waters, 2001;2003;2013, Ong, 1999). A few studies focused more broadly on the family; however, they did not include any detailed discussions regarding family relationships and were either focused on financial stability (E-Pua et al., 1996; Lam; 1994) or the historical causes of immigration and immigration policies (Skeldon, 1994). Some research has described some experiences of astronaut children (Irving, Tsang and Benjamin, 1999; Alaggia, Chau and Tsang, 2001). As well as the very similar experience of "parachute" kids, children who have been left by both parents (Tsong and Liu, 2008; Waters, 2013). All studies were concentrated on Hong Kong or Taiwanese (or both) immigrants, and none looked at Mainland Chinese immigrants specifically.

## Summary

Overseas Chinese studies is a complex and re-emerging academic field which has expanded into a multidisciplinary social science following its separation from orientalist traditions of Sinology (the study of Chinese peoples and cultures) during the past century. Modern overseas Chinese communities have seen significant changes to their economic and cultural image since the beginning of the mid-twentieth century. In the late twentieth century, studies have revealed that Chinese business migrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan (and more recently among Chinese mainland migrants) have begun

to practice a unique form of family dispersal strategy (Skeldon, 1994. Coined by popular media as "astronaut" families, these unique family units practice a form of modern Chinese cosmopolitan existence which draws parallels to past Chinese "sojourners." However, rather than leaving the family back in the motherland, "astronaut" bread earners pass that role on to their families. It is the family that plays the role of the emigrant, while the individual stays behind to work and tend to familial relationships.


It is within this unique migrant population that this study proposes to conduct research. Recently, scholars have called for a reexamination of modern overseas Chinese studies, emphasizing more collaborations between Chinese scholars and unique members of the Chinese diasporic communities abroad. As the literature review revealed, significant research gaps exist within overseas Chinese academic studies. Past and modern studies on the Chinese diaspora have become oversaturated with studies focusing on the experiences of migrants coming from Hong Kong and Taiwan, while largely ignoring the significant and growing population of Chinese migrants coming out of Mainland China since the opening-up policies of the 1970s, especially in Canada (Welcome BC Immigration Data, 2014). Within "astronaut" family studies, overrepresentation of the experiences of Hong Kong and Taiwanese families also exist. Furthermore, past studies on Chinese "astronaut" families have also focused almost entirely on the experiences of the "landed" spouse and the "astronaut" bread-earner, while the experiences of the children in these households have mostly been kept to the sidelines. By focusing on these research gaps, this study will try to construct a better understanding of the experiences of Mainland Chinese immigrants by focusing on documenting the lived daily lives of "satellite" growing up within Mainland Chinese "astronaut" households.

# Chapter 3.    Research Process

## Introduction

Before presenting an overview of the methodological decisions that went into this study, it is important to emphasize that this is a qualitative sociological study and therefore encompasses certain epistemological assumptions about research methods and knowledge generation. As opposed to the scientific study of the objective world by physicists, mathematicians, and bioengineers, as well as the purely ontological and epistemological pursuits of philosophers, sociologists occupy their time within the "reality of everyday life" (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 19). The purpose of sociology, therefore, is to engage in understanding how reality is perceived and experienced by individuals who live within the knowledge and practice of "*inter*subjective common-sense" (p. 5).

To understand the individual experiences of my participants I chose to employ an interpretivist perspective as my central theoretical paradigm. Specifically, this study utilizes an *idealist* approach within an interpretivist epistemology as suggested by Karen O'Reilly (2005) and informed on by the work of Peter Winch (1958 as cited in Charmaz, 2009). This approach suggests that social scientists concerned with studying individuals and communities take a relativist approach in translating and comparing across cultural boundaries. Importantly, an idealist approach to interpretivist research suggests that the study of societies is necessarily the study of *ideas within* a society which become to reflect "what counts as belonging to the world" (Winch, 1958 as cited in Charmaz, 2009 p. 15). Using this perspective allows us to form a more nuanced perspective regarding the lives of "satellite kids" who must constantly update their worldviews as they face conflicting sources of values, morals, and boundaries as well as explaining these differences to the people around them. Secondly, around this central paradigm, I am choosing to employ a novel way of understanding the experiences of a Chinese Mainland immigrant identity by utilizing some tenets of "Chinese rural (or peasant) sociology" as formulated by the Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong. In particular, I will be

utilizing the concept of *differential modes of association* in order to describe and explain some of the fundamental differences between Western and Chinese group dynamics, especially in regards to family organization and personal relationships.

This section will begin by reviewing the main theoretical frameworks of interpretivist-idealism as well as the *differential modes of association* in Chinese society. Then, it will move on to present an overview of the methodological process which will include a summary of my methodological approach, recruitment strategies, participant information, data collection and analysis and finally, ethical considerations.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Interpretivist-idealist

 For interpretivists, the individual does not merely "react" to challenges that are posed by the structural systems which seem to dominate their life but instead emerges as an "actor" who must choose and make complex decisions which fit within a framework of possibility defined by their own subjective knowledge (Dobson, 2003). Therefore, to understand and gather knowledge about our subjects we need to "get inside their heads" and understand "their own meanings about what they are doing" (O'reilly, 2005, p. 53). Interpretivism is also a hermeneutic process. This means that the individual, as well as the researcher, is always inundated within a historical process that shapes and molds their experiences (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 55). Ideas, knowledge and common-sense notions are reinforced, and transformed, by our socialization with others.

Peter Winch (1958 as cited in Charmaz, 2009) argues in his book, *The Idea of Social Science and its Relations to Philosophy* that when utilizing an interpretative perspective to study human interaction, it is essential that social scientists consider the importance of language and culture in defining how an individual views their realities (O'Reilly, 2005). When looking at human experiences, the researcher must be aware

that some realities cannot be understood using an "overarching form" nor can experiences be totally translated or represented (p. 54). Individuals have their own view of what exists in the world which is based on what they believe to exist in their daily lives. This knowledge stems primarily from their language and culture, formulated into *ideas*. The implications for this kind of understanding is that human cultures cannot be equated nor can they be judged as good or bad since any arguments that arise can only be understood within a specific context. Furthermore, idealism as an interpretivist paradigm emphasizes the power of language and culture in shaping an individual's understanding of the world through their discourse; namely how their experiences are understood and defined by those around them (Winch, 1958 as cited in Charmaz, 2009). Since the 1970s, the interpretivist approach has been utilized by a wide range of social scientists including historians, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and philosophers (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979). The interpretivist approach challenges especially "holistic explanation" which is the hallmark of natural scientific reasoning. This is the belief that the documentation of human phenomena cannot be organized around static elements such as universal properties of objects, nor can social relationships be effectively inscribed into concrete laws. Some recent examples of studies which have utilized an interpretivist approach are Gregory Snyder's (2009) study on graffiti artists in New York as well as Serena Nanda's (1999) ethnographic portrait of the hijras in India.

## *Guanxi* and a differential mode of association

Contrary to popular belief, Chinese societies are *not* group-oriented but rather centered around the self and "built from networks created from relational ties linking the self with discrete categories of other individuals" (Fei, 1948, p. 49, as cited in Hamilton and Zheng, 1992, p. 24). Chinese social relations are built around single dyadic ties, called *guanxi* (social relationships) (p. 21)*. Guanxi* relationships are interpersonal, informal and specific (Zinzius, 2004). Each *guanxi* tie is unique but normative to specific categories of social relations and is tied to the understanding of (*li),* a Confucian ideal, which roughly translates to "obligations of respect" which dictates behaviour between a subordinate and their "elder" (p. 22).

Chinese social relations are also systematically and *associatively* different from western social relations (Hamilton and Zheng, 1992). In western societies, individuals and organizations are categorically discrete, and boundaries between the two are defined. A person can enter specific organizations based on choice or preference, and furthermore, organizations can vary in their openness to new members. For Fei (1948 as cited in Hamilton and Zheng, 1992), this type of western group organization is an "organizational mode of association" whereby groups and individuals are distinct from each other. In contrast, Chinese social relations are not based on discrete groups but rather, "overlapping networks of people" linked together through differentially categorized social relationships. Therefore, relationships are never "entered" as social ties can only exist as a *closer* or *farther* away from the self. This understanding of the self contrasts with the notion of "individualism" as western conceptions of the self are usually focused on the equality of individuals within society. (Fei, 1948, as cited in Hamilton and Zheng, 1992, p. 68).

This *differential mode of association* can be most clearly seen within a familial context. Firstly, within the Chinese family, relationships are given a system of notation (Second-Brother, Third-Paternal-Uncle, etc.). Since in *guanxi* systems, all relationships start with the individual, every individual will also uniquely identify other family members. As Fei (1948 as cited in Hamilton and Zheng, 1992) eloquently puts it, "no two people in the world can have entirely the same set of relatives" because everyone will occupy and hold a different "web" of social relationships which is specific to each family member (p. 68). How you speak and act with family members is also dictated by a strict system of obligatory performances. The differences between mundane and formal topics of conversations or ideas within the family are not always easy to separate. This means that knowing your "place" within the family is essential, and this information must always be reinforced through daily life.

Moreover, within the family, individuals do not have a choice to "exit" their familial obligations and a refusal to participate in the obligatory act can result in a loss of face and respect, which can push you "farther" away from others, and diminishing your

*guanxi* with other individuals. Obligations towards family members are held before your obligations to yourself, the community and the society. For example, you are held responsible for your family member's actions and must stand by your family even if it means breaking your own morals or convictions. Certain ties, such as those belonging to age categories, gender and most importantly, family, come pre-set. A person does not choose to participate in these relationships but rather is "obligated to achieve the relationship" by participating in the act of morality required by the specific relationship (Peng, 1989 as cited in Hamilton and Zheng, 1992, p. 22). Moral action and behaviour of groups and individuals based "on the social categories of the actors" will vary with different *guanxi* ties. Thus adhering to personal or familial responsibilities could mean turning a blind eye to more substantial ethical obligations within the community (p. 21).


Using a theory of *differential modes of association* is particularly useful when examining the experiences of "satellite" kids because they occupy a unique place where they will experience and must adhere to, both types of organizational relations in their lives. Outside the home, individuals are pressured to belong to organizations, join groups and carve out their own identity. Within the household they must learn to suspend their selfhood to some extent and develop *guanxi* with their family through performances of obligation and respect. These individuals are also most able to describe how these competing systems are changing within Chinese families, as well as altering the customs that their families have adopted in the host country. I believe that when studying "astronaut" households, understanding and utilizing a framework of Chinese social relations may help to explain how this family dispersal strategy has been so successful among Chinese migrants. Finally, modern Chinese Mainland immigrants have had a more recent memory of living within a "rural" society, a factor that Fei Xiaotong attributes to the development of Chinese social relations, therefore these organizing principles may be more significant within the family lives of the participants (Hamilton and Zheng, 1992, p. 19).

# Methodology

The primary research methodology used in this study to analyze its data was a grounded theoretical approach (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967 as cited in Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory is a set of "systematic inductive methods" aimed at constructing theories from "the ground up" (Charmaz, 2007). Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, grounded theory is a "flexible yet systematic mode of inquiry" which is directed towards open-ended analysis of qualitative data. Studies that employ a grounded theory approach often design and collect data based on general lines of inquiry. This research style helps to guide the research without limiting itself to the confines of past theories or predetermined hypotheses. Grounded theory is also *iterative* meaning that the research process is not wholly linear and analysis of data happens throughout the research process, from the overview of literature to coding and discussion of results.

There are several key aspects to consider when conducting a grounded theory analysis (Bryant and Bryant, 2017). Firstly, the researcher keeps detailed *memos* which document the thought process, ideas and theories of the researcher which is kept separate from the interview data. Secondly, during data analysis, data coding is kept *open* as patterns and themes can emerge from the transcripts, while *selective* coding is usually employed at the end to fit the data into an organizational framework. Finally, *data maps* are constructed which attempt to link the core concepts that have emerged from each of the coded sections which can help to produce more coherent ideas and theories.

For this study, a grounded theoretical approach was applied in every stage of the research process. *Memoing* was used throughout the research process from the initial fieldwork planning stages to the participant interviews and finally during the "writing-up" process at the end of the fieldwork. Audio interview data transcription was completed before the initial coding stages of the study. Interviews transcripts were also supplemented with observational memos during the interviews. Both open and selective coding was used for data analysis. A more thorough summary of the data analysis section will be given in a following section.

**Table 1: Participant Information**

| Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Education |
|---|---|---|---|
| Andy | 19 | M | BA (in progress) |
| Ben | 24 | M | BA |
| Cameron | 32 | M | BA, MBA |
| Dillon | 24 | M | BS |
| Ellen | 23 | F | BA (in progress) |
| Fran | 22 | F | BA (in progress) |
| Gabby | 28 | F | BA |
| Helen | 22 | F | BA (in progress) |

Interviews were collected from eight participants between the ages of 19-32: four self-identified males and four self-identified females. Participants in this study also self-identified as a "Mainland" Chinese-Canadian immigrant, with the exception of one participant (the reasons for this inclusion as well as the limitations will be detailed in the last section of this thesis) and most of the participants held Canadian citizenships. All the participants (except for one) was born outside of Canada. Participants also self-identified as a "satellite" kids (not in terminology) and had lived a portion of their youth within families that had an "astronaut" parent. Participants had also all lived in Vancouver for a significant portion of their youth and attended schools in Vancouver for their primary education.

