

BICULTURALISM AND THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN CORE PERSONAL  
VALUES AMONG FEMALE ASIAN ADULT IMMIGRANTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

Biculturalism researchers have acknowledged intricate dynamics in the process of change during bicultural exposure, yet the lived experience of this complexity during immigration has often remained unexplored. I wondered what the experience was like living in the chasm of two distinct cultures and not feeling a sense of belonging to either one. How did immigrants negotiate competing values without compromising their desires of the heart? What was the process of personal transformation when engaging in relationships? I offered an Experiential Constructivist approach to bicultural research to capture not only *what* has changed but more importantly *how* people changed during immigration. I engaged in semi-structured interviews with eight female immigrants from Hong Kong who immigrated to Canada during their teenage years and have been in Canada for ten years or more. I adopted a narrative analysis to bring to light who they were against the historic, economic and cultural mosaic of Colonial Hong Kong. Through their subsequent engagement in life in Canada, they revealed their implicit desires in their investment in families, relationships, community, education and spirituality. The discovery of their experience was characterized by finding a complementary cultural space that encompassed the experience of living as bicultural individuals. This study exemplified the synergy between the content of meaning and the processes of making meaning when engaging in relationships.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
An Expanding Scope of Biculturalism.....	5
An Experiential Constructivist Approach.....	9
Core Personal Values.....	11
Hong Kong History and Identity.....	14
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY.....	19
Researcher’s Role.....	20
Participants.....	20
Recruitment.....	21
Data Collection.....	21
Interview Protocols.....	21
Interview Procedure.....	23
Data Analysis.....	26
Translation and Transcription Processes.....	27
Life Scripts Identification.....	28
Construct Identification.....	29
Ethics and Trustworthiness.....	31
CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS.....	34

Five Salient Life Domains .....	36
Home and Family – Desire to Find Root.....	36
The Meaning of Root.....	36
The Uprooting.....	38
The Chosen Soil.....	40
Friendship and Relationship – Desire for Intimacy.....	42
Knowing Friends.....	42
Knowing Those Who Came before Us .....	43
Desiring Intimacy .....	45
Community – Desire to Live out the True Self .....	48
Education – Desire for an Enlarging Self.....	50
Spirituality – Desire for Meaning in Life .....	52
Third Space – The Shapes of Bicultural Identity.....	54
“Tammy” and the Hybrid (□□□) .....	55
“Number-two” and Maturing Wine.....	56
“Esther” and the Enlarged Life.....	58
“Tina” and the Rhythm in Life.....	59
“Tiger” and the Creative Self.....	60
“Tiffany” and her True Self.....	60
“Tamara” and her Search for Significance.....	61
“Tara” and the Vibrant Life.....	61
CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION.....	63
Process of Change in the Language of Personal Construct Theory.....	63

Interpersonal and Reflexive ROLE .....	64
Process of Interpersonal ROLE .....	65
Process of Reflexive ROLE .....	65
Hybridized Identity and Cultural Frame Switching .....	66
Bittersweet and Constructive Alternativism. ....	67
Inspirational Quality of ROLE .....	69
The Desires of the Heart and ROLE.....	70
Implications for Research on Biculturalism .....	70
Implications for Counselling Psychology.....	73
Limitations and Future Research .....	74
Conclusion .....	76
REFERENCES .....	78
APPENDIX A: Sample Interview Questions .....	83
APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Form .....	85
APPENDIX C: Debriefing Script .....	88
APPENDIX D: Confidentiality Agreement.....	89
APPENDIX E: Translation Verification Instruction .....	90
APPENDIX F: Interpretative Transcription & Adaptation Strategies.....	92

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Like many other young women who immigrated to Canada in the approaching years before the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty from Britain to China, I immigrated with my parents without knowing what challenges I would encounter. As a first generation immigrant moving to Canada from colonial Hong Kong, I struggled to transition from being a teenager to an emerging adult while being exposed to competing cultural values. Throughout that time of adjustment, I experienced a constant tension from negotiating an ever increasing number of behavioural and attitudinal alternatives that would otherwise be considered unacceptable or plainly wrong in my original culture. After living in Canada for about ten years, I began to accept this internal dilemma as a normal existence; I was no longer shocked when the tension arose but began to anticipate the pressure to negotiate among competing perspectives. The most critical and tender of all of my integration experience was my changing role as a female member at home and in society. My increasing independence, a more individualistic outlook in life and post-secondary education have influenced my perception of who I want to be as a person. The gradual but deliberate awareness in my transforming identity made me wonder what other immigrants experienced in their life journey. What was their experience like living in the chasm between two cultures?

My experience was not uncommon to many immigrants who walked the path before me. For some time, anthropologists and psychologists have been interested in studying immigrants' behavioural change for social planning and control (Berry, 2003). Recent theorists and researchers have been trying to develop viable structures to describe the intersection where two cultures meet; each subsequent framework seems to

demonstrate an increasing awareness of the complexity of the immigration experience (Boski, 2008). If it is true that the process of change during bicultural integration is indeed very complex, how then could we best capture its intricacy? Could complex matters be captured in an empirically controlled manner? What would be our alternative framework or method to best address the change during immigration?

I have just raised a fundamental question in biculturalism research, namely “What would be an apt way to explore the experience relating to immigration?” To address what an apt way is, I reviewed the research approaches in acculturation and biculturalism studies. I noticed that a quantitative enquiry was often used to understand immigration experience. These approaches often reduced complex processes into empirical indexes. For example, family values were reduced to labels associated with preferences for food, clothing or religious beliefs (e.g., Georgas, Berry, Shaw, Christakopoulou, & Mylonas, 1996; Rosenthal, Ranieri, & Klimidis, 1996; Tardif & Geva, 2006). These culturally-loaded items were measured and compared between first and second generation immigrants yielding a difference in the level of acculturation. While this reductionist approach to biculturalism research may seem feasible and logical, cultural processes like the changes in values would be more aptly explored by understanding the lived experience of immigrants’ struggles and transformations (Boski, 2008). Other researchers acknowledged the intricate dynamics between immigrants and their cultural environment; the researchers made significant effort to incorporate qualitative and constructivist components in recent biculturalism studies (e.g., Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000; Hong, Roisman, & Chen, 2006). Yet they adopted a deterministic philosophy to

their research that suggests that human experience can be observed, measured and generalized as an objective reality (Creswell, 2003).