Regarding their families, approximately half of the participants still lived in an "astronaut" household (at the time of the interview), while the other half is currently living alone, with a roommate or significant other and/or residing in a "full" home with both "landed" parents.  In terms of higher education, all the participants had graduated or were in the process of graduating, from a post-secondary institution, with a few of my participants currently in the process of obtaining a post-graduate degree. At the time of the interviews, most of the participants were working in a variety of job sectors including retail and service, health services, banking, and research work. Most of the participants were not married and did not have children. Characteristics which were not collected include sexual orientation of the participants, as well as social class. The sexual orientation of the participants was not explicitly asked as participants were drawn from a snowball sampling method and there was an issue of privacy as some of the participants could be identified through this trait.  As of the interview, all the participants reside and work in the Greater Vancouver Area.

A note on the omission of class analysis

It must be noted that immigrants who practice "astronaut" family arrangements have an obvious class difference to traditional immigrants. With the East Asian economic booms of the mid to late twentieth century, many first-generation immigrants have found far more accessible routes to immigration to the west in the form of business and investment migrants. With these economic advantages, these migrants are no longer migrating in the pursuit of economic opportunities in the host countries. Instead, their employment and financial pursuits are usually hindered through the move as many realize that there are more lucrative and rewarding financial opportunities to staying behind in their own countries.

For this study, I chose not to focus on class for a few reasons. First, since my target population was "satellite kids", I did not find it prudent to ask about financial situations since, drawing from my own experience of living in an "astronaut" family,

financial information is not something that is readily or easily shared with an "outsider." During the interviews, most of my participants had very little to say regarding class. Some mentioned that the financial situation in their household was probably better than most and that they felt fortunate that they did not have to worry about money during their time growing up. Participants also hinted on a reluctance to be critical of their parents as it was clear that they did not want to appear ungrateful.

Finally, I realized through my own experiences as well as during my literature review that the topic of Chinese wealth was a very sensitive topic, especially in Vancouver. Recent incidents such as the racial targeting of Chinese foreign property owners as well as perceived ghettoization of Chinese communities in Richmond has further exacerbated a negative portrayal of "rich" Chinese (Bula, 2016, July 30). Therefore, I found that any discussion of class and financial situations was an awkward topic to bring up with my participants. I do believe that the topic of class among modern Chinese immigrants is an important one which should be given more attention and study. However, I felt that with this study there was not enough time and resources to tackle the topic adequately and responsibly and therefore it has been omitted.

## Sampling Methods and Recruitment

The primary data collection technique used in this study is qualitative semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen for many reasons, most importantly of which was the benefit of allowing participants to give free and open-ended accounts of their subjective experiences. The primary sampling technique used in this study is a purposive snow-ball sample. Participants were recruited from friends and peers and from Chinese-Canadian Social Clubs at SFU and UBC with whom I was introduced by my participants. All participants were over the age of 19 at the time of the interview. To obtain a more nuanced understanding of this group, I attempted to recruit a diverse sample group, and my initial hope was to get a range of social backgrounds that included age, sex, (dis) ability and geography. However, realistically I did not want to focus my study entirely on diversity because my project is first and foremost exploratory.

Therefore, in the end, I settled on expanding my participant selection to having an equal number of self-identified females and males and those other more diverse categories would still be granted but not targeted during recruitment. Since the primary goal of my project was to contribute to filling a significant research gap in "astronaut family" studies, a major requirement was for my participants to be Mainland Chinese. Also, this study focuses on "satellite" kids. Therefore, it was important that the participants must be self-identified and they lived as a child within an astronaut household in Vancouver.

All participants were approached via a general introduction email and contact script (please see Appendix). Following a first contact by the participant and an expression of interest, the consent form and recruitment information were sent out. Then, communication channels were established (most of the participants preferred social media) and the interview was set up (in private settings, for example, coffee shops and restaurants). After the interviews, a $5 Starbuck gift card honorarium was also given to the participants. Although nine interviews were conducted, one of the interviewees did not live for a significant time as a "satellite kid"; therefore this interview was excluded from the analysis.

## Data Collection and Analysis

As previously stated, data collection and analysis of this research study was conducted in an iterative-inductive process which involves a simultaneous writing down, sorting out and writing up process (Martinez et al., 2015). Data collected during fieldwork were in the form of written down notes, recordings as well as on-site sorting of data including themes, codes and sound-bite quotes. Each of my separate interviews started out and followed in the same interview guide. I gave my participants some freedom in how they wanted to talk about each section. Therefore, certain sections were sometimes skipped within during course of the interview to match my participants train of thought (coming back to them at the end). I wrote notes on my interview guide sheet (separate for each participant) to document pauses and breaks and kept time-stamps of highlighted soundbites in the margins.

Data derived from the interviews consisted of in-depth journal notes and memos, along with the recorded interview sessions. These notes included the sound-bites and visual observations of the participants as well as separate time-mark notes which would help me sort the data out from my recorder for quicker transcribing. The in-depth notes I took also involved jotting down follow-up questions and potential themes which I thought was interesting or surprising. These categorizations were necessary for the final stages of my write-up. Following each interview, the recordings were transcribed, and corroborating data (visual observations and body language) based on time-marks were then added.

This model of data analysis is based on a *social constructive* grounded theory approach proscribed by Kathy Charmaz. As opposed to more "classical" grounded theoretical methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 as cited in Strauss and Corbin, 1998) this version of grounded theory argues that theory construction is produced from an interplay between the goals, knowledge and presentation of the researcher as well as from an analysis of the data. Social-constructivist grounded theory views the data collection and analysis stages as "tangled" and not separate from each other (Charmaz, 2003 as cited in Charmaz 2009). This means that some review of literature is needed before and during the data collection and analysis rather than relying on theories to *emerge* solely from the data itself.

The obvious benefits to this type of data analysis plan are that themes and codes that may emerge from unexpected sources (such as from observational memos, or even external literary sources) can then be immediately reinforced by the researcher through the coding process. Furthermore, data plans and research plans can also become more flexible with the researcher being able to narrow, widen or even change the scope of their fieldwork steps as the data is coming in (Ezzy, 2002). Data retrieval and collection was also not conducted in a standalone or "upright" process but instead occurs as a "spiral or helix, that demonstrates how analyses and writing up can lead back to more data collection" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 181).

The process following the actual fieldwork stage was the sorting stage where data collected was moved from a chronological stage into thematic stages (O'Reilly, 2012, 187). First, I divided the transcripts by gender because I noticed from my notes that specific questions noticeably varied by the gender of the participants. Later, I also went back and examined the interview data between gender categories. Then open coding was conducted whereby each transcription was sorted using the thematic sections given in the interview guide. This was a bit challenging because I noted that not all of my interviews followed the exact order. Also, some sections were brought back in for discussion and tangents that were present during interviews often fit better into other sections. Themes sorted from the interviews were listed for each participant and then separately indexed. Then, I coded each section by homogeneity (grouping similar "emotional" or thematic responses to specific questions; happy, excited etc.) and more importantly recorded outliers to these responses. Another secondary coding was done for specific emotional responses to the questions (positive, negative, neutral). For example, responses found to be positive were cross referenced across conceptual categories.

After the development of several *descriptive* categories, they were further integrated into *theoretical* categories which provides the basic contributions of this study. These theoretical categories attempt to form some basic analytical discussions in regards to the research questions posed by this study. Since the tenents of grounded theoretical study require that there be sufficient "saturation" in both sampling and analysis of research data to generate theory, this study offers first steps towards the formation of these theories. This is because this researcher notes that there are significant gaps and limitations to this study which inhibit the production of a "general" theory which can be made about "satellite kids". However, this study can contribute to identifying some important theoretical concepts in regards to the experiences of these unique individuals and hopefully contribute more discussion to the formation of more in-depth and nuanced study of Chinese Overseas as well (Gunwu, 2003).

Finally, it should be noted that data collection, transcription and analysis of the study was conducted by myself. Participants were given pseudonyms on all files and records of the interviews. For convenience, I chose to use the first names of the participants during the data analysis of the transcripts, then during the final write up pseudonyms were then added back in before I shared the research drafts to my supervisor and committee member.  None of the data were disseminated for any purpose other than the proposed research project. All other sources of data (literature) were found via the SFU library database and are all within the public domain.

## Researcher Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

As Madden (as cited in O'Reilly, 2005, p. 99) states, fieldwork into the subjective and embodied experiences of others is a "whole-of-body experience and can have unanticipated consequences" to both the researcher and the research subject. For the research subject, detailed cross-examinations and challenges of recounting memories can be pleasant, painful, illuminating or boring. Therefore, it is up to the researcher to consider how to design a suitable and safe methodology which considers the possibility of change within the research subject participating in the study. For the researcher, the acquisition and analysis of data are also generated within this social setting of unfamiliarity and "unanticipated consequences" (101).  Our gathered data is not limited to the responses we get from participants during our interview but also derived in part from our own observations and judgements. Our personal upbringing and academic interests also play an important factor in determining what kind of questions we ask and indeed, what kinds of conclusions we may draw.

In terms of reflexivity, this study has been intimately connected with my own life and has influenced both my current identity and my academic career. I grew up in a "astronaut" household and have lived almost my entire life as a "satellite kid." However, I did not know what my family arrangement was called until I went to university. Nevertheless, I was always extremely conscious of the fact that my father's absence in my home life was beginning to raise questions about my own future and the future of my

family. I was also always inherently interested in other families who had the same arrangements as my own. Growing up I met a few children who were like me, but similarly, they never talked to me about their experiences.

My interests in astronaut families drove me to take family studies, gender studies and social theory courses during my undergraduate studies and strongly influenced my decisions to pursue an advanced sociology degree. My upbringing challenged my assumptions regarding positivist notions of family and society and helped me to form a better understanding of how to critique and understand theoretical perspectives such as structural functionalism and conflict theories. My background also gave me some advantages, as well as disadvantages, to studying my research group. The main advantage that I have in studying my participants is access. As I have outlined in my introduction and literature review, identifying and locating astronaut families for a social study has been complicated and time consuming. During my sampling methods, I found that my background helped immensely in building rapport and connecting my participants to the essential questions that this study examines. I believe that an "outsider" would have a much harder time coming up with the "right" questions to ask during important moments of the interview. Furthermore, my status as an "in-group" allowed my participants to elaborate and discuss their experiences more freely. A final advantage of my personal upbringing in this study is language. I found in my study that being able to speak both Mandarin and English during the interview process gave me unprecedented access to relaying more nuanced and specific experiential discourses and helped illuminate an important part of my research findings. Furthermore, this language access allowed me to document and address bricolage (Monaghan and Just, 2000) formed within this specific family setting.

Nonetheless, there are a few disadvantages to being an "insider" in this study. Firstly, my own "closeness" to the research topic influenced how I designed and practiced my fieldwork activities. I found it hard to distance myself away from presumptions that I had during my own studies in university. I found that I had many preconceived ideas and assumption which found their way into my written proposals and

arguments. These thankfully were quickly edited out thanks to the thorough and professional advice I received from my supervisor and committee. I was also conscious of the fact that my questions could be leading and directional. I chose to conduct semi-structural interviews so that my own questioning method would be less rigid and less prone to becoming teleological. Furthermore, I was also conscious that my own experiences and reactions could bias the responses that I received from my participants. Therefore, in my design, I chose not to disclose my own personal information to the participants and to keep my own analogies and real-life anecdotes to a minimum. Finally, I was also aware of the fact that my own personal background, as well as my position as a researcher, produced uneven power relations between my participants. I was often asked to provide explanations and to "authenticate" the responses from my participants during the interview process. However, these problems were minor, and I believe they did not alter or damage the efficacy of this study in the long run.

# Chapter 4.    Results and Findings

## Introduction

       The following chapter will present the main research findings of the thesis using five main thematic sections organized around the main interview schedule. These sections are *Family Relationships, Identity, Sites of Practice, Conflict and Solidary,* and *Home and Belonging.* Transcripts were coded into initial categories using these thematic sections taken from the interview guide. These initial categories were further integrated, compared and refined into descriptive categories. This process was done many times using different iterations of conceptual categories and integrated further into more inclusive descriptive categories. The subheadings for each of the sections presented in the following chapter are representative of the final descriptive categories which emerged from the coding process. Following this chapter, the main theoretical categories which have been derived from a comparison *between* the main descriptive thematic sections will be presented.

## Family Relationships

In Chinese households, adhering to kinship authority and identifying oneself "with the family" plays a key role in how an individual structures their daily activities and long term goals (Hamilton and Zheng, 1992). Each person within the group works towards a shared idea of "the family" while personal successes and failures are "shared" among all the family members. Family members are also guided by an understanding of filial piety which structures the relationships between parents and children (Kwok-bun, 2013). In astronaut households, the "astronaut" and the "landed" partner maintains the primary conjugal role (Bott, 1957 as cited in Steckley and Letts, 2013). These roles are often "segregated", with the "astronaut" holding the breadwinning role while the "landed" partner is occupied with bringing up the children as well as other domestic activities. While some tasks, such as filial caring of the in-laws or long-term financial decisions occupy gray areas where decisions require a joint discussion, most of the roles between the pair, such as bread-earning for the husband and home-making for the wife, are usually planned and agreed upon (Waters, 2001). The role of "satellite" kids within the family is much more vague and fluid. Most of the participants agreed that their primary role within the family has to do with success, which they operationalized as "study hard and get a good job". While most found this to be something "positive", many also found that it often placed them in uncomfortable and confusing situations, especially in regards to their relationships with their parents. The following section will use interview data to examine how the participants form relationships with their parents, peers and kinship group.