As to what is worthwhile to explore in the experience relating to immigration, researchers who studied biculturalism have been looking beyond behavioural change and enquiring deeper into personal values. It has been acknowledged that the change in values and beliefs can dictate the change in behaviour during immigration (Marín & Gamba, 2003). Although research efforts on the change in values at a group level have been prolific, relevant research at a personal level is lacking. Value research on a personal level is needed. I concurred with Marín and Gamba in their observation that a qualitative study in the change in personal values is justified. However, let me stir up the dust again to address a potential shift in research to complement the existing biculturalism literature. The matter at hand was not simply to justify a biculturalism research on the change in values for an unexamined cohort; the crux of the matter was how to approach the unknown. We, as a body of biculturalism researchers, have encountered an outcry literally from the same members in the research body to depart from treating immigration experience as an external, static given. We were beckoned to pay reverence (Leitner, 2001) to the values and beliefs at the core of the human heart: to seek out meaning-making processes as much as the content of meaning and to be willing to engage with others as evolving, growing and changing human beings.

I have just swung open a floodgate in research that left the parameter, and perhaps the possibilities, of this study wide open. There was much to examine I admit. For example, how developmental stages transform self identity, what personal values are salient to Hong Kong immigrants and gender role at home just to name a few. The focus

of this study, however, was to centre on the process in which core personal values change. The purpose was to journey with eight Hong Kong immigrants, to walk in their shoes of overcoming heartaches and difficulties and to rejoice with them in their personal growth. The process was to take the centre stage and everything else that emerged would fall to the sideline. With this focus in mind, I interviewed eight female adult Hong Kong immigrants and asked them how they perceived their lives before, during and after immigrating. By examining how they invested their lives in relationships and significant life events from when they were teenagers to adults, I let their core personal values emerge from their responses to heartaches and triumph during immigration. I listened to them closely in how they turned difficulties into opportunities for growth. In the form of metaphor, I helped capture the complexity of lived experience and the meanings uncovered from the deeper end of the human heart.

I believe in the inspirational quality embedded in stories, and therefore, a narrative analysis was deemed to be appropriate for this endeavour. I allowed the experience of constructing meaning bring to light the struggles and difficulties as well as the joy and growth. Throughout the process of this research, I engaged in a laddering process when increasingly superordinate constructs were elicited. Through the labour of interacting with the participants, the text of their stories and my intuition, more superordinate constructs emerged. A narrative approach to research worked in coherence with the spirit of honouring the lived experience of making meaning through engaging with others in the world. At the end of this study, I, the co-author and sojourner with the participants, savoured the journey of discovering their processes of change as much as mine.

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

## An Expanding Scope of Biculturalism

Anthropologists and sociologists have long been acknowledging the interaction between people and their cultural environment and the ensuing change as a natural discourse. In an earlier acculturation model, Gordon (as cited in Birman & Trickett, 2001) purported that assimilation is a natural progression to acculturation and that integration to new society is expected. Although he acknowledged that assimilation may fittingly describe the experience of native born children more than first-generation adult immigrants, he offers no alternative framework to conceptualize the experience other than his unidimensional framework.

Berry (2001, 2003) later on initiated a broadening view of bicultural interactions. He suggested a bidimensional acculturation model that provided researchers an expanded framework on cultural and psychological integration. He suggested that the tendency to maintain cultural heritage on one spectrum and participate in relationship with other cultural groups on the other would yield four possible preferences and attitudinal positions: separation (maintaining cultural heritage without intergroup relations), assimilation (renouncing cultural heritage and adopting new cultural identity), marginalization (not adhering to either culture) and integration (internalizing both cultural heritage and new cultural identity).

Although the bidimensional framework to acculturation research was welcomed by many, more clarification of its operational elements and loosening of the framework were called for. One of the major criticisms of Berry's model came from its acultural notion of key measuring items. For example, the key elements to evaluate cultural

integration were based on participants' declared preferences or attitudes and cultural labels (Boski, 2008). Although these elements took into account the implicit attitudes and the value of choice as vital components to cultural integration, participants' interpretation of the supplied life events (e.g., nationality of marriage partner) and cultural labels (e.g., Vietnamese Canadian) were not specified. Without allowing the participants to elaborate on their attitudes and meanings in the choices they made in significant life domains, researchers may not be measuring what they intended to enquire. This issue brought us to the importance in eliciting the participants' construal of the world instead of providing them with supplied constructs.

The use of cultural elements for measurement led to another contentious discussion around adopting a cross-cultural approach by using variables versus focusing on the processes in intercultural research (Greenfield, 2000). The argument prompted us to reconsider how best to examine and address nonlinear cultural processes such as the experience of value change. On one hand, it was believed that precedence should be given to identifying cultural patterns at a group level (Marín & Gamba, 2003), thus justifying a reductionist approach in finding a collective reality in the world. On the other hand, researchers who took on a cultural approach argued that reducing complex cultural processes into variables and labels would overlook key psychological development as in the construction of meaning and experience of socialization (Greenfield, 2000). The discussion of using variables versus examining processes challenged us to depart from asking "What has changed?" to "How have things changed?" By expanding the boundaries of our curiosity in human experience, we, as a research community, were

expressing our desire to honour the dynamics that gave rise to change and to unleash the richness in cultural interaction that has long been confined.

Recent biculturalism researchers attempted to address our desires to expand in understanding cultural interaction specifically how and why people change within a bicultural context. For example, in Tadmor and Tetlock's study (2005), they provided a bicultural model that helped organize complex internal negotiation and how intrapersonal dynamics affected and motivated change when exposed to a second culture. Such organizational effort intended to fill two needs that were desperately lacking in biculturalism research: a model of change that described bicultural exposure and the recognition of how felt and perceived value conflicts would affect an individual's choice of change.

Riding on the curiosity of how and why change happens, biculturalism researchers developed the Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) framework to capture how cognitive and affective processes influence choice. Two noteworthy elements were incorporated into the development of BII. Researchers made use of bicultural frame switching as a priming procedure to trigger observable cognitive perception and bicultural competency. The BII also recognized intrapersonal tension arisen from bicultural exposure; these emotions could in turn affect the choices of acculturation strategy. Conceptually, the authors intended to take into account the interacting dynamics between external factors and internal processes during second culture exposure.

Further utility of bicultural frame switching in research traversed from its external, priming and cognitive function to its interpretive quality in understanding

bicultural experience. Researchers ascribed this to a Dynamic Constructivist Approach (Hong et al., 2000) acknowledging individuals' interpretation and meaning-making of the interactive and sometimes conflicting cultural frames. The incorporation of a constructivist component in bicultural research signified a beginning effort of bringing to the fore the experience of interacting between individuals and their cultural environment. The constructivist connotation of capturing change helped soften the static view of bicultural experience and opened up the possibility of a more fluid and interactive stance. Bicultural existence perhaps did happen on a continuum. The relational and emotional connections during bicultural interaction were looked upon as essential determinants to change instead of being treated as observable outcomes. The impact of relationship during bicultural experience was comparable to the importance of interpersonal attachment in childhood (Hong et al. 2006).