## Working towards the family

There are many reasons to immigrate and in the case of "astronaut" families these reasons include escaping politically uncertain environments, avoiding religious persecution and perhaps most importantly, desiring to give children greater educational opportunities (Tsong and Liu, 2008).  Most of the participants stated they "knew" the primary reason for moving to Canada was "for them". All the participants stated that their parents had talked about their concerns regarding the schooling system in China. They cited the harsh and demanding examination culture and placing systems of Chinese

schools as detrimental to children. Most of the participants never experienced any of this for themselves, but it was considered as "fact" by their parents and thus a reason enough for them to immigrate.

Most of the participants believed that the role that they played for the family was one of "success" and that they would eventually be asked to "prove" this success through the acquisition of a good education and job. Furthermore, they were seen by their parents as an eventual "product" of the family's sacrifices. Thus, school and grades become a mounting pressure and an important job that was performed by the individual as well as taken responsibility for by the entire family. Many participants recounted how they had had conversations with their parents about how each person in the family was "sacrificing" so that they, the kids, could work hard and get a good job for the future. This kind of pressure was common within most participant's accounts of their family life. Moreover, the idea of "succeeding for the family" also extended to the planning and formation of their unique household.

Most of the participants never had a discussion with their parents regarding their future prior to the move. Many described being whisked away from their "normal" life quite suddenly and finding themselves starting anew within a strange land. For example, Dillon experienced the move quite rapidly and without warning.

> Dillon (M): I don't remember it that well so maybe I was like five or six? But still I never been on a plane before, but I took it pretty well… I didn't really think about it too much, I was a pretty easy going child…I guess I just followed my parents… But I had no idea that I was going to Vancouver, or Canada… I think my parents knew what they were doing, but not telling me was probably a good idea… I think I got really sick when I came here but that's what my mom told me like long time later but still I guess I never thought about it, like how big it was? At the time, it seemed like an adventure.

The participants also found out quite dramatically that they would be living with their mothers while their fathers were going to be "away". Many attested that on the day their fathers left for the first time that they had no idea that he would be gone for months at a time, and certainly not for years on end. Many of the participants had no clear schedule on how long their fathers were going away for each year. They guessed that it was a substantial amount of time based on how much they had forgotten about their fathers during their separation, and vice versa.

## Waiting for dad, living with mom

In describing their relationships with their "landed" mothers and "astronaut" fathers, participants had more to say about their father while mostly playing down their relationship with their mother as a "normal" mother-son/mother-daughter relationship. To get a clear picture of the participant's relationships with their parents, this study looked at how close each participant felt they were to each parent in terms of their own values and lifestyle, additionally the participants were asked to describe their own relationship with each parent and how the organization of their family life affected their relationships.

During the interview, participants were asked if they felt "closer" to their father or mother. "Closeness" of the participants was determined by asking how closely the individual's values and general attitudes to life was closer to one parent or the other. All the male participants, and most of the female participants, stated that they felt their personalities were closest to their mothers, which was expected since they, and indeed all the participants, had lived without their "astronaut" fathers during their family life. Andy talked about how his tastes and personality was like his mother's.

> Andy (M): I feel like I am more like my mom, my mother because we have the same taste in food and like shows and movies. But I think it's normal because we both have been here (In Vancouver) and we spent a lot of time here without my Dad. When you spend a lot of time with one parent you kind of feel more close to them you know? I mean my Dad kind of doesn't know what I like and I don't really know what he

likes…yeah food and movies…hobbies, yeah I have like no idea what he likes (laughs) and he probably likes some stuff but I can't get into it. I feeling like he isn't, or not that, well he is not used to life here? (In Vancouver) When I was small it was mostly just me and my mom. I mean we would not hang out so much but like normal days we would have dinner, or if I am not home I would call her…never my Dad…no I wouldn't call my Dad.

Andy's response mirrored that of other participants who believed that proximity and time spent with each parent was the biggest factor in how much they took up each parent's personality and lifestyle. While none of the male participants found that their personality was like their father's, some of the female participants stated that "presently" they felt they were more aligned to their father's personality and lifestyle. Ellen (F) talked about how her personality and "movements" mirrored her father throughout her life.

Ellen (F): I think its my father like he's much closer to me in just more oh I think personality? I am extremely like him like I act the exact way as him... like our reactions are the same… like you know like what we feel like eating… or I can't stand it like when there are dishes to be done (cleaning).

Ellen's sentiment was different from Fran's as she had "developed" into being closer to her Dad after previously been close to her Mom.

Fran (F): I think I'm closer to my Dad… like in so many ways, we like the same stuff I mean tastes in like movies, funny stories, we both love to sleep! (laughs). I mean I'm still close with my Mom like she raised me but lately we just don't get along like she has more of a um I guess you could say negative attitude like she will always say stuff to me that makes me feel I don't know, bad about myself? And I think my Dad is just more independent and supportive um of me, so I guess I like that better.

Gabby was one of the only female participants who felt that that her relationship with her mother was closer than her Dad.

Gabby (F): My relationship with my mom is pretty like close as you can get because we literally like close (indicates with hands coming together), cause I live with her so, we see each other every day and she's kind of like you know the mom and the dad role for me so where I say you know the closest you can ever get with a parent … I'll tell her everything and she'll tell me everything and such. With my Dad its actually quite distant …because usually when I was still living in China basically how it goes is like Monday or Friday I stay with my Mom and then every Saturday and Sunday I go live with my Dad, but even though my Dad has been kind of like the fun parent you know? I also feel like my relationship with him is not as close as my moms so a lot of things I would tell her I wouldn't tell him about…I say we probably talk on the phone once a month or so? But other than that, it's quite distant.

Even though most of the participants saw their father's as important providers, they were also often strangers and figureheads within the household. In describing his relationship with his father, Ben got quite emotional as he described his father's absence in his early life.

Ben (M): You know what, it's something I've been thinking about for a long time and this might be kind of like messed up to say but I'm clearly closer to my mom than my dad right like my dad was gone for years and yeah he'd pop by occasionally but um he'd bring back like a counterfeit lego toy or whatever (laughs) but it doesn't really mean anything because well he wasn't here and me and my mom kind of like had to work by ourselves so like (voice is slightly cracking) so as much as I love my dad it's something that I realize now is that my relationship with him is not that concrete like I feel like he was absent for such a big part of my life right.

Most of the male participants did not share such a detailed account, but their responses hinted at some sort of lost connection with their fathers due to their absence. Ben was unique among the participants in that he confronted his father about these issues. He called these confrontations "fights" but afterwards he revealed that mostly it was just silence between himself and his father, while his mother mediated the situation from the sidelines, mostly due to the difficulty in communicating what he was feeling with his

father. Ben described one of these "fights" then talked about what he "wanted" to tell his father during these confrontations.

> Ben (M): What usually happens is (pauses and laughs) you know he'll (pauses) it's funny because, he studied sociology and I studied sociology, and he'll have a strong understanding of norms and like he'll know exactly what to do, like what isn't appropriate like he'll be able to pinpoint it out but usually our fights end up happening because um (pauses) it's actually funny (laughs) like once it's a break from the norm I mean we'll end up fighting over it right, so these fights like for example, well like if I'm in public and let's just say he starts treating me like a kid in public, you know I'll be like stop that. I mean I'll be like I'm fine, like I can, I can buy my own groceries, I can do a lot of shit by myself you know like without assistance like you know it's cool like I don't need that or I don't need your advice uh like tagging along, and honestly I don't want you to treat me like a kid anymore. I want you to treat me like an equal, l I want you to treat me like a friend.

Emotional neglect, which can be defined as "decreased parent-child interactions, verbal abuse" as well as a side effect of physical violence have been shown to produce adverse effects in the later life of children (Gaudin et al., 1996 as cited in White et al., 2005). Interestingly, research has found that this kind of experience seems to be more common among predominantly single parent families with a larger number of children (Watters et al., 1986 as cited in White, 2005). Female participants also talked about how they received criticism about their looks from their mothers and cited it as a reason that they were closer to their fathers. Female participants were also more frequently critical of both parents while male participants were more critical of their fathers. Critiques of the astronaut "fathers" included public and private behaviours. For Ben, these included how his father treated him in public. Ellen mentioned that her Dad would sleep all the time and that she disliked that trait in her Dad. Furthermore, male participants tended to talk (or hint) at their negative relationships with their father's while female participants chose to talk more critically about their mothers.

Interestingly most of the participants stated that they had engaged in an "education" talk with their astronaut father's but none reported talking about romance,

friendships, hobbies, pop culture or political events. Conversely, most of the participants reported talking candidly about these issues with their mothers. In fact, some had mentioned that they could *only* talk about these topics with their mothers because of the language barriers they had with their fathers. Furthermore, both parents were seen primarily as authority figures in family life. Some of the women interviewed stated that they did have what could be described as a "friendship" with their mothers however they had admitted that there were subjects that they couldn't breach due to formality.

## Absence of kinship networks

Kinship ties can be said to be a mixed blessing since although they can give its members important emotional, financial and practical support they also tend to segregate participants within these groups and limit their opportunities to integrate into the larger society. (Thomas, 1990 as cited in Tan, 2004). Studies have shown that larger kinship groups (as well as ethnically ghettoized communities) can act as barriers to outside structures and institutions for immigrants living within them as they provide a convenient and self-sufficient structure that inhibit acculturation opportunities for its participants (Jabbra, 1983 as ctied in Jabbra, 1991).

For most of the participants, another lived reality of daily family life is the complete absence of a kinship support group. Most of the literature regarding astronaut families have noted similar trends of families living in isolation of family networks and this study also found this to be the case among the participants (Skeldon 1994; Lam; 1994). Without aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents, traditional and cultural roles, rituals and social nets needed to be replaced by other social objects and networks. This included friends, neighbourhood communities such as churches, sport clubs and Chinese societies as well as technological platforms such as internet blogging sites, social media and databases which acted like "security nets" where families turned for help and advice. Technology was noted by participants as being a huge factor which nominalized daily life. Indeed, the influence of technology has dramatically affected the way youth experience and mediate relationships with family and friends (Tilleczek,

2011).  Cameron talked about the addition of video technology and social media into her family life.

> Cameron (M): Now we have Wechat and Youtube. Its really amazing what they have done, you know if you want to meet someone just (shaking motion with his hands) do this, and you meet someone. You can meet someone everyday and you can talk to them. Now I can send pictures and say hi to my friends and back then you had to meet face to face. I think technology is something that's important and changes a lot of things about the way that we look at our society. We cannot live without it now though so that's kind of sad.

Indeed, the lack of kinship support as a result of migration is not something unique to "astronaut" families and have been reported by the clear majority of emigrating groups (Muir, 1988 as cited in Dasgupta, 1992; Seifeddine, 1997 as cited Guthrie and Wank, 2002). Furthermore the consequences of removing one's family from kinship supports has also resulted in problems such as marital stress (Man, 1995), depression (Noh and Avison, 1996) and the ghettoization of certain communities (Jabbra, 1983 as cited in Jabbra 1991). Studies on astronaut families also reported similar results whereby marital breakdown, stress and gravitation towards ethnic enclaves characterized the experiences of "landed" parents (Boyer, 1996; E-pua et al., 1996; Waters, 2001, 2009, 2013; Tsang et al., 2003). For the "satellite kids" however, a lack of kinship groups and networks has been enculturated into their daily lives, and there was less of a sentiment of shock and stress and more of a notion that something they felt was missing. However, the effects of growing up without kinship groups in proximity did have some effects on the participants. Fran spoke about her relatives in China and how their absence has affected her life.

> Fran (F): I have no relatives here at all they are all in China. I sometimes see them when I go back but mostly I just never see them… (laughs) is that weird? I think it's weird, probably. I mean having like a small family is kind of what I want but sometimes you know… sad. It would probably be the best sometimes I can understand. Family is like really important to Chinese people and I really want my kids to learn you know how important the family is when you know when they have families. ..I will still call them during the New Years (her relatives), uh or text

actually because of my mandarin. My mandarin is so bad (laughs)I mean my Mandarin is really horrible, I don't want to talk to them on the phone… nana ni hao, gugu ni hao (laughs) like legit those are the only words I know (laughs) but I hope they're doing well and I still think of them as my family even though they are far away.

Fran's sentiments regarding the feeling of something "missing" was exacerbated by the fact that her friends and peers in school *did* have kinship groups in which they relied on and spent time with. Furthermore, feelings of inadequacy in communication and understanding with her kin also steered her away from pursuing relationships with her relatives back in China. The issue of familial importance and filial piety was also present in her account as she stated that she took the time to send well wishes and greetings to kinship groups during the holidays. Memorized greetings and long-practiced kinship names were used in place of spending actual time and getting to know her relatives and mirrored the practiced customs and relationship she had with her own father. Ellen also gave her thoughts on having so few relatives living near her as well as how she handles the possibility of never knowing her close family.

Ellen (F): I've maybe met like one of my cousins? He lives in the States. I think he's still there? None of my aunts, I think maybe one uncle... I don't think I will ever meet everyone because it's been so long and I don't know, I don't think there's a need… No I don't really miss them you know, because I've never met them. Both my grandparents are gone, I saw them a couple months before they passed away… I didn't go to their funeral but we went to their grave, the cemetery, when I went back. I don't know, I think having family is important and its sad sometimes because there's always a need for a family you know? But no, I wouldn't say I miss having a big family, I never knew what that was.

This statement also highlights a feeling of acceptance and perhaps dejection in that their lives were already "set" so to speak, and that their own situation presented them with limited opportunities to form concrete relations with their relatives. Furthermore, most participants also expressed ambivalent feelings towards the loss of kinship networks in their lives. Dillon was especially candid about his own situation and talked about his reservations of living with larger kinship groups nearby in the future.

Dillon (M): I like having that, I mean that's a good thing I think (laughs). It's just way easier, I can live my life without having this big family that I have to talk to. I mean my cousin is dope, and like I have a really close relationship with him and my uncle… I know my Mom cares a lot about that, not being close to my grandparents. I just think that at this point its way to awkward, I mean I don't really know what to say if I saw them. It would just be better off like this, you know no contact, I think it's just easier for everyone.

Of the participants interviewed only two had second-degree relatives such as aunts, uncles and cousins living near them and most of the participants expressed that they had not talked to any of their relatives in years. A few also expressed that they would not recognize any of their relatives if they saw them on the street. Interestingly, the participants who shared these sentiments rarely expressed disappointment or a sense of regret about their diminished relations with their relatives.

## Importance of filial piety

In the old Chinese tale, Kong Rong shares fruit, we see the titular character tasked with dividing a plate of pears between himself and his siblings (Li, 1988). In the story, he gives the biggest pear to his oldest brother and takes the smallest one for himself, when asked why he divides it in this way he answered that since he was the youngest he should be given the smaller share. This story exemplifies an important idea within Chinese families. "Xiao" or filial piety is an ethical and moral philosophy within Confucianism (Fei, 1948, as cited in Hamilton and Zheng, 1992, p. 43). It is arguably the most important virtue within Chinese cultures and organizes kinship as well as societal interactions. Within the home, filial piety also dictates different ways that family members should interact with each other. Relationships such as son and father, daughter and mother, vice versa (or to a lesser extent sibling relationships) all have their unique and special "rules" associated with their interaction. For the participants, instances where they practiced filial piety came from multiple sources including parental relationships, sibling relationships and external "elder" relationships.

Filial piety is based on the concept of familiarity or "living in proximity" (Fei, 1948, as cited in Hamilton and Zheng, 1992, p. 44). It is something that is hard to explain and usually seen or expressed as "respect" or "deference" in the way you behave and communicate to people who are more experienced or older than yourself. Among the participants, filial relationships were most consistently reinforced and practiced during interactions with parents. For male participants in particular, being a filial son was an extremely important idea that permeated daily family life. Male participants stated that being a filial son usually applied more heavily to their fathers while they felt it was more relaxed with their mothers. Acts such as opening doors for parents, cleaning up after dinner and even holding shopping bags for parents were cited as examples of being a good "filial" son in daily life.

Within the immediate family as well there was also a sense that relationships based on filial piety was more important than emotional connections. Most of the participants stated that their relationships with their parents had more to do with respect than emotional dependence. There was a feeling that being a child, they had a responsibility to respect and listen to their parents' wishes and often this would clash with their own commitments. Ellen talked about her experience of getting a first job and her parent's thoughts on her financial needs.

> Ellen (F): Like for example when I got my first job… at like an ice cream store, um TCBY (laughs) yeah. It was like a summer job but I wanted to keep it you know. Most people don't keep their job when school starts... I was there for maybe two years I think… My mom didn't want me to keep it like she thought I should have been studying (laughs) uh my Dad was really upset… I did get into like fights um like about my job… He was like, you know about like traditional Dad and stuff and like he didn't think I should be working like he was like why do you need a job, like I'm making money for you and mama and you should be studying you know getting into a good uni… I thought it was unfair because I need my own  like money and stuff and I couldn't always like I wanted to spend my own money that I made you know like it wasn't about I need money but more like I wanted to do something on my own… My Dad just couldn't understand and he still doesn't get it.

Filial piety was also practiced amongst siblings and between second-degree family members such as aunts and uncles. Among the participants who had older siblings some had stated that they did try and act respectful however not to the extreme in which they behaved towards their parents. Furthermore, participants recounted how they also "knew" to be respectful towards family friends and relatives, particularly during special events and celebrations. In these narratives, participants stated they felt their duty to fulfill filial piety obligations trumped any "real" discussion of personal trauma they had with their parents. Among the participants there was a clear sense of the "family" not just as a collection of individuals, but as a unit working together. None of the participants interviewed openly challenged filial practice in their lives though some clearly had criticisms regarding how it has effectively organized their home life, particularly when filial responsibilities affected their individual goals.

Within astronaut households, filial duties and responsibilities are characterized by the idea of sacrifice. In contrast to other Chinese families, the filial duties of the children become a linchpin in the organization of family life. While in other families, filial piety can mean merely being respectful to one's parents (Mei-wah, 2013), in astronaut families, this is not enough. Being respectful to your parents means fulfilling their wishes and practicing a self-suspension in the face of familial responsibility. For the "satellite" kid, these wishes are engrained in the actual reason for the family move. They are here because their parents want them to succeed academically and, later, financially. Furthermore, the absence of the father and the sacrifice of the mother becomes an actual tangible *reason* for the child to uphold their filial duties as they can see how much their parents have given them and which in turn they feel obligated to return somehow. Therefore, in some ways, astronaut families exemplify the purpose of filial piety; ensuring that the individual is only defined by his or her obligations.

## Discussion

The main findings of this section centered around how participants experienced their familial relationships. In terms of analysis, this section was the hardest to code and collate because participants often gave their opinions on family organization and relationships throughout the entire interview. Getting participants to talk about family relationships was also extraordinarily difficult. This could be due in part to the strength of filial obligations that participants felt for their family units. Using an understanding of a *differential mode of association,* we can see why participants become extremely protective of their family units and defend it as if they are talking about themselves (Hamilton and Zheng, 1992). However, participants were also capable of being quite critical of the family arrangement. Mainly this was found in their annoyance of their obligatory role to provide the "successful story" for the family through their academic performance.

The kinds of parenting styles described by the participants seemed to be a combination of two distinct styles out of five proposed by LeMaster and DeFrain (1989) which are *parents and martyrs* (parents sacrificed own needs in the interests of the child) and *parents as drill sergeants* (parents are bosses) (as cited in White et al., 255). The final three styles are *parents as pals* (friends with your children), *parents as teachers* (teaching and guiding children), and *parents as coaches* (treating children as equals) were conspicuously missing in the descriptions.

Many participants found that they had not chosen this life nor had they been consulted in how and where they lived. This sense of "powerlessness" has been documented by researchers as being an essential feeling felt by the women and children of "astronaut" households which is linked to the patriarchal control of Chinese families (Ong, 1999; Waters, 2000). In reference to other migrants who practice family dispersal strategies, the participants had limited access to kinship networks (Irving and Tsang, 1999). Surprisingly, and in contrast to the experiences of their parents (Man, 1995) many also described a sense of relief that their relatives were far away. The reason for this feeling was primarily due to fears that they could not communicate properly with their

relatives. Another main finding of this section highlights the importance of filial obligations in organizing family life for the participants (Waters, 2000). Participants expressed some ambivalence towards the idea of filial piety as most found it to be a central pillar in their lives but also disagreed with how it should impact their own choices. This idea of a competing set of demands to individual growth and familial obligations was also evident in the participant's identity formations.

# Identity

Uniquely, Mainland Chinese "satellite kids" become habituated into two different sets of lifestyles at home; one set with a "landed" parent and the other, a completed but fleeting home life when the family is reunited with the "astronaut" parent. In this way, the individual goes through a process of *alternation* (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 58) where an individual "switches worlds" and applies a different set of identity roles and performances to navigate multiple realities. Alternating between a "full" and "split" household, the participants had to learn to shift back and forth between having to perform the duties of being a filial son or daughter to managing their personal lives. Surrounding them was a culture that was in many ways the exact opposite of these cultural values. Growing up in Vancouver, participants were constantly being inundated by messages of self-expression, self-validation and self-pursuits. Participants were especially susceptible to the influences of their peers and friends who did not have filial expectations or responsibilities to their families. Furthermore, the idea that Chinese culture was a "peripheral" culture was everywhere while they grew up in a western setting. The following section describe and analyze emergent themes concerning the unique identities of Chinese Mainland "satellite" kids.

## Strong sons and beautiful daughters

All of the participants self-identified as either male or female. For the males, common themes of expectations within the family included being a filial son, having strong academic and financial pressures placed on them and, familial responsibilities including being the "voice" of the household as well as being the future "head" of the family. For the females, there was more emphasis on individual poise and cultural knowledge, including knowing how to be a filial daughter. Similarly, there was pressure regarding education, future job prospects, and most importantly, marriage. Most of the participants agreed that obedience to their parents was a similar expectation for both genders.

For the male participants, being a filial son meant several things. Principally, it meant being obedient to one's parents such as listening to advice, taking care of the parents, being attentive to the parents needs and sacrificing of the "self" to serve one's parents. This could include being deferential to one's parents during arguments as well as being patient and listening to parents.  Dillon talked about his frustration with his mother's preoccupation with Chinese medicine, especially disagreeing with her purchasing expensive herbal medicines for him, even when he told her that he did not believe in its health prospects. Male participants were also pressured into doing well at school as they were expected to have a singular "job" which was to find a good career and take care of one's parents. This pressure extended into other extra-curricular activities as well, as most of the male participants expressed that they were "forced" to go to Chinese language school, as opposed to only one female participant who had gone (although all the participants recounted having informal Chinese lessons at home), as well as take on extra classes and carry out volunteer work at school and in church studies. Male participants also reported that they took on an active role as the "voice" of the family. Dillon talked about how he would order food for his father when they went to restaurants as well as perform some daily activities in the house such as answering the phone.

> Dillon (M): Yeah he doesn't speak English (father), my mom can though like she has gotten a lot better um like if we were at a restaurant I would order for him and like talk to the waiters and stuff because He can't read the menu but He would do that if we went to a Chinese restaurant… I find it usually nowadays I will just help out my parents whenever I can and I do think that because I used to do a lot of stuff before um like I don't know answer the phone or like talk to people, sales people or like the Jehovah's witnesses (laughs)… I don't know I never thought about it but yeah I did that.

Doing minor things around the house, such as answering the phone or greeting salesman at the door illustrates how very early on, participants must fill an "adult" role within the household. Although some of the male participants noted this happening, none of the female participants talked about doing these things around the house but it can probably be safely assumed that they also intervened on behalf of their parents where language barriers were present.

The female participants noted that their expectations as "girls" were highly sexist and created conflicts within the household. Filial daughters were characterized as being more submissive, gentle and caring, taking after their mother. There was a common idea among the participants that Chinese families "wanted" to have sons over daughters. Ellen talked about how she felt that daughters in Chinese families were "unwanted."

> Ellen (F): Well like my parents wanted boys right, obviously (laughs) but when my sister was born they said they would try again and then they had me. I know it's like you want a boy right but I think my Dad always saw me like as a boy… My mom would always say that my personality suited a boys (laughs) because I was so stubborn.

Ellen's description of her relationship with her parents hinted that she was somehow proud that she took on the role of the "son" with her father. There was also a casual acceptance of this gender inequality within the female participants' narratives. The idea that the parents "wanted boys" was often laughed off or even hinted at not being serious. This gender bias towards sons was not shared by the participants however. All the female participants expressed that when it came time for them to have children, they would rather have daughter's than sons while most of the male participants said they did not care about the gender of their children.

Most of the female participants noted that they disagreed with Chinese attitudes regarding sex and gender in the household. By far the most common topic was the conversation regarding marriage. Most of the female participants talked extensively about being pressured into marriage, as well as dating restrictions that were imposed on them. Male participants did not mention any dating restrictions by their parents. Andy mentioned that he did not have any "requirements" for dating from his parents and that he was relatively sure his parents would be fine with whoever he dated. Dillon mentioned that perhaps his parents would "freak out" if he started to date someone from another ethnicity, but stated that he would probably not care if his parent's disapproved of who

he was dating. Most of the female participants revealed that they felt they had been pressured into getting married by at least one parent in the past. Ellen talked about what she witnessed when her older sister was pressured into marriage as well as her personal experiences.

> Ellen (F): Oh my god yes! I have totally, it's so annoying! Have you ever been nagged at to get married, no right?... It's like its none of your business who I want to date and like when we are going to get married! I have like my own life and my own choices and I don't wanna like get tied down like I do wanna get married, like in the future but I don't want to get married because I've been told to you know! I think it's mostly like a thing with Asian parents and like getting grandchildren and my mom can tell her friends that but I just want them to know that I don't feel like, well it's like pressure you know?... Like my sister for example, she got married like three years ago and it's like I don't want that you know because my parents pressured her cause she was like with her boyfriend for like ten years and they finally got married but I think I'm more of the stubborn one in the family and like um I don't do the what you tell me to do, that's something about me I think.

Gabby talked about how her father's religious expectations as well her parent's divorce dissuaded her from thinking about an early marriage.

> Gabby (F): I don't think it's that good, I mean to get married like without thinking about you know the consequences, I mean like look at my parents, they got married like super young and they probably did it because you know that was what you were supposed to do… No, I think if I marry I will make sure that it's right for me, I also think that my Dad influenced me a lot and like he's Christian right so his ideas on who I date and stuff is like super strict, I don't know I think I get like influenced in some way um by like um like I will always see my Dad's face (laughs) you know if he (her future husband) is the one or not, I don't know.

These gendered expectations affected the personal life choices of the participants including relationships with parents, career decisions, as well as future "home" decisions, a theme to be explored in later sections.