Other research efforts were attempted to address the Gestalt – the unified whole – within the complexity of bicultural experience as summarized by Boski (2008). One of the streams of study was the Cognitive-Evaluative Merger approach that acknowledged the emergence of a “third value” as a result of the fusion of two cultures. An example of an emergent third element would be the Creole languages spoken in the Caribbean countries as a reflection of colonialism. Another stream of research assumed a Constructive Marginalization approach that stated that fully bicultural and integrated people would exhibit characteristics of marginalization in two senses. Encapsulated marginality describes individuals who maintain their unique identity that is detached from any cultures. Constructive marginality describes those bicultural individuals who maintain a positive self identity by moving in and out of cultures; they exercise their

cultural fluency by choosing to engage or exit one culture and to reengage in another culture.

### An Experiential Constructivist Approach

Although existing bicultural frameworks and instrumentations have been expanding in scope to capture the intricacy of human dynamics, they show a tendency to truncate human experience into indexes and variables. Most acculturation and biculturalism research approaches mentioned previously assume a reductionist approach where change and perceptions were to be observed and measured. Even when a constructivist component was incorporated (e.g., Hong et al., 2000), most studies were operating from a stance where bicultural experience is treated as an “external given” (Leitner, 2005) and a static phenomenon to be examined. While these approaches may capture the observable cognitive, affective and behavioural manifestations of bicultural experience, they fail to offer a holistic view of “the real complexities of life in two or more cultural worlds ...” (Boski, 2008, p. 152). These complexities encompassed the lived experience in overcoming cultural and personal differences and difficulties, turning pain and sufferings into an impetus for growth and insight, and the ability to recognize growth along the way.

To this end, we proposed an Experiential Constructivist approach as an alternative to biculturalism research. This approach was based on George Kelly’s concept of Sociality (Leitner, 1985). It was assumed that the experience and meaning of the world “...is neither solely an internal construction nor an external given that is discovered” (Leitner, 2005, p. 307). On a relational level, we are urged to engage in a continual interchange – an interactive relationship – of two constantly evolving entities. On a

content level, we did not merely stop at knowing the constructs, the contents and “what” was perceived by the other; we were to understand the construction process and “how” the other made meaning of the world. Allowing ourselves to descend from knowing the contents to knowing the processes of another person took human relationship to a deeper level that reached down to our yearning to know others and to be known intimately. In doing so, we launched ourselves away from the logical and cognitive realms to deeper matters of the heart and soul. This was termed “ROLE relationship” (Leitner, 1985). It was suggested that we found meaning in life and made sense of the world in the roles we played in relationship with others. An Experiential Constructivist approach to research, thus, led us to depart from the observables and to focus on the observed and how we made sense of the world.

Such an intimate interpersonal relationship could be deeply rewarding yet potentially terrifying if and when the core matters of the heart and soul were invalidated (Leitner, 1985). We, therefore, live in a constant tension between seeking closeness and maintaining distance to one another. The struggle of easing the tension in interpersonal, communal and intrapersonal relationships would reveal the process of change in the choices that moved us in the direction of greater meaning (Leitner, 1999b). Such tension created by this incessant consideration of maintaining an optimal distance with others and the self was beginning to be recognized and captured by bicultural instruments as in the Conflict and Harmony continuum in the Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Instead of focusing on finding an objective reality out there, an Experiential Constructivist approach enabled us to know and to begin to understand the experiential reality through the eyes of bicultural individuals.

By co-creating a current construction of their immigration stories, bicultural individuals and the researcher entered into a ROLE relationship; the key to ROLE relationship was to reverse (Leitner, 2001) the values of the meaning-making processes as well as to trust the process to lead us to the person's heart and soul. By expanding our willingness to perceive the unknown and by giving justice to their immigration experience, I let the participants' struggles and difficulties of adjusting to the new culture come to light. Through the choices they made, the relationships they invested in and the way they dealt with major life events, the participants spoke richly about their core personal values and how their values changed over the course of their lives. Thus, an Experiential Constructivist approach to biculturalism research enabled us to understand bicultural individuals and their experience in a holistic and humanistic way.

#### Core Personal Values

To understand where the role of core personal values was situated during immigration, I examined the definition of values in the context of culture. Culture was defined as the attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours that were shared by a group of people and were communicated from one generation to another (Georgas et al., 1996). The definition of values, as a component of culture, was elaborated by Kluckhohn as the "characteristics of individuals that represent what is desirable for those persons and influence the selection of both means and ends of possible actions from among a set of alternatives" (Georgas et al., 1996, p. 330). The qualities and purposes of values described and embedded in this short quote were several. First, values characterized a person by bringing unique qualities to an individual so to distinguish them from others. Values, thus, have no intrinsic significance if being considered alone unless they were

interpreted with reference to an individual or within a context. Values served their optimal purpose when we exercised their representational function. Further, values were not inherently good or bad; they simply adhered to the desires and preferences of the beholder. Lastly, values played a crucial role in influencing the individual's decision-making process by guiding and directing the individual through choosing one alternative over another.

Hofstede (as cited in Georgas et al., 1996) also suggested similar connotation on values in that “[values] are a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others.” Thus, values cover a wide range of circumstances and enable a person to consider choices concerning life events.

George Kelly (1955) provided an alternative language to interpret core personal values in his definition of Core Constructs. In Personal Construct Theory, Kelly defined core constructs as those qualities and elements that governed the processes that maintain our identity and existence. Thus, Kelly's definition of core constructs resembled the functions of core personal values in that they were important standards that encompassed priorities for growth, relationships and decision-making.

Core personal values, therefore, were catalytic elements for initiating changes. These changes may affect immigrants' self-identity, relationship with others and decision-making processes. Different decisions would in turn lead to changes in behaviour. How and how much they changed may, therefore, hinge on their core personal values. If core personal values distinguished the self from others in terms of characteristics, shaped perception and interpretation of events and influenced decisions, an examination on how immigrants interacted with the world would reveal the journey

through which they engaged core values in meaningful ways. Core personal values, therefore, were crucial ingredients in the process of change through the decisions they made during immigration experience.

The change in values has been acknowledged by cross-cultural researchers as a central component in the process of acculturation. The purpose of most cross-cultural studies focused mainly on the pattern of change in values at a group level. These studies recognized the importance of defining cultural characteristics of a collective group, and identifying factors that may contribute to the change in some prominent values. The rationale for tracking how and what values change at a group level and the factors that may affect the change were that culturally appropriate interventions could be devised to influence the behaviour of individuals who were members of a group (Marín & Gamba, 2003). Examples of studies on changes at a group level included examination of traditional family values (Georgas et al., 1996; Rosenthal et al., 1996) and comparison between collectivistic and individualistic approaches to life between two generations (Doná & Berry, 1994). Other examples included the measurement of differences or changes in value between the generations in a longitudinal study (Birman & Trickett, 2001). Yet another indication of change in values was indirectly inferred by the observable behavioural conflict or emotional and psychological stress induced as a result of immigration (Doná & Berry, 1994; Rosenthal et al., 1996; Tardif & Geva, 2006). In these studies, while values were assumed as a stable element embedded in observables, for example mastering language, and often examined at a group level, the full extent of how values were making an impact in people's lives was not made explicit.