## "Chinese" and "Canadian"

When asked to express what they felt was the biggest difference between being a "satellite" kid and other first generation Chinese kids who had a more traditional nuclear family, most of the participants expressed a feeling of being "white-washed" or having more a westernized or anglicized identity. This feeling was almost unanimously expressed among the female participants, while the male participants were more divided on whether they felt this was something common or unique among first generation children.  Andy described how he saw this difference between Chinese born Canadians or CBCs (Western Thinking and Acting) and new immigrants (Eastern Thinking and Acting):

> Andy (M): I think that it's interesting because I think that what I would call it is Canadian born Chinese or  CBC but I think that there is a really good point which is that I'm not really fully CBC and I'm not really like someone who is fresh off boat, and I think it's because I guess I learned the both of those aspects I mean I think CBC are kind of really think eastern but they act western maybe and then the fresh off the boat they maybe act more eastern but they want to learn and to act more western, if you know what I mean. And I think I can understand both but maybe I am stuck in the middle like I can act like both but it's more like I can choose what to be.

Andy seemed to be saying that he felt the difference between himself and other Chinese immigrant children was that he juggled and practiced a collective approach to family life (*eastern*) as well as developing his own wants and needs which can be separated from the family (*western*). He felt that although he "acts" in a western way, or trying to showcase more of his individuality without the appearance of his family, he still thinks and prioritizes a family-centric personality. Many expressed being "westernized" through their narratives on how they made friends, as well as their preference in using English over Mandarin. Some of the participants also expressed that they believed they are

more "westernized' because their knowledge pool regarding pop culture was primarily "North American". Furthermore, being "western" affected the way they grew up and interacted with their parents at home. A clear example of this was found in their ideas about eating habits and family dining experiences. Andy, Fran and Ellen talked about their love for "western" food and felt that they associate it more with their "diet" at home than Chinese food. Ellen gave her thoughts on a staple food in her diet:

> Ellen (F): I don't think I can live without salad… I can probably eat it every meal, when I was younger we didn't have salad and all our vegetables were steamed or boiled and I always thought I hated vegetables… I legit didn't have any salad until like halfway through grade five… I don't know I think its just the best food (laugh)

Stereotypes and prejudices that applied to Chinese people, as well as Asian people in general soon became common knowledge to these participants who began to develop an idea of Chinese-Canadian culture. Gabby described what she found was the "common" trait of Chinese families living in Vancouver.

> Gabby (F): I personally think maybe hardworking, like pushing yourself academic-wise and uh I say it cause I find that Chinese people here are usually more conservative, like many people here, like Caucasian people, so I mean that's another trait… and also like food I guess, and maybe social media too because on YouTube I watch a lot of you know Chinese shows as well so I guess maybe that's kind of something, yeah, other than that, I mean I'm trying to learn how to write Chinese and it's an experience that I've tried, I mean I've completely forgotten it and trying to you know learn it properly.

In terms of a unique "Mainland" identity, all the participants also relayed stories of their parent's experiences in Mainland communist China. Cameron talked about his father's earliest job as a peanut trader.

Cameron: You know how my Dad got his start? He used to walk like "humhumhum" (motions with his hands) to Hebei get the what do you call it? (peanuts)… He would carry it on his back and walk back to Shanghai you know carrying this heavy bag just to sell it, can you believe it? I don't think I can even walk for like two hours, think about that. That's how you make money back in China before all this you know… So I think to myself my life is easy. You cannot get anywhere without hard work right, you have to be focused, and not take shortcuts. Hah (sighs), impossible. Things like that, they were so hard for our parents, your parents, you know.

Dillon's father lived in a family of eight kids in which he was the eldest and had to share a bed with four of his siblings during surprise famines in his village.

Dillon (M): Yeah my Dad grew up pretty poor, um I think he was the eldest of like six children or something like that… Yeah I remember he would tell us like he had to share his bed with my uncles and like not getting enough to eat and having to go and steal like eggs and like chickens (laughs).

Ellen recounted how she felt extremely grateful and emotional when she thought about her parent's childhood.

*Ellen (F): Our parents they had it rough right?… Like I'm super grateful of my life when I hear stories like that, like it is unbelievable how much we have now and like we never think about where our next meal is coming from… I don't even know how my parents did it.*

As opposed to immigrants from Hong Kong or Taiwan, families coming from Mainland China all share a relatively recent exposure to "life in the west". Coming from Mainland China, families also usually shared a collective memory of living in a considerably poorer and more restrictive environment. All the participants had stories to tell regarding their families impoverished past. These stories were passed down within

the family and retold to the younger generation becoming a source of family pride and strength.

## Discussion

The findings in this section showcased the most apparent differences in experience between male and female participants. A particularly poignant concept found in this section was how the participants, both male and female, experienced their role as sons and daughters. Although both sets of participants found that harsh demands were placed on their academics and future job prospects by their parents, the female participants had an extra duty; to become eligible wives and secure the security of a good marriage. This added pressure seemed to be coming from both parents, but this pressure seemed to be mainly articulated by the mother. There was also a careful note of criticism among female participants that Chinese families are still primarily patriarchal (Man, 1995), although surprisingly, most of the criticisms were directed towards "external culture" rather than at the family.

There was a sense among the female participants that the sexism they experienced in the household was accepted because this was tradition and that at the end of the day *things were getting better* (Waters, 2000). Interestingly, male participants had very little to say regarding the differences between how sons and daughters (and even mothers) are treated in the household. Indeed, some of the participants defended the practice or even provide reasons for it and for the most part they did not try to challenge this issue with their parents. Other minor findings reinforced past findings that "satellite kids" received expanded responsibilities on daily tasks within the household when their parents were unable to perform them (Irving and Tsang, 1999).

Issues of cultural and ethnic identity were also explored by the participants and findings in this section provided the strongest evidence that a unique Chinese Mainland identity is experienced by immigrants. This can be seen in the appropriation of stories

told by parents and elders by the individuals as a source of pride and encouragement to fulfill filial duties. These stories of past hardships within a communist regime remain unique to Chinese Mainland immigrants.


Furthermore, findings suggested that "satellite" kids must practice both "Chinese" and "Canadian" identities *systematically* throughout their lives. For the participants, much of their life is lived in either a "full" or "dispersed" home. These two "worlds" intertwine at some points, diverge at others and sometimes are lived almost completely separately. These events of "world-switching" can be seen most apparently when the astronaut returns home to the family. A process of alternation, or "world-switching", thus occurs periodically throughout the family life of the participants (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Although on the outset, family reunions are represented as happy moments in family life, hidden within these social processes are complex moments of confusion and stress which must be shouldered by every individual in the family. Usually, when the father returns, the family must be accommodating to his needs. However, there will constantly be moments of awkwardness as each family member tries to resettle into daily routines. For the participants, having their father come home can be joyous but stressful occasion. They must remember to perform filial acts, switch languages to converse with their father, and often, give reports on their academic progress. These interactions are often intensely private and emotional and cannot always be adequately described by the participants or even asked by researchers without building sufficient rapport. By asking the participants to describe their daily practices, it may be possible to catch a glimpse of these complicated interactions.

## Sites of Practice

Our rules, identity, language and culture must be framed within and among multiple and overlapping "realities" which are constructed by the social institutions in our lives (Berger and Luckman, 1966). These realities are subjective in that they are ordered and arranged, both in time and space, in relation to ourselves. Our learned experiences shape what we know about ourselves and the objects that we perceive. Practice is the learned experiences of people who embody (objectivize) and enact (subjectivize) their primary practical relations in which they have been socialized into; what Bourdieu refers to as *habitus* (O'Reilly, 2003, p. 7). Practice is not only the mindless repetition of tradition but a conscious and *practical* application of subjective knowledge. The decisions that one makes in life is almost always oriented towards the future and are usually planned, and with some semblance of calculation and outcome. In other words, people make decisions based on what they know and what can be reasonably expected. These decisions are further augmented by interactions with objective calculations and given reach through the extension of available economic power. Therefore, this study argues that representation of subjective understanding in research must be located, if not informed at least partially, by the extraction of the *daily practices, habits and labours* of individuals and groups. The application of examining practice gives us valuable information on how the individual experiences his or her world, how they negotiate structural difficulties in their daily lives, and how they negotiate their future. The following section will use interview data to examine the multiple "sites of practice" within the lives of Chinese Mainland "satellite" kids.

## Ways to live at home

During the interviews, a clear theme emerged that the family was not "fragmented" but merely messy, reimagined but otherwise "perfectly normal". For the participants, understanding and imagining the idea of a "whole" and complete family was very important. Interestingly, most of the participants did not perceive "astronaut" families as anything special and that they never considered themselves to be anything other than a "normal" family.

Daily life within an astronaut household was often emphasized as mundane or "business as usual" and participants were initially reluctant to recount any conflicts within the family. Most of the participants said that they experienced a relatively happy home life growing up within an astronaut household and many had not thought of their life as anything especially unique or interesting. Furthermore, most of the participants had never heard of the term "astronaut family" or "satellite" kid, although some of the participants had heard of the Chinese term, "taikong ren". When asked what they thought the term meant, Andy had guessed that "astronaut" family was a derogatory term for new immigrants that did not speak English. Many also guessed that the term "astronaut" family had negative connotations and had been used to denote something which was not true about mainland Chinese immigrants. Indeed, in the limited literature out there regarding these family units, both media based and academic, the idea of an astronaut family is often regarded as "problematic" (Skeldon, 1994). There was often a sense that they wanted to highlight the far bigger pressures from their school and social life as an indication of the quality of their immigrant life, more so than from their family organization.

All the participants expressed that when they were growing up, family life was "easier" when the "astronaut" was away. Most of the participants agreed that they have never lived more than a year with a "full" family. Furthermore, most stated they had spent more time with the "landed" parent, which in all cases was the mother.

Family life in a "split" home was comparatively more relaxed, individualistic and "normal" for the participants. Having a "full" home often signified more rigidity in terms of time spent with the family and the allocation of free time. Comparatively, the time spent with a "full" family was more emotionally complex than "split" time, however many of the participants took extra care to specify that this was not entirely negative and many enjoyed having a "full" home. However, for many this was a comment made in hindsight and most of the participants agreed that during their time growing up, they did view having a "full" home in a more negative light.

Helen (F): My Dad was here maybe like three months..or four… a year? Ok let me put it this way ok one year I remember I saw my Dad for like two weeks one year(laughs). I think the longest time I spent with both my Mom and my Dad was like a year but I can't remember it at all, I was super young…When I was younger I remember being super nervous when I saw him… It was a bit of a shock sometimes when he comes back and he looks so different or when I see a picture of him and like its not that I can't recognize him it's just I'm not used to seeing him. Its better now I think like as each year he stays longer and now he can stay for like four months at a time…I probably see my Dad more than my Mom now and I call him a lot more.

Less pronounced kinship structures as well as a fluid home life has led to a feeling of ambiguity and unpredictability for the participants. These changing family values are not only significant for immigrant children but also modern urban family life as well. Researchers have found that the interests of parents and children are diverging (Bumpass et. al.,1990 as cited in Edholm, 2009). A century ago children would be given more responsibility in family life, including completing important family chores, dividing shares of wealth, labour and emotional time spent with larger kinship circles. Today, variable circumstances in family life and more individualistic stances on family organization has created ways of family living where children are "powerless beings" who live underneath the parents, while parents act in their own self-interests" (White, Larson, Goltz and Munro, 2005. P. 351). For the participants, not knowing when the "astronaut" parent would be back and for how long often requires the individuals to develop special resiliencies that allow them to juggle the stress of anticipating living in a "full" house while still going about their daily lives. Helen tried to explain how she would normalize the experience of having living with and without her father.

Helen (F): I never had that, even when I was little, like where I wouldn't recognize my Dad when he came home. I would probably call him once or twice a week, and my Mom would always be on the phone with him and I would go and say hi and it was comfortable I don't know… It felt normal I guess I never thought about it? I mean I know my friends didn't call their Dad once a week or once a month! (laughs) I mean not like a set schedule… I think he would call more, and if he was talking to my Mom I would just go and say hi and it felt like he was here. He had clothes here and I could always go to my mom's room and see his stuff

there and I mean there was pictures of him in the house, so to everyone
else I think it looked like he was here all the time.

The idea that their home life was not "broken", such as through a divorce or a death of a
parent exemplified the distinct "up-in-the-air" quality of an astronaut household. Helen
expressed that although she knew that her father was not home, His presence as a
father figure (and as an extra parent) always seemed to be present, whether he was felt
through various objects such as clothing, past souvenirs and photographs of her father
in the house, or in actual communication mediums such as weekly calls and social
media platforms which seemingly allowed her to always be "close" to her father. In his
narrative, Andy emphasized how he had a normal upbringing, and conversely it was his
father and mother who had faced the most severe challenges.

> Andy (M): They got [the other kids] I mean they didn't have like just
> their mom at home, it was always their mom and dad. I mean like I
> didn't talk about it um, like when my dad left. It was just kind of stuff
> that went on, you know, background and they always knew my mom
> and stuff and their mom would talk to my mom and stuff, but it seemed
> normal… It was different for us. I mean they knew I had a dad, it wasn't
> like they thought of me as living alone with my mom and sister. We had
> a good childhood… and we were never hungry and like we never got a
> bad day. It was hard for my Dad, and my Mom, they were doing it for
> us I know and I like appreciate it now, I didn't before, but now… I can
> see how hard they worked for us and I guess it feels like we should do
> something to pay them back.