Most researchers in these cross-cultural studies assumed that values were relatively stable and therefore they subjected the outcome of measurement to statistical analysis. In these studies, while the external and personal factors that affected change were often identified, how these factors interacted with the acculturating individuals in the changing process was often not explained. An example of external factors was the age of entry to the new country. Adolescent immigrants were often used as a comparison group and were assumed to make behaviour and attitudinal adjustments to the host at a faster pace than their parents (Birman & Trickett, 2001; Georgas et al., 1996; Rosenthal et al., 1996; Tardif & Geva, 2006). While these researchers attempted to examine the impact of age on the change in personal values, they left the lived experience of their struggles and tension in the growing up years unexamined.

#### Hong Kong History and Identity

To understand the transforming identity of people from Hong Kong from being a group of unassuming villagers to industrialized urbanites, we must come to know the history of Hong Kong. Hong Kong was noticed as a strategically well-located trading harbour in the mid 1800s when China was defeated during the Opium War. Hong Kong Island was then relinquished to Britain as a colony. More land was yielded to Britain in 1898 when Hong Kong's surrounding territories was ceded for a 99-year land lease. The lease would expire on June 30 in 1997 when the land and political ownership of Hong Kong would revert to China (Sussman, 2005).

Hong Kong's industrialization and prosperity were tightly tied to the pulse of China. Between the signing of the first colonization treaty in 1842 and the post Second World War era of 1949, Hong Kong had quickly become a financial and commercial

centre, an entrêpot to China. But its economy was dampened by the civil war in China after World War II (Sussman, 2005). China's political and economic instability diverted businesses and entrepreneurs to Hong Kong. Following the United Nations' embargo against China in 1950, Hong Kong turned to its industrialization rather than relied on functioning as the entrêpot to China. With lenient trading policies and low taxes, Hong Kong's economy continued to flourish between the 1950s and 1970s.

While Hong Kong was still enjoying its economic success and stability, Hong Kong people were alarmed and shaken by the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration of the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. The announcement marked the beginning of the end of the 99-year lease to Britain (Li, 2005). The uncertainties gathered around Hong Kong's economic and political future, coupled with favourable immigration policies for investors and entrepreneurs during Canada's economic recession in the 1980s, attracted over 66,000 immigrants between 1981 and 1990; 20,000 of them settled in Vancouver. In the subsequent decade, as Hong Kong was approaching the handover in 1997, another 118,000 made Canada their home, and close to 50,000 settled in Vancouver. Immigrants who moved to Canada in this period shared unique historical, political, social, cultural and economic influences that sculpted their core personal values and outlook on life that were unlike any other group. Over the 150 years of colonization, 98% of Hong Kong people remained Cantonese and developed a unique identity of their own in the backdrop of the Chinese cultural fabric superimposed by a colonial British undertone (Sussman, 2005).

The birth of Hong Kong identity was thought to have emerged and developed since 1949 until the pre-handover in the mid 1990s (Li, 2005). During that time, Hong

Kong Chinese, although sharing the same geographical ground with Mainland China, were segregated politically and economically. The fence that separated Hong Kong from China ensured the privilege of political stability and introduction to the West. Yet the shadow of Chinese heritage was cast on the Hong Kong soil as a constant reminder of China's presence. The political stability and economic success also gave rise to a transformed identity that earned Hong Kong Chinese a reputation for being an opportunist. They are named as one of the four dragons – a group of people who makes the best use of its limited resources, seizes the narrow window when the money god (opportunity) passes by the door and invests the greatest human effort possible to multiply. The ability to remain flexible, adaptable and resourceful in the midst of change has become a source of pride to many Hong Kong people. The British values are another kind of resource that Hong Kong Chinese have made good use of. However, while Hong Kong people were able to demonstrate extraordinary resilience on their own soil, could they take the flexibility, adaptability and resourcefulness and once again reinvent their cultural identity when moving to a foreign land? What might happen when they bring their desire to thrive to a new country where their roots need to be replanted? How do they reorient themselves when the matters that once were core in Hong Kong have become insignificant in Canada? An example of the inversion of values would be the use of English; English was only used as an official form of communication but usually not at home. In Canada, the use of English is the core and may even be spoken at home.

In their study of the people of Hong Kong's social identity three years to three months prior to the handover of Hong Kong's ruling to China in 1997, Chiu and Hong, (1999) found evidence that the people of Hong Kong wanted to foster assimilation to

Mainland Chinese. Among their recruits were 450 college-aged Hong Kong students. Although there was indication of seeking intergroup harmony among Hong Kong people, the researchers wondered if the desire to foster connectedness would be reciprocated by Mainland Chinese. This study also found that social roles that were accepted by the majority of people tended to guide the actions of the people of Hong Kong. The implication of the findings suggested that social identification, harmony and connectedness to the main cultural group were sought after by most people from Hong Kong before the handover in July 1997. I wondered what the experience would be like for Hong Kong people to seek identification and a sense of connectedness after immigrating to Canada. How would they respond if their effort to identify with the mainstream culture was not reciprocated?

After the handover, an increasing number of research studies explored the phenomenon of Mainland Chinese moving to Hong Kong. One research focused on the difficulties and maladjustments of these immigrants for the reasons of socioeconomic, political and cultural differences (Lam & Chan, 2004). However, more research studies were directed to emphasize the resilience and positive attributes to overcome challenges such as discrimination experienced by Mainland Chinese by the people of Hong Kong. Would the same ability to rise above life's challenges and social injustice be experienced among Hong Kong Chinese immigrants in Canada?

Research findings on the subjective experience of Mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong and Singapore may draw relevance to Hong Kong Chinese immigrants in Canada. In two narrative studies of Mainland Chinese who immigrated to Hong Kong and Singapore (Chan & Seet, 2003; Lam & Chan, 2004), the researchers found that a

marginal identity has emerged. A marginal person was used to describe an immigrant who straddled between two worlds; someone who did not totally fit into the old or new community. For example, in the study conducted by Chan and Seet (2003), although Mainland Chinese who moved to Singapore looked and talked just like their local counterparts, they were seen as immigrants regardless of their fluent social integration and assimilation. Yet despite their frequent and close contact with the Mainland, they were seen by their former acquaintance and family members as foreigners. In a study conducted in Vancouver, it was found that newcomer Chinese were sometimes negatively received by well-established Chinese immigrants (Rock, 2005). These studies perhaps informed us of the uncertainty and tension around how Chinese immigrants were accepted by their fellow Chinese in their new community. I wondered what the experience would be like for an invisible minority feeling unaffiliated to people in both the old and the new cultures. Where and how would immigrants establish their sense of belonging? Where were their roots when they moved away from their home land? How would they express their new-found identity?

## CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to elicit from the participants' immigration stories the journey in which their core personal values changed. By engaging with the participants in a semi-structured interview, I co-created a new narrative on their immigration experience. Navigating through the participants' responses to challenges in life, seeing how they made decisions and examining how they eased the tension in significant relationships, I revealed the deeper desires of their hearts. I listened closely and reverently to how they engaged in life after immigrating; I was led to uncover novel bicultural spaces that encompassed their experience of living in two cultures and their new-found identities.

To elicit participants' narratives that directed me closer to their core construing, I employed a laddering strategy to engage in the interview, in structuring the interview protocol (see Appendix A) and in data analysis. I treated laddering as a skill, rather than a research procedure, that enabled me to elicit increasingly superordinate constructs (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004). By asking the "Why" question, I guided the participants to choose the preferred construct that was increasingly superordinate. Embedded in the laddering process was the assumption that constructs were organized in a hierarchical manner with more superordinate constructs subsuming more subordinate constructs (Fransella et al., 2004). Superordinate constructs were core constructs that describe ways that people maintained identity and shaped their ways of living (Kelly, 1955). Core constructs, then, were analogous to core personal values in that they helped characterize and define our identity, influenced our desires and guided our decisions (Kluckhohn, 1951). In the language of Personal Construct Theory, core personal values

can be defined as core constructs that reflect a person's strong evaluations of personally significant life domains. Kelly avoided traditional distinctions between thoughts, feelings and motivations because he found the distinctions created artificial categories that failed to accurately characterize human experience.

#### Researcher's Role

As the principal researcher, I conducted all the interviews and performed the translation and transcription of data. I at first assumed the role of a Canadian researcher exploring the immigration experience of Hong Kong people. Although I look and speak like the participants, I was unwilling to be identified as one of them. This outsider stance soon proved to be a hindrance to my effectiveness and authenticity to the interview process; it prevented me from looking at the participants' world through their eyes. My dissatisfaction in the quality of engaging with the participants urged me to reflect upon my role in relation to the participants and the significance of this study to me; I decided to change my attitude from being on the outside looking in to sitting side-by-side with the participants. After conducting the first two interviews, I adopted the role of a co-author, and collaborator, instead of being a bystander.

#### Participants

I interviewed eight female immigrants from Hong Kong who came to Canada between the ages of 15 and 19 with an average age of 16.5 years when they immigrated to Canada. At the time when I conducted the interviews, the average age of the participants was thirty-six years and their average stay in Canada was eighteen years. All of them were working or studying for the majority of their stay in Canada (i.e., 9 or more months in a year). Prior to entering Canada, they were Hong Kong residents for an

average of 15 years. All of the participants were born in Hong Kong except one who was born in China and immigrated to Hong Kong at age thirteen. One participant studied in England for 2 years prior to immigrating to Canada.

### Recruitment

I started the recruitment process by inviting my friends to participate in the research. Participants were selected based upon the snowball effect. Among the eight participants, 4 of them are my friends and I had no prior contact with the remaining four. I also contacted those friends who did not meet the recruitment criteria for potential referrals. In the latter case, my friends were conducting the initial screening for potential participants. I then followed up with the leads by a phone call or email. I contacted the counselling department at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (a multi-service agency for Canadians and immigrants) attempting to recruit from their staff members and from people they help but no participant was recruited.

### Data Collection

#### *Interview Protocols*

I began the data collection process by contacting potential participants by phone or email explaining the objectives, their role and time commitment for participating in the study. Once I received a verbal agreement from the participants, I worked out with them a suitable time and meeting location for the interview. I then forwarded the interview protocol to them by email for two reasons: first, to foster a sense of safety by giving them the questions or the kinds of question they can anticipate during the interview process; second, to give them the time to reflect on their immigration experience before the interview.

The selection of an interview location was a mutual effort. Half of the interviews took place in a public arena, for example, at a restaurant over a meal or in a mall. Although I was concerned about the quality of the audio recording due to background noise and the depth of the conversation due to the lack of privacy, I found the audio quality of all the interviews reasonably distinguishable and the depth of the interviews not compromised. The remaining half of the interviews took place in the private setting of my home, the participants' home or office. I noticed how the choice of interview location as an indication of the participants' perception towards me and the study. Although I was unable to translate the nuances of our relationship as part of the data, I took mental note of them as background information during data analysis.

I recorded all interviews for processing and analysis. The audio recordings were downloaded from the tape recorder to my computer, protected by a password, for the convenience of data processing. I then erased the interviews from the tape recorder. I subsequently made two sets of back up on Compact Disc; one set was stored in a secure place at my home and the other set was kept in the Counselling Department at Trinity Western University.

When the participants and I met for the interviews, after a brief introduction, I explained to them the informed consent (see Appendix B), limitations and right to participate and withdraw from the study. I budgeted one hour to one and a half hours for each interview; the average length of the interview was fifty minutes. I also offered them an option to any subsequent contact for an update on the study. Upon signing the informed consent form, I offered the participants a \$20 gift card to T&T Supermarket as a token of appreciation. Before the actual taping of the interview, I asked the participants

for an alias that would sufficiently disguise their real name. No real name was used in the transcripts or in the final document. The eight aliases for the participants were Esther, Number-two, Tina, Tiger, Tiffany, Tamara, Tammy and Tara.

Since I established a friendship with half of the participants prior to the interview, I experienced a slight difference when starting the interview process. For those participants who are my friends, we started from a familiar place of friendship and prior knowledge of each other; the familiarity helped us to integrate the questions in the interview protocol in an exploratory conversation around their immigration experience. In the interviews with the remaining participants, we spent the initial moments familiarizing ourselves with each other during some small talk. The interview would progress in a fashion that closely followed the interview protocols. The interviewing style would resemble a question and answer interchange rather than a conversation between two friends. Throughout the interview process, I felt that my clinical training in counselling psychology worked to my benefit in engaging my friends and other participants in a sensitive and tactful manner.