Some of the participants talked about how the topic of their home life was almost
never brought up in discussions with "outsiders" such as friends or teachers. To them
the subject was uncomfortable and "didn't need to be brought up". Although none of the
participants stated any specific feelings or attitudes, the general feeling I got from asking
them about their families was perhaps a mix of embarrassment and defiance. In short
they felt that they were already outsiders to the people that grew up here. Being
Chinese, being an immigrant and having to juggle school and friends was hard enough,
they did not need something else to make them more noticeable as alien foreigners. Ben

rationalized reasons why he never felt the need to bring up his unique family life to other people.

> Ben (M): I don't think it's uncommon, I mean the standard family dynamic is a mother figure, a father figure, and the kids, right? I don't think it's uncommon, I just think that people don't talk about it that much right. I mean are there any (pauses) are there anything that benefits them for saying that like in terms of the law or anything like that like…, do you get a cheque or anything like that, if your husband's like working outside the country... Uh I guess what I'm saying here is that if there is nothing that's a benefit to telling people, I don't think people will bring it up. Like oh wait, let me tell you about my situation like my husband's working outside the country right, like that's super interesting right(laughs).

For Ben, the reasons for not talking about his situation was more for convenience in that he found there was no benefit in talking to other people about his family situation. Although he did not explicitly state it there was a sense, through his choice of words and his body language, that he wanted privacy. This theme came up frequently for all the participants when they were asked if they had ever talked about their family situation with their peers.

Most of the participants also talked about how a change in dining etiquette, food type and food customs also exemplified the difference between having a "full" or "split" home. When the "astronaut" was away food was generally more diverse and eating schedules were less rigid. Fran expressed that her Dad could not stand "western food" and that typically when he came home her mom would cook more traditional meals and that they would often go out and eat at Asian style restaurants. Others also talked about how having formal family dinners, such as having the entire family unit present for "laid out" meals, usually only happened when the father was present. Almost all the participants expressed the idea that they did not like to have formal dinners and preferred eating alone, and watching TV or on their computers, or with friends.

The everyday life of the participants was constantly inundated by competing cultural events, traditions and knowledges. Moreover, the participants constantly had to make decisions to balance how far they could step into each world, too far into one and they would risk losing social connections and relationships that could hinder their own future. Participants were also teachers and educators, disclosing, as best they could, their own ideas of the integral elements of Chinese and Canadian culture to those around them; often with incomplete knowledge. Whether it was explaining social etiquette and popular memes to their parents or the foundations of filial piety to their peers, the participants grew up in a confusing but "understood" reality of daily life that could only be captured through their own ideas of the world and with their own words.

## Learning how to celebrate

Most of the participant in the study agreed that they participated in unique Chinese cultural activities such as festivals, funerary customs, coming of age and achievement celebrations and filial piety customs during daily family life. All the participants stated that they learned these traditional customs from either one or both parents. Although each participant gave detailed accounts of what they did, specific details such as why or when each event should occur traditionally was rarely provided. It seemed that for some of the participants, the activities were practiced because they were enforced by the parents but most admitted that they grew to enjoy these traditions and look forward to it during the year. Most of the participants interviewed did not have a historical understanding of the rituals. Dillon talked about something that he had to do when his uncle passed away.

> Dillion (M): My uncle died when I was in the second grade and I remember I had to wear like a black string around my arm to school. I don't know to this day what the significance of that was I was just told to do it by my mom. I think it symbolizes respect and like showing that my family was, had just lost someone… I don't think anyone noticed (laughs) but I took it off when I was at recess and I put it back on when I went home after school. It was weird, I didn't want anyone to see it but I think I was just um I didn't want people to know or see that and ask about it.

For Dillon, traditional symbolic acts such as the one he described was practiced at significant moments in his life, such as during the passing of a relative. This exemplifies how, without proper education or reinforcement by authority figures outside his home, cultural rituals like the one he described would probably not be passed down. He admitted later that although he would be interested in finding out the historical significance of the act, he had not thought about it in a long time and he probably wouldn't do the same thing if a relative passed away again. Ben also talked about how frequent family gatherings helped him to hold on to Chinese culture but also outlined some negative aspects.

Ben (M): Uh what does it mean (sighs pauses) uh, tradition...I mean like to be Chinese, it's a big part of my identity, the most major part? No, but it's a big part now this is just talking about me, like personally but our family gatherings and such I guess. What does everyone do at a Chinese gathering? Speak Chinese, right? I mean so there is like a reason there like to speak Chinese and preserve I don't know like the culture I guess ... when you greet your aunts, your uncles you have to speak their names right? So, like elder-cousin, elder brother you know all that stuff, so like I grew up with that and I was kind of forced into habit to keep that kind of side and I really think that influenced me a lot. I mean to this day I still call them (relatives) by their you know Chinese titles, right, like instead of saying Uncle Tom (laughs) I mean like Uncle Jack or something, I'll say (dou be?) (unclear in the audio) which is for elder brother. Um my aunt Kim, I'll call her something else just like stuff like that, it influences the way you think and um its very miniscule cause you don't really think of it as a kid but growing up now, you know I think it would be saying like oh Hi uh Tom or hi Kim you know, hi Steven, instead we call them by what we know in a sense we were groomed into seeing them in that kind of role instead of them as a person like someone you get to know right and in that sense it's how we see family.

For Ben, participating in these rituals, particularly through the course of using traditional greetings and acknowledging specific *guanxi* ties within the family helped him to reaffirm and learn his familial position. In the moment of using a traditional name or greeting participants could establish *guanxi* relations. This is important because they could potentially rely on these relations later in life. The use of traditional names for different

relatives reaffirmed obligatory relationships and restated familial roles for the participants.

The most important ritual that all the participants recounted participating in each year was the Lunar New Year celebrations. Helen described the usual hustle and bustle of New Years, centering around watching the TV event with friends and family.

> *Helen (F): I think New Year is like big for everyone right and I think everyone is the same you know buying lots of food and drinks, and you clean up the house, everything you know you have to prepare the food… Yeah my Dad would come back, usually… I remember yeah and he and my Mom would cook like dumplings for us and we would watch Qinjie Wanhui on the couch… Yeah of course I know about it it's really popular… well usually you would watch it with your family right but here like a bunch of us would go to each other's house.... yeah like people like us, astronaut… I remember when I was in Montreal and I felt like really bad because it was like the first time I saw it without my mom and I cried I remember (laugh) its like you need to watch it with family I think.*

The Lunar New Year is usually celebrated in early to mid-February and does not usually coincide with any statutory holidays in Canada. Activities that are usually practiced include shopping with family members for "new year supplies" such as food, decorations and clothes, eating family meals as well as a very unique event, watching the CCTV New Year Gala or "Qinjie Wanhui", a four and a half hour live broadcast New Year's entertainment TV special. The TV special is usually a variety show with presenters, comedians and skits as well as celebrations for events in the year. Common themes of the show are centered primarily around filial piety and is relatively wholesome and family friendly.  All the participants described watching the show with their families.

Cultural traditions, festivals and gatherings were opportunities for the participants to learn about their own families and cultural traditions. Although some rituals were not

given adequate explanations, either through inattention or inability of the parents to explain them properly, they did reinforce and establish "chineseness" for the participants who would otherwise not have opportunities to experience them outside the home. Participating in these rituals were also crucial for cohesion of the family because for the participants, these were the only opportunities to establish kinship ties to their distant relatives back home, and more importantly, opportunities to "connect with" their "astronaut" parent.

## Outside the family

In most of the narratives, participants chose to talk about institutions and communities outside their families which they felt impacted and defined their experiences growing up. These include religious communities, school life, jobs, friendship relations as well as social and popular media sources. For most of the participants, school was the single most important institution outside the family while they were growing up. All the participants expressed that grades and results at school were an important topic of conversation in the home. Andy talked about his first day at school.

> Andy (M):  I felt just like everyone else. It was normal, normal life. The kids at the school were basically the same as me…Taiwanese, Chinese kids, and the Hong Kong (pauses) nees?... I didn't feel any different from them. I mean my life was not like theirs but I felt like everyone else. Like we all, [ate] rice, like noodles you know (laughs) I remember when I first came to school and I thought uh wow everyone here is Asian and it didn't seem like that bad…Well I did feel like a bit bad on my first day and I couldn't speak English. There were other kids too but pretty soon we all, you know, become the same, Canadians.

Andy's experience mirrored that of other participants in that he felt that his early childhood was uneventful. Andy also tried to describe why he felt that his family life was "normal" and he rarely shared information on his family situation. He felt that his teachers "knew" that he lived in an "astronaut' household but he never received any special attention about this issue at school. Instances of this lack of "academic attention"

towards Asian-American racism by teachers, or what Cui (2017) calls the practice of "racialized habitus" has been found to be common in schools in Canada (p. 1152). Furthermore, racial stereotypes of Chinese-Canadians immigrants as "model-minorities", reinforced in media representations of Asian academic "work ethics", also further undermine the "help" students receive in classrooms and professional spaces (Cui and Kelly, 2013).

It was evident that school life was an important socializing institution for the participants and it was also a constant and enveloping force even during daily family life. Cameron, who had moved to Canada after his primary school education recounted how the education system in Vancouver was far less demanding than his primary school education. Particularly for subjects such as mathematics and science, he felt that his primary school education in China had a more challenging curriculum and that he breezed through these subjects in high school.

> Cameron (M): School? Ah that was easy, so easy. I did it all before back in (primary school). When I came here my teacher would just let me sit in class and sometimes I would just skip it you know. Like kids here have to learn like what algebra, trigonometry? We learned in grade two, three, not even. Back in China you had to go sit exams after each year. I don't think I sit in even one exam when I came... Well English maybe, I don't really study you know... I was always out playing baseketball and just going to the pool hall… I was the student always leave everything to the last minute but I always get A (laughs)…. In China? There is the (middle school "kao") and the (high school "kao") and then you know everyone, before, they didn't hear about it but now everyone knows about the gao kao… What I think is they have to have it (gao kao) because there the people are so many you know, but I don't think it, um.. yeah you can't make you life, one test, you know? Here you go to highschool and university and then life begins, way harder, and in China its (the getting in that is hard), once you finish, you set, you got job, maybe get marry and take care of family.

Some of the participants also attended religious institutions and found a community where they had the opportunity to meet people like themselves. Gabby

explains how her family had gravitated towards the Church when they moved to Vancouver and how it acted as an important and valuable social network for her family.

> Gabby (F): When we first moved here we didn't know anybody right? And I don't know we kind of just gravitated towards like Church. My father is Christian right, and before he was like a pastor actually in China, he wanted me and my Mom to go to Church here… It was a big deal when I was little um to go to um like Sunday School, like basically all my friends were there… my Mom was never a big like believer but I think she felt that like the community or whatever.. Um so actually I go to a Chinese Church, and a lot of the parents there, well the mothers, are like astronaut parents… It usually the mom that's there, the mom the kid and the dads not there, but a lot of them so yeah like in my I guess daily life I have quite some interactions with those parent.

For most of the participants the relations that mattered the most to them outside the household seemed to be friends. Friendships were stated by the all the participants to be extremely important as they functioned as confidants, social anchors and support networks. Most of the participants said that friends were at least as important to them as their parents. Scholarship into the youth relationships have found that establishing friendship circles are fundamental and positive to youth development (Bibby, 2001 as cited in Tilleczek, 2011). Indeed, it seemed that friendships were encouraged in the household and most of the participants stated that friends were one of the things they could not live without (followed by parents, social media and pets). Some participants even stated that they were closer to their friends in some ways than their parents and most gave the reasoning that communication with their friends seemed to be easier than with their parents.

## No sex in the house

The subject of sexuality and romance was a topic of conversation that was avoided by most of the participants at home. Andy stated that in his family sexuality was not brought up often, although he mentioned that it was never specifically banned as a topic of conversation.

Andy (M): I guess I think easternly but I act very westernly… like for example there is a big ideology uh that I learned from my mom, uh it's kind of uh I tend to for example, like sexual innuendos and stuff I'm definitely not as open as most westerners but what my advantages is that uh I tend to do things westernly and uh I tend to be more open to things like I'll be open to trying anything

Here Andy was describing how the difference between "western" and "eastern" ways of approaching taboo subjects were different, specifically in the creation of spoken rules. He stated that in the "west" there were topics that were "banned" for conversation in the home. Specifically, he talked about the "dinner table" as an example whereby he observed that topics of conversation such as violence or off-colored jokes were usually not allowed to be talked about. However, he believed that in Asian families, what he referred to as "eastern", had a much simpler approach which was to avoid talking about the subjects at all. In the quote, Andy was trying to describe how taboo subjects in the home has influenced his own life. He was particularly uncomfortable with talking about sexuality (he refers to the subject of sex as "sexual innuendos"). However, he emphatically stated that this influence goes both ways and that he has since become more open to the topic of sex in his life. Dillon also gave similar sentiments regarding his sexual education as well as the "taboo" topic within his household.

Dillon (M): Relationships, yeah I don't talk about it with them… Sex? I never talked about that stuff with them. Like let me ask you, have your parents ever talked to you about sex? (laughs)… I don't know how my mom expects me to have children because she probably doesn't think I know what a penis is (laughs). I think it's just an Asian thing like parents don't talk about that with their kids (laughs)… um like I don't ever wanna have that conversation but I think it could be an issue, right? Like at least teach them about condoms, maybe?... I mean I learned all that stuff on my own (laughs) it's just something that happens, when you're young and you're curious about stuff… Definitely friends yeah (laughs) I mean that's the best thing about growing up here they teach you stuff at school but you probably learn it yourself just being stupid with friends.

For Dillon, sexuality was an important aspect of his education which he felt was missing in his family life. Importantly, he described how this deliberate censure within his home life could have potentially affected other kids in his situation. He also relayed the importance of outside social networks, particularly friends, in giving him more of an education regarding sexual health. Here Dillon also exemplified how "satellite kids" must also grow up more quickly and accept responsibilities for their own educations in "adult" matters such as sexual health into their own hands. Ellen recounted how she was given a quick advice regarding sexuality with her mother, she said.

> Ellen (F): Yes I did talk about that with my parents (laughs). I remember my mom just saying one thing to me, don't go home with boys and be smart (laughs)… that's it (laughs)… I think it was more that we didn't want to talk about it, you know its natural, the awkward stuff… I never talked about that stuff with my Dad, oh my god I would die (laugh).

## Discussion

The findings in this section highlight where and how daily life is practiced by the participants. During analysis and coding, this section was the most "open" as most of the responses given by the participants described, in some way or the other, how daily life was practiced. Participants had a much easier time talking about *what* they did in daily life as opposed to questions that probed their emotional response to certain practices in their life. The findings in this section found correlating results to past studies (Ong 1999; Waters 2000) which described the reluctance of "satellite" kids to criticize home life. Interestingly, none of the participants had discussed issues of the home life with an outsider prior to this study*.*

For the participants, growing up was extremely "normal" and "mundane". Some responses even gave an impression that this "understanding" should be kept that way and not highlighted as unique or strange. When I asked directly if they had anything "negative" to say regarding the organization of their home life, almost all the participants gave me the exact same response, "that there was nothing they could think of".

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However, when asked to describe and contrast how they lived their lives, in "split" homes without the "astronaut" compared to "full" homes when "astronaut" had returned, some themes emerged that could be interpreted as an attempt by the participants to take a more critical stance on this dispersed family strategy. For example, almost all the participants mentioned that life was "easier" when they were living without their "astronaut" parent at home. Reasons given included having a less-formal home life as well as utilizing more English and "Chinglish" to communicate with family and friends. Furthermore, during coding, it was noted that participants were more likely to give positive descriptions of daily life when the "astronaut" was away.

Participants felt that their practice of daily life, especially during traditional events and celebrations, often required them to perform actions in which they were ignorant of their meaning or cultural significance. This was not a big problem for them growing up, however, now that they are much older they have begun to understand the importance of not only passing down cultural rituals but also understanding the meaning behind the traditions as well. Participating in ritual activities, such as celebrating important festivals and using familial status names (second Aunt, third cousin etc.) was also an important way for participants to build *guanxi* ties with their relatives and with their parents as well as learn about cultural traditions and history.

The practice of daily life extended beyond the family. For participants, most of their time growing up was spent at school or with friends. In fact, for many participants, school life and socializing with friends constituted a large socializing force in their identity formations with some observing that the influence in their formulating years had been greater than the forces they experienced at home. Interestingly, none of the participants talked about how life outside the family negatively impacted their family life, if at all, and vice versa.

Finally, sites of practice mentioned by the participants do not always constitute a purely physical space but also specific situations as well. Certain topics such as

sexuality were considered 'taboo' topics by the participants and were never discussed with their parents. Also, topics of discussion was also restricted to each parent, either through formality or because of communication difficulties. Participants had stated that suitable topics of conversation with their "astronaut" fathers was limited to a few subjects such as school or professional activities. Furthermore, certain daily activities, such as having family dinners, were practiced differently when the "astronaut" returned home.

# Home and Belonging

Feelings of belonging and inclusion into the "host" society are problems faced by almost every immigrant family and is inevitable within the process of migration. For "astronaut" families these tensions take on a much more complex character and the question of home is often uncertain and messy.  For past migrants, having existing kinship groups residing in the "host" country helped to ease the transition and were essential for many emigrating groups and often enforced by immigration policies of the receiving countries (Peterson, 2012). In the case of "astronaut" families, kinship support is usually nonexistent (Skeldon, 1994; Boyer 1996). Furthermore, a continuously practiced family dispersal strategy reinforces the idea of a double existence of family and home life. For the adults, especially the "landed" spouse, there is a constant longing for home and a return "home". In contrast to their parents, "satellite" kids do not have any ties to maintain nor any relationships to mend. Their entire experience has been that of growing up and living within their adopted countries. In a study done on the feelings of belonging and adjustments of "satellite" kids, researchers found that most individuals believed that at least for themselves, their immediate future will belong to their adopted country (Irving, Tsang and Benjamin, 1999). However, even for them, the future of their family is uncertain. This section will make use of interview data to examine how the participants rationalize their own experiences of home as well as explore their sentiments regarding the future of their families and themselves.

## Work and realistic prospects

Some of the participants also wanted to return to China while others wanted to stay in Canada. However, the statement most participants gave regarding their future plans was simply that "they did not know". Talking about the future with their parents was not something that was readily reported by the participants. Most participants stated that they had not had a formal "conversation" with their parents about where the family would live following the "astronaut's" retirement. Ellen stated that she didn't want to have the conversation and felt that it would somehow be "awkward", knowing that her father probably wouldn't be able to spend his retirement outside of China. When asked if they had ever had informal conversations about the future, Dillon stated that ideas regarding

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where the family would all live in the future seemingly changed, depending on the mood of his parents. After asking the participants to identify where they would most likely stay, most of the participants stated that they would ideally stay in Vancouver. While most stated that this was a preference, others stated that this was purely a practical decision. Dillon was quite sure where he was going to end up, even if it meant a life without his parents.

> Dillon (M): I'm going to stay here if I can (Vancouver), but if not I might move to the States or maybe the East-Coast… Nope, definetly not thinking about going back to China um its probably not even an option for me at this point like I don't know, how will I get a job?... I think that my parents wanted to stay here after my Dad retires or maybe moves his work over here, which they've been discussing. But ultimately its up to my Mom I think. I know she misses her family and stuff and she's been going back a lot more often with my Dad and well I think they like it there more than here because um cause everyone there is Chinese (laughs)... They just like being able to speak Mandarin and I think it's the same for me, I couldn't live anywhere where they don't speak English. It would just be too hard to set things up, meet people um like yeah way too hard. I'm also not very um like an outgoing person so I can't really just do that, move my entire life to a different country, I mean it'd be cool but, a little scary for me.

Dillon mentioned that he disliked going back to China because of how loud people were in public and said he would get embarrassed when his Dad would spit on the sidewalk or belch in restaurants. Sharing similar sentiments regarding his financial reality, Cameron also stated that he did not think that moving back to China would be a smart move for him, although he admitted that he would have liked to move back if he could secure a job. Cameron also talked extensively about the competitive environment of China, and Shanghai for prospective workers.

> Cameron (M): Man Shanghai is crazy, it's a crazy, crazy city. You want to work in Shanghai you need to have a big gut you know (laughs), just the people there are smart, too smart. Everyone there is competing with someone you know, I don't know I didn't like it. I just didn't want to do the work because like when you get there at seven, there are already like twenty people there arrive at six. Like if you want to go and find out your own average life go work in an office building in Shanghai… I just

think the business opportunities is there but you won't get decent pay for the time you spend working… I mean I could have worked there and you know do the climb up the ladder but it was so exhausting… I think in Canada people don't know how hard everyone else is working (laughs) and people complain too much, if you go work in Shanghai you'll know what it's like to work.

Gabby's experience exemplified the "inbetweenness" felt by "satellite" kids who did not entirely see themselves as first generation immigrants nor CBCs (Irving, Tsang and Benjamin, 2003). Participants often found it difficult to connect with their relatives as they constantly found themselves stuck within the confines of strict filial relations.  Andy described what it was like when he first came to Vancouver was asked if he thought there was a difference between himself and CBCs that he knew.

Andy (M): When I came here I didn't have any knowledge of Canada… I didn't (speak) a lick of English, I was what they would call it fresh off the boat (laughs) I mean I remember my first class I spoke Chinese the whole time to my teacher. It was sort of a tough transition for me I switched four different elementary schools… then I went to highschool and I would say it wasn't I mean I didn't have a lot of problems… I felt I had a disadvantage learning here because I thought I didn't have the natural abilities that a lot of people that were born here had. Right now my English may be fine but I still have accent like here and there and also because I think I was born in China, I talk to my parents every day, my mentality is uh even though I can talk and act in a very western way, my mentality is very eastern, and I think that this affects my interaction with a lot of communities.

For most of the participants, talking about the future, both for themselves and their families was challenging and sometimes confusing. Most of the participants admitted that they did not know what the future holds for their families. Some of the participants believed that their family would settle down in Canada once their "astronaut" parent retires. Others saw a move back to China as a likely option for both parents. In regards to "astronaut" households, and unlike "permanent" immigrants, the long-term plans for many families was not thought out.  As was previously mentioned, most of the participants noted that the primary reason for emigrating out of China was so that their children would be able to get a decent education and thus better chances of securing

financial stability. There was an indication amongst the participants that initial plans to return to China had been entertained by the parents. This may explain some of the reluctance by the "astronaut" parent to fully commit to moving to the host country, thus holding on to an escape route in case something went wrong. All in all, the idea of persistent separation is always present. Even if the parents chose to go back to China, they, the kids, would probably stay, thus extending the cycle of family dispersal and separation.

## The future of the family

In regards to the futures with their parents, most participants stated that moving closer and living with parents was important to them. They also stated that they knew that their parents were probably going to be an active part of their lives and that their parents had also expressed a desire to live close to the children. For the parents, the participants reported that following the end of their formal education, many "landed" parents had started to spend more time with the "astronaut" parent back in China. Fran talked about how she could foresee her parents becoming an "astronaut" couple, living in China and coming back to Canada to visit her in the future.

> Fran (F): My parents are both back in China right now, I think they will stay there until the end of the year… My mom's been like travelling with my Dad a lot more since I graduated… I think she misses travelling like before when I was small my Mom and Dad would go travelling for business together, but since I was born she obviously had to stay and look after me so she came here… I feel that they will probably live in China for a few months every year or they can come back… Now that I'm not in school I think it kind of frees up my mom um I think its good for her and I don't exactly need her to be here with me.

Finally, participants were asked whether they would consider becoming astronaut's themselves and work and travel away from their spouse or children. Interestingly, Cameron was already married and had briefly worked in Shanghai for a few years after his daughter was born, as an "astronaut", however he quit his job last year and moved back to Vancouver. He described how the job was not for him and that

he realized that working so far away from his daughter was not worth it, even though he had a high salary:

> Cameron (M): Yeah I worked in Shanghai for four years… It was a good job lots of fun memories, drinking with (colleagues) and bosses… I moved back maybe two years ago, last June… I decided I can't be away from my daughter, I never realized it but I miss her so much, when I was in Shanghai all I had were pictures that my wife sent me and (pauses) I saw her everyday, bigger, bigger. Well and I was like what the hell man, I am missing this!.. I realize I can't anymore! Sometimes you will realize that the most important moments can't be (bought) with money, I mean I don't make as much now but it's more worth it because of my daughter, my beautiful daughter, she is like my sun, my moon you know (laughs)… I still think I could do it (being an astronaut) but maybe when she is a little bit older, I think she needs me right now so I will stay for her.

This quote by Cameron was especially insightful because it presented another "mixing" of worlds for Cameron. His past life as a "satellite kid" and his present one as an "astronaut" father. This kind of balancing of duties of both "success" and "family happiness" is especially evident in immigrant families who associate financial success to the success of the family (Wang, 2010). For Cameron, this decision to leave his child was something he had accepted, but now regrets. His own insights into how to head a family has been changed primarily due to his own experiences.

Overall, the future for the participants still seem to be undecided. Interestingly, when examining how future paths were challenged and developed amongst the participants, more information was gleamed by examining the narratives "within" each family rather than "between" families. Each participant had their own stories and experiences growing up as a "satellite" child, however, their trajectories could not be "predicted" even though most participants shared and experienced many of the same uncertain rhythms within their fluid family arrangements. Ultimately, each participant belonged to a unique and creative family whose own paths and choice of roads will still be left "up in the air" to be figured out by each family member in their own way.

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# Chapter 5.    Conclusions and Future Research

## Results and Conclusions

This final chapter presents a summary of the main theoretical categories which emerged from an application of a *coding paradigm* of the descriptive sections presented in the last chapter. Limitations of my research, as well as implications for future research, will follow this discussion. Overall, this study found that mainland Chinese "satellite kids" have experienced a unique and complex family life which is markedly different from the experiences of their parents. Firstly, "satellite" kids growing up in a mainland Chinese household experienced unique dual realities in which *systemic* alternation, or the practice of "world switching," must be incorporated into daily life planning. Secondly, their experience of daily life can be characterized as one of self-suspension and sacrifice as they must not only find time to explore their individualism but also provide and practice familial responsibilities and obligations within the household. Thirdly, most of the participants have accepted the notion of uncertain and unsteady futures within their own lives, and most of the participants have chosen to live around these uncertainties by staying practical while leaving room for careful optimism.

The first main theoretical category which has emerged from this study is the notion that "satellite" kids living within mainland Chinese households are experiencing dual realities, both in how they alternate between a "split" and "full" home life as well as how they manage, practice and transform their own identities. Initially, the idea that participants were trying to describe different "worlds" was first picked up during the initial coding process. After transcription memos were added into the coding process. I noticed that almost all the participants were at first very reluctant in talking about their family experiences of "living with the astronaut." They had initially answered all my questions within the context of "living without the astronaut." Thus, responses I got to questions were often curt and emphasized a notion that "everything was normal.". This happened during the first few minutes of each interview and I noticed that I would have to separately ask the participants to describe their experiences of living in a "full" and

"displaced" household otherwise they would only give me one account. It was from this realization that I decided that I wanted to separately examine how the participants practiced familial obligations and developed their identities between living in both "states" of the household. From here I began to develop categories beyond the experiences of "duality" of household organization and move on to further categories which exemplified the kind of juggled world the "satellite" kid lives in. This Included being culturally split between "Chinese" and "Western" traditions practiced at home as well as experiencing dualities of adhering to both *guanxi* systems and western organizational systems.