#### *Interview Procedure*

The interview protocol was designed to elicit increasing superordinate constructs relating to the participants' immigration experience. The organization of sample questions progressed from the exploration of immigration experience, significant values, seeking similarities and differences and conclusion. I began the interview by asking general and broad questions relating to the participants' immigration experience and gradually narrowing the questions to focus on significant memories or changes. In regards to questions that explored significant values, I explored with the participants the

qualities of the events or relationships they found especially meaningful or challenging. I continued to examine the similarities and differences in the perceived significance of those treasured qualities before and after immigrating. I concluded the interviews by asking the participants to summarize their immigration experience in one word or phrase. I debriefed with the participants after the interviews to ensure that I could be contacted if they had any further questions about the interview process or their participation in this study (see Appendix C for Debriefing Script). By gradually tightening the focus and scope of the questions, I made the laddering process and the essence of the “Why” question a mental posture instead of a skill. This posture guided me through the interview process as well as data analysis.

Adopting a laddering strategy was complemented by the attending skills I acquired from my counselling training. I engaged with the participants and followed the cadence of their stories. I attended to the contents as well as the process of how the stories were told. I followed where the participants were leading me at the same time steering the interviews to explore increasingly core and significant lived experiences. In a joint effort, the elicited stories arrived at a place that neither one of us would have reached alone.

The most helpful skill of all was my awareness of felt experience – thoughts, feelings and experiential markers – when I was engaging with the participants. My heightened self awareness guided me through the times when I felt confused and lost during the interviews. In those times, I would find myself repeating some questions or asking questions that did not lead us further or deeper; I would feel increasingly nervous and tried to ask more questions to cover up my fear of being seen as a novice researcher.

My awareness also directed me to see the development of trust when the participants were trying to verbalize more core issues. The most rewarding of my enhanced self awareness was that it took me inward to discover the wounds and interpersonal walls that shielded me from being open to establishing ROLE relationships.

I would like to address the issue of self disclosure in establishing a ROLE relationship during research. My role, as a researcher, to my participants during data collection mirrored that of a counsellor to her client in therapy: the participants would likely self-disclose more extensively than the researcher would. That may seem to contradict the openness and honesty I was striving for with my enhanced self awareness during the research process. However, striving to be congruent did not also mean needing to self-disclose. My willingness to remain open and honest to myself facilitated trust in my relationship with the participants. Such honesty encouraged me to “be” a certain kind of person before “doing” certain kinds of work. That, to me, was an essential and pivotal quality to being an effective and agentic researcher, in direct parallel to being an effective counsellor.

In preparation for the interview, I engaged in training sessions (as an interviewer and observer) with a biculturalism research team to familiarize myself with the laddering process and to heighten my awareness in the progression of the elicitation process. The practice sessions were videotaped and reviewed with the research team. I also practiced the laddering skills with two research partners prior to the actual data collection. One practice interview was audio taped and reviewed with the research team.

To evaluate my effectiveness of the co-authoring process and the research protocol, I used a journal to reflect on the internal alignment between my actions and my

authentic self. I used the space in the journal to turn inward to verify the level of congruence between my actions and the level of trust of my intuition. Using congruence as my experiential marker, I was bringing my self-awareness to the fore and thus I was engaging authentically with the participants during the construction process instead of merely performing the actions to conduct this research. My enhanced confidence in trusting my intuition spoke to the effectiveness of the reflexive process and the quality of this study.

In regards to the choice of language during the interview, I was open to using either or both languages (English and Cantonese). When I met up with the participants and before starting the actual interview, about half of the participants asked what language I would prefer them to use. (And interestingly, they all asked me in Cantonese.) Their intention was for the convenience in my transcription. I responded to them in Cantonese that they could speak in whatever language they felt most comfortable. I also assured them that I was fully prepared to translate the interviews from Cantonese to English should they choose to use their native tongue. For the other half of the participants, using Cantonese was natural to both of us and the question was not raised. Had I insisted that the interviews to be conducted in English, the depth and the quality of the construing of core personal values would have been compromised.

#### Data Analysis

I took on a narrative strategy for analysis of data. The procedures of a narrative strategy turned out to be rather undefined but Josselson and Lieblich (2003) captured for me the spirit of adopting a narrative framework to qualitative research: the researcher is to do “what is necessary” (p. 260) to bring to light the “rich and multilayered meanings of

historical and personal events” (p. 259). It was important for me to retain narrative as an approach, framework and strategy to handle the participants’ stories. Knowing that narrative analysis is not a rigid adherence to a method or a set of procedures, I compared a narrative approach to a voyage of discovery. Yet procedures were necessary to ensure progress in the analysis and help organize the data in a logical fashion. My experience in adopting a narrative approach would be best described as delighting myself in the voyage of mining a claim that was rich in ores at different depths below the surface.

I let the process of discovery take its course to guide me through the analysis. My journey of discovering the data analysis process was a marriage between immersing in the stories in both languages and understanding my organizational style. It was a continual effort of reading the stories multiple times each at deeper levels, writing out alternative versions of the stories in an increasingly superordinate manner and organizing the derived constructs in a methodical manner.

#### *Translation and Transcription Processes*

To initiate the analysis process, I developed a 3-column structure to help organize the transcribed data. The first column held a literal translation of the interviews and the second column retained a functional equivalent translation of the original interviews. The third column provided a space to salvage what had been lost in translation.

I performed a simultaneous translation and transcription process of the audio tapes of the interviews. The first stage was to achieve a literal translation; the exact words, phrase and sentence structure in Cantonese was translated into English. The second stage was to achieve a functional equivalent translation when the original text was re-contextualized (House, 2006) into a Canadian framework so to preserve the meanings

across the two languages (House, 2001). In short, I switched from a Chinese mind frame to a Canadian frame between the two stages of translations. In both stages, I enlisted the help of two translation partners to check the closeness of both the literal and functional translations of 2 of the eight translations. Both partners shared comparable cultural competency and linguistic abilities as the participants. They were given a ten to 15 minutes portion (about 20% of the entire length) of the original interview for verification. I established a confidentiality agreement (Appendix D) with both partners in writing to ensure that the identity of the participants was protected. A copy of the Translation Verification Instruction was also given (Appendix E). I concluded the translation and transcription process by capturing what has been lost between the two translations. Those losses were cultural materials that had no comparable version in the Canadian frame of reference (see Appendix F for translation and transcription protocol prepared by Dr. McDonald). By the time I completed the translation and transcription processes, I became fully familiarized with the details of the participants' stories. The immersion prepared me for the next phase of data analysis: life scripts identification for each story.