Another lived duality for the participants was found in how they approached their own self-identity. Participants had to strike a delicate balance between expressing their own individualism and their commitment to an idea of the family. Participants living within an "astronaut" household also lived a hyphenated ethnic existence which was much more pronounced and exaggerated in comparison to other immigrant households. This was due in part because one of their own family members had not fully committed to a "landed" immigrant life. Furthermore, the unique cultural identity of their parents, coming from mainland China, instilled in them a strong sense of loyalty and pride towards their own family which stems from the passing on of collective memories and ideas of "how far the family has come". Overall, the experiences of family life for the participants were split between an expression of tradition and individualism. For the participants, life always seemed to be working against the grain of "living for the family" and "living for oneself". Although the idea of duality is not a uncommon experience for immigrants I argue that, from the data, it is clear that "satellite" children experience this most *systematically* than other immigrant children due to the continual "return" and "departure" of their "astronaut" fathers.

A secondary theoretical category emerged which relates to the idea of self-suspension and sacrifice. Participants understood that their own part to play within the family was their role as the eventual "product" of the family's success. Taking on these roles translated into the acceptance of intense scrutiny regarding their own academic

successes which not only placed pressure on the participants themselves but also on the parental efficacy of the "landed" spouse. This theory was grounded in the secondary coding process in which I separated participants' interview excerpts by emotional responses to the interview questions. The emotional responses were coded into either "positive", "negative" or "ambivalent" categories. I found that most of the positive responses I received from participants talked about the sacrifice of their parents as well as sentiments pertaining to Canadian or Western culture.  Although most of the negative emotional responses also had to do with parental relationships, especially relationships with the father, most of the codes that belong in this section came from quotes made by specific individuals. Generally, only a few participants were openly critical of their parents and their family while most only had positive reactions to questions regarding family life. Most of the ambivalent responses had to do with personal obligations and academic goals. Many participants found that the pressure their parent's put on them for academic success was stiff but fair. Many participants talked about how they felt they needed to "pay back" their parents by working harder and succeeding, even if it meant enduring rigorous academic testing.

Furthermore, self-suspension of individual pursuits also permeated the daily experiences of the participants as they were called into action to shoulder responsibilities and duties that should traditionally have been performed by their parents. Ultimately, these choices were linked to the idea of self-sacrifice found in the practice of filial piety within the homes of the participants which required the participants to act in ways that were deemed "obligatory" and necessary to family life. While "self-suspension" is not limited to the experience of "satellite" kids but other kids who are born into more traditional immigrant families, I argue that within "astronaut" families this idea is given more scrutiny and reinforcement by family members. "Satellite" kids are constantly reminded of the act of sacrifice of their parents through both the absence of their "astronaut" fathers and the sobering condition of their "landed" mothers.

Lastly, another theoretical category that surfaced was a *positive* sense of uncertainty and risk that was accepted by the participants to be a part of lived reality and

which extended into their expectations for the future. This finding was grounded in how participants responded to questions about the future. Following the first rounds of open and secondary coding, I discovered that most of the participants did not have a clear idea regarding the future of their families and, surprisingly, there was a sense they were not concerned. I selectively coded for questions regarding the future of the participants to generate findings for my last section "Home and Belonging". I found that most of the responses the participants were giving was that they had no idea what the future was going to be and that discussions with their parents regarding the future constantly changed. I further coded these responses again by emotional response. Surprisingly, almost all the responses regarding future plans was positive. Although each participant interviewed gave their preferred future home, none of the participants could adequately say where their family would end up. Most believed that it their parents would split time between China and Canada.

Participants also maintained that they were doubtful that they would ever have what could be considered a normal parental relationship with their own fathers, partly due to culture lag between themselves, but most importantly, their own inability to communicate with their fathers. This idea of having uncertain relationships also extended towards their separated kinship groups in which there largely exists a sense of ambivalence in regards to their non-relationships. Uncertainty was also felt within their own self-identities as many were unclear where they belonged in terms of being more Canadian or Chinese. Furthermore, uncertainty and risk permeated their own cultural knowledges and practices since many participants expressed that they were not given a good knowledge base from their families regarding traditional rituals and expectations. This lack of understanding were major sources of uncertainty for both the participants and their families who worried how they would be able to keep family traditions alive. Uncertainty and risk became normalized and accepted within the daily lives of the participants as they focused on short-term goals and pursuits. What is unique, therefore, about the experiences of uncertainty among the participants is a sense of optimism that everything was going to work out.

# Limitations of this Research Study

There are several limitations to this study. In terms of generalizability of the findings it must be noted that the sampling methodology for this study was not ideal. As relayed many times throughout this study, and by theorists studying "astronaut" family populations (Alaggia et al., 2001; Ho, 2007), there needs to be a comprehensive effort to find and record "astronaut" households within larger urban populations in Canada and the United States. Since this study employed snowball sampling methods to procure its research participants many opportunities were lost to gain a more varied and representative sample of "astronaut" family populations.

As I have outlined in the sections before, this research topic is exploratory and the research participants, Mainland Chinese astronaut households (specifically "satellite kids") have not been extensively studied or described. Therefore, this research project is tentative and general in its scope. If I had more time, money or access to a more extensive participant population, my ideal study would focus more specifically on addressing topics that could potentially yield more nuanced data sets such as gender role diversity, sexuality or cultural and language intricacies. However, despite these weaknesses, this project offers a timely, unique, and important contribution to this under-researched field of inquiry.

In terms of other limitations that are unique to this study, a major challenge that I faced was in trying to establish and develop rapport with the participants. Family life and private experiences are intensely emotional and understandably so. Once again, because of time and financial restraints, the major methods used in this study were  not ideal in studying the wide range of experiences of this distinct population. To garner more in-depth and comprehensive narratives from the participants, this study would benefit enormously from a long-term ethnographic study, involving follow-up interviews and fieldwork (e.g., observations of informal social interactions). Furthermore, ideally, future studies should include a more comprehensive study of all members of the "astronaut" household. Overall, exploring more and generating more diverse sample groups would also be helpful, including varying the sample by age, sexual orientation,

mobility, place of residence as well as expanding the study to include different countries and cities.

A further limitation of this study was the inclusion of a Singaporean-Chinese participant, Ben. I realized very early in my fieldwork that obtaining participants for this study was going to be a challenge as I did not have a way of locating Mainland Chinese "satellite kid" populations in Vancouver, my area of study. Fortunately, very early on my fieldwork stage and through a combination of luck and goodwill of my other participants, I had found eight participants, all Chinese Mainland "satellite kids". However, after undergoing my interviews I found that one of my participants had only lived a few months as a "satellite kid" and had been living most his life as a "parachute kid". As my own fieldwork stage was coming to an end I found a willing participant in Ben, whom I had spoken to earlier but rejected because he was not a Mainland Chinese immigrant. After consideration of both time and financial aspects of this study, I decided to conduct an interview with him and found out that his father worked in Mainland China and that, at least on the outset, he had very similar experiences that was in line with the other participants. Since my objective was to move away from studying Taiwanese and Hong Kong immigrants, I decided to use Ben as a proxy for what I was trying to achieve; generating a more nuanced study of Chinese immigrants.

I realize that his inclusion would be problematic because his data was going to be different from the other participants, particularly in his family practices at home as well as his own views on Chinese culture influenced by his Singaporean-Chinese mother. However, Ben's statements on his father and his views on the future of his family was very poignant and I decided to include a lot of his quotes for analysis in this study. Therefore, although Ben's inclusion was not ideal for my specific topic, I felt that his insights and contributions to the general topic of documenting the experiences of "satellite kids" in Vancouver was important and invaluable.

I also realized very early on that as I followed through with my interview guide, many questions needed to be backtracked and revisited. For my participants, talking about family relationships or conflicts within the family freely to a stranger required some degree of time. This time was needed to ensure that participants had the opportunity to carefully reflect on their answers, thus ensuring greater credibility of data. Consequently, I feel that I have been able to produce some fascinating insights into the lives of "satellite" kids that had not been previously explored. Furthermore, it is important to state that this was an exploratory research project which sought to document modern mainland Chinese immigrant experiences as well as uncover a seldom researched population within Chinese "astronaut" families. Within this specific scope of interest, I am confident that I was able meet my initial objectives.

## Implications for Future Research

his thesis extends several implications for future research ideas and practices for "astronaut" family studies and overseas Chinese studies in general. Firstly, to add on to professor Wang Gunwu's call for "more and better overseas Chinese research" (2003, p. 285), this study proposes a third concern which should be covered by future overseas Chinese researchers. This concerns the need for more longitudinal and ethnographic analysis of overseas Chinese populations. I believe that, highlighted from this study, further extensive and long-term research plans and projects should be carried out to more successfully document the changing social landscapes of Chinese communities abroad. Particularly in today's hyper-globalized society, Chinese immigrants are finding newer ways to establish connections back to their countries of origin as well as keeping more network ties intact while they undergo a process of acculturation within the foreign cultures surrounding them. This can create interesting moments of clarity and discovery wherein local voices can begin to describe what they feel is characteristic and special within Chinese society that holds value and should be passed down to future generations.

The theoretical categories which were outlined in this study have been an attempt to generate more analytical categories for future researchers. These categories, although fluid and not always mutually exclusive, will hopefully help to produce more general theories regarding the experience of Mainland Chinese immigrants. In using a social constructivist grounded theory approach, I hope that future studies will consider that qualitative research is essentially an inductive-deductive iterative process. From this standpoint, there is further need for theories and ideas to *emerge* out of the data, but also to build on what is previously theoretically and conceptually known, since all knowledge is co-constructed and reconstructed.

This study is an important attempt at bringing attention to the fact that mainland Chinese migration is in critical need of more research studies. The clear majority of studies into modern overseas Chinese has been conducted on Taiwanese and Hong Kong immigrants. This research revealed that extensive historical, cultural and social differences exist between these populations which needs further clarification by social scientists.  I would argue that fundamental differences exist between mainland Chinese populations and other Chinese immigrant communities and that these comparisons warrant further attention.

I also believe that social scientists who are studying these emergent identities should shift away from relying solely on "hard" data, which traditionally dominate the field of migration studies, into examining the nuanced narratives produced by the individuals who must live, plan, and practice these realities in their own lives. This was also highlighted within this study as attempts were made to use a characterization of Chinese society by Fei Xiaotong which tried to incorporate a novel way of conceptualizing Chinese communities as fundamentally different from western society (Hamilton and Chang, 2011). Fei's idea of a unique Chinese social organization helped to distinguish the different relationships within each of the participant's narratives of daily life. Applying appropriate theoretical and methodological traditions of social theory to the critical study of cultural representations is therefore crucial to the decentering of academic literature away from ethnocentric foundations (Said, 1978).

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# Appendix A.

**Interview Guide**

- Background and Family (Can you tell me a bit about yourself, who you are, what you're currently studying or working on? Where do you currently live and with who? What are some current future plans? What do you enjoy doing?)
- Defining the topic (What do you know about the topic that we are going to talk about today? Have you heard of the term "astronaut" family? What are your thoughts about this kind of family arrangement? What are some opinions other people have given you about this kind of family? Do you like this arrangement? Would you prefer another type of family arrangement?)
- Family Relationships (What is your relationship like with your parents? Separately, with your mother and father? What about your relationships with your relatives? Do you have any relatives living in proximity? Do you have relatives overseas? Do you have any siblings? How is your relationship with your siblings? How old were you when your family decided to adopt this family strategy? Do you know about anyone else who is currently employing this strategy? Would you ever consider adopting this strategy?)
- Identity (Would you say you are more "Chinese" or "Chinese-Canadian/American"? Do you think there is a difference between yourself and other Chinese/Chinese-Canadian/American who are not "astronaut" children? What do you think is unique about your own identity compared to your peers? Who would you say is more closely related to your own identity your mother or father? What do you think it means to be Chinese? Do you still do anything that you consider is distinctively "Chinese"? What are some of your memories that made you think you were more "Chinese"?)
- Sites of Practice (What is unique about your family life? Where do you think you act more "Chinese" or more "Western"? Where are some places that you go as a family? What are some things that you think your family does uniquely? Where are some usual places that you go with your family? Can you describe your experiences of these places? Are there any places that you go privately with either your Mom or Dad, or siblings? Are there any places that you go that you normally wouldn't go if your father/mother/both is absent? Do you ever go back to China? How often do you go back? What are your experiences in China?)
- Source of cultural conflict and solidarity (Are their any conflicts or tensions that you have experienced as a result of your family experience? What do you think is the biggest difference between your family and other families that have both parents living with them? Have there been any conflicts arising in the way you have been brought up? Have there been any strengths and benefits to having your particular type of family? What are some things you like about your family and what are some things that you would change? How has your family upbringing affected the way you live your life? Have you ever been given conflicting advice on how you should act or think?
- Home and belonging (What are the future plans for your family arrangement? Where do you see your family and yourself settling down in the future? Do you think your family is a "Chinese" family or an "immigrant" family? Are there any conflicting notions of belonging within your family, for example is there any confusion about where your parents will settle down in the future?)