#### *Life Scripts Identification*

After the translation and transcription processes, it was apparent to me that there were patterns shared across the eight stories. These patterns not only helped organize each individual story in a sensible way but they also made connections across the stories. Among the most significant patterns were distinct personal life scripts of each participant before immigrating and the emergence of five salient life domains: home, friendship, community, education and spirituality. The personal life scripts revealed their experience as teenagers living in colonial Hong Kong with the impending handover. Casting the

personal scripts against the backdrop of the grand story of Hong Kong helped me to see glimpses of the participants' construal of the world prior to immigrating. The experience of living in Hong Kong also uncovered for me where and how they invested their life that was deemed most meaningful. Through narrating for the participants the life scripts they portrayed explicitly and implicitly in the salient life domains, I built a bridge upon which all other stories were connected and integrated. I concluded the second stage of data analysis by answering the question "How did the participant's process of change in core personal values exemplify in her personal script and in connection to immigration?" By narrating for the participants how their core personal values changed in connection to immigration, I distilled from their stories a coherent version of their lived experience during their transition from Hong Kong to Canada.

#### *Construct Identification*

After finishing a reasonably coherent version of the participants' narration, I began to integrate the identified constructs and life patterns according to the five salient life domains under three columns: before, during and after immigrating. During each writing and organizing in columns, I was operating from the mental posture of laddering intending to make explicit the more superordinate constructs until the top of the ladder was reached. The constructs exposed at the top of the ladder were then captured and summarized. This process involved writing in concise sentences the lived experience of each participant around a life event or issue. I then stepped back and surveyed what was in common among the experience. When I identified a shared experience, I asked the question, "What were the deeper yearnings and desires the participants were communicating?" The thought process of answering this question brought me to listen

beneath the contents of their stories and uncover the hopes, dreams, desires and yearnings; those were their core values exemplified in their interactions in life.

In this construct identification process, I made explicit the core personal values revealed in life events and relationships of these participants. By juxtaposing their attitudes, perceptions and responses to life events before, during and after immigration, I was able to put together a narrative mosaic of the process of change in core personal values in connection to their immigration experience. The final phase of construct identification was summarized in the Result Chapter where I offered a version of the participants' collective immigration experience presented according to the five salient life domains.

I used a couple of tools to help me to identify constructs arising from my immersion in the participants' stories. I used blank papers (not lined papers) to write, draw and sketch the emergence of constructs. A blank, white page somehow gave me the freedom to capture implicit meanings in words and forms. It also enabled me to organize the emerging constructs spatially in relation to others. I found schematics and metaphors were often facilitative in expressing core constructs when words were not adequate.

Another useful tool that helped me to start to formulate the results of this study was to capture in a short Chinese title the participants' lived experience in the five salient life domains. At that stage of data processing, having deeply immersed in the stories, I found Chinese phrasings especially in poetic forms and metaphors to be a more apt language to encapsulate a life time of experience. I then elaborated in English the meanings and tone in the Chinese phrases from a naïve stance presuming that the reader

would not have understood the participants had I not made explicit every culturally significant expression.

### Ethics and Trustworthiness

To maintain the quality of this project, I put in place several check points to ensure its trustworthiness. Before starting data collection, I submitted the project proposal for ethical review for human research; it was approved by the Research Ethics Board at Trinity Western University.

When considering who to invite to take part in this study, I was conscious of the potential challenges and benefits of recruiting friends as participants. My goal was to engage them in a constructive and mutually beneficial way. During the recruitment process and the interviews, I handled the relationships with care and sensitivity. Knowing that my friends would feel more willing, perhaps obligated, to help me with my study, I interacted with them with care during recruitment and interview so that they would not feel pressured to participate. My previously existing relationships facilitated both my friends and I to be more aware of the core areas when they emerged and enabled us to reach deeper during the interviews. However, recruiting friends as participants cannot be used as a default practice in qualitative research merely to make the process easier. Due care, sensitivity and respect has to take precedence; research should not compromise friendships.

My clinical training in counselling helped me to adapt my interviewing style to the personality and developmental stages of the participants. It also enhanced my self-awareness when interacting with all the participants with the due care I mentioned above. In a similar fashion as my counselling training had helped my research process, the

immersion in data analysis helped me to integrate myself in my clinical practice. I felt impelled to examine the areas that stopped me from engaging in the process wholeheartedly. As I invited the participants to show me their core, I must also be as willing to search deeply within myself my process of change in core personal values.

When portions of the translation and transcription of data processing were completed, I engaged two translation partners to verify the veracity of the translation. They both indicated no major disagreement in both the literal and functional translations.

When I completed the write-up of three Third Space descriptions, I engaged the participants to double check my rendition of their respective Third Space for closeness of fit. Two of the three participants replied to my invitation indicating that my version of their Third Space descriptions represented the major themes of their experience. Their experience of reading the Third Spaces was like watching a movie of themselves. One participant was most identified with the metaphor she used in the interview and I captured in her Third Space.

To ensure that the research process would progress in the directions I intended and in a timely fashion, I met with Dr. McDonald, Thesis Supervisor of this study, almost every week since the commencement of this project. His guidance and his engagement in my reflexive process and the use of a research journal helped me to deepen my integration of myself throughout the research process. Our shared interest in this study and in biculturalism, our experience in clinical practice and our pursuit of personal growth strengthened the conceptualization of human experience during immigration. Our mutual commitment in this project not only maintained the standard for a Master's thesis; it enriched the quality of the study with authenticity that came with immersing in the

participants' stories and incorporating the research process in personal and professional growth.

## CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

After immersing in the participants' narratives, I identified five salient life domains around which the lives of immigrants were centred. The happenings in the salient life domains were not merely events; they were mediums where immigrants invested their time, desires and hopes with significant others. Understanding the happenings in the core constructs that maintained and governed their identity and existence will lead to an understanding of the core process of construing life (Leitner, 1985). Similar to how process was to be exemplified in content, so were core personal values to be revealed in lived experience. People and their identity were not solely defined by their core personal values; rather, people's core personal values can be seen in how they lived life. That is to say that core personal values were seen in lived experience. The contents that were important to our core processes help maintain our identity and existence to the extent that they even governed the most autonomic of daily functioning.

In this regard, what were the core personal values and in what context have they been found meaningful to female immigrants? The narratives suggested that core personal values were expressed in the desires derived from the five salient life domains – home, friendship, community, education and spirituality. In a mutually complementary manner, the implicit desires expressed in these five salient life domains revealed the basis upon which immigrants made significant decisions, endured hardships and crossed barriers. Kelly suggested, in his Choice Corollary, that we choose in the direction of greater meaning (see Leitner, 2001). Our desires enable us to choose, anticipate and grow in a direction of greater depth and breadth as a person, in our relationships with others, and in becoming a person of substance. These desires lead us to seek a sense of

belonging, to grow roots and to find meaning amidst our sufferings in our sojourn in life. Perhaps we yearned to discover a place, better yet a space, where our evolving and transforming selves could reside and belong.

Having the preceding notion of how process complements content, I have presented the results of this study in a narrative format according to the five salient life domains to help make explicit the complexity of the journey during immigration. This has been followed by Third Space descriptions to help me further appreciate the lived experience of being a bicultural person. To be in keeping with the narrative and constructivist approaches to research, I adopted a genre of co-authorship between the researcher and the participants. The events described here were an amalgamation of the researcher's personal immigration experience and the participants'. The descriptions provided me a small window through which I can begin to understand the process in which core personal values of female Hong Kong immigrants changed. The immigration experience portrayed in this section was by no means exhaustive but it was a close representation of what mattered the most in the lives of these eight women.

Read it, immerse in it and interact with the text; put yourself into the shoes of these women. Give yourself a glimpse of what it was like to be an immigrant – to nurture a sense of belonging, to desire friendship, to discover a deepening and truer self and to seek meaning in life.

## Five Salient Life Domains

*Home and Family – Desire to Find Root**The Meaning of Root*

Growing up in British Hong Kong prior to 1997 was often seen and believed as living in a cultural, political and financial crossroad where East meets West. However, the awareness of living in this cultural kaleidoscope has not always been apparent to us. Engrossed in the daily mundane and competing responsibilities, the impact of colonialism was a normal way of life and reality. We learned about the historical fact of Hong Kong – some time in the distant past when the land, people and power were yielded to Britain by our Motherland.

Despite this unique political legacy, the questions of where we belong and who we are at heart were unusual questions teenage girls would contemplate. Situated in the security of the home, and marred in the complexity and perplexity of family matters, we were mired in the pursuit of interests and life as busy metropolitan young women. We became oblivious to our cultural belongingness. The desire to find roots would not emerge unless the ground upon which we stood was pulled out from under our feet.

When we were living in Hong Kong, naturally, we would not ask what and where we would consider home. When we had never left home, we would not question the places we could not call home and the need to find it. Besides, how could we ponder these questions when the matter of cultural roots was often tied to becoming a useful member of the British Colony on Chinese soil? We were indeed situated at home even on colonial soil; there was none other. We would not question the only home we knew and upon which we stood and grew roots.

Upon the colonial soil of Hong Kong a personal background story sprouted roots in everyone's home. We announced our entrance to this story as we began playing our part amongst other existing family members. The home became a stage where this personal background story – the characters and the events – continued to unfold with our grand entrance. The stage of home and family, thus, was transformed into the ground upon which we stood and within which we gathered courage, providing the push-start that launched us into the race of life. We learned to bring honour, not shame, to our family as a dutiful daughter would fulfil her filial piety to her parents.

Home, therefore, is a place we feel safe and proud to bring our trials and triumphs to; a place we feel and know that we belong and a place where our values and virtues originate. A place we can rest knowing that we are satisfied to stop looking for another home.

Tamara grew up in her home knowing her rightful place of significance among her immediate and extended family. She enjoyed her privilege of being a carefree yet responsible teenager. In her own words, she portrayed her privilege of only being mindful of eating, drinking, playing and being happy (□ □ □ □). She was safe and secure in her home; she was content as a dutiful daughter by achieving in school; she was valued by her friends and shared a common interest in volleyball. She planted roots in Hong Kong; she was participating in the continuation of the family story in her home.

Esther, however, spoke of a home that was uprooted from the political instability of China. She sojourned with her family to Hong Kong with the ultimate goal of finding a new home in Canada. Although having left her home in China at a young age, Esther was firmly established in the glory, virtues and legacy of her Great Grandfather, a

Grandfather who took risks in paving the way to the US and Canada for future generations. Her life is a continuation of her family story of finding root in Canada.

### *The Uprooting*

At the dawn of the remaining years of Colonialism, doubt and anxiety were on the rise among the people of Hong Kong concerning the possibility of maintaining a comfortable and secure home after the handover. Our parents contemplated seeking a new land, government and people that could ensure more stability than Colonialism and Communism could promise. How they made the decision to set sail to the wide Maple Leaf Country, we did not know. We followed them just like dutiful daughters would. With great excitement, a sense of adventure and a vague idea mixed with a slight resentment and much unknown, Maple Leaf Country seemed alluring, pure and vast. Packing our parka and all the essential belongings we thought we would need, together with the virtues and principles we learned in our Colonial home, we started a new life in the new country, literally, overnight.

We did not give a second thought to the question of what to do with our roots, or did we? What would we call it when we packed our belongings and what we belonged to, travelled with them to a new territory and built on and around them a new life? Was it not establishing roots?

So, in Maple Leaf Country we settled. To our surprise and perhaps dismay, when we arrived and set up housekeeping in the new land, the shape of the home, our role as key players and the storyline changed. At the very least, the circumstances surrounding the home changed in the new land. The old way we tangoed, the roles we used to function under and even the essentials we brought along did not sufficiently prepare us to

handle the shock and the challenges that had arisen in the home. Returning to the old land was not an option; we resorted to what Hong Kong people were known best in the face of difficulties and changes: remaining flexible, adaptable and resourceful in problem-solving (□ □ □ □) as Tammy would put it. We were able to, somehow, muster up unprecedented determination to improvise so as to make our life work in this new land.

Armed with a desire to succeed and to make this life work, we expanded our roles and stepped up and stepped in to take up responsibilities that were beyond our tender age. The suffering and sacrifice of the self was to be endured for a greater and higher collective purpose of keeping the family united and continuing the story. The desire to fulfil filial piety to our parents drove us to act; it gave us courage to assert ourselves and the ability to forgive. The value of instilling honourable virtues and character in the next generation motivated us to let go of time spent in securing financial sufficiency for quality time.

Tammy, motivated by her desire to fulfil filial piety to her parents, started supporting the family financially. She was delightfully surprised by the bonding she shared with her mother and sister while enduring a time of great financial need. When she recounted her journey as a new immigrant, she did not find her early experience arduous as her mother would recall. She chose to look at her journey as a learning process and accepted how events turned out. She preferred to look beyond the outward behaviour of people and appreciate the intention that motivated the behaviour.

As the oldest daughter in the family, Tamara stepped up to be the family communicator, although reluctantly, while her father retained employment in Asia. She

continued to be the more independent and responsible one in the family and among her siblings.

As for Tina, she found unprecedented motivation to fight for what she needed with the high school authority. Her desire to bring honour to her parents by fulfilling the expected timing of finishing school gave her the drive to succeed. She savoured the surge of assertiveness she experienced with the school authority and hoped to find a similar passion to propel her for a job change in her current life.

During the time in the Maple Leaf Country, the home was grounded in the foreign soil. The home was a place that bore the brunt of the challenge and change during immigration. We struggled to overcome financial and relational difficulties. We invested our time and life in this new land and fought for the things and people whom we deemed worthwhile. We found courage to press on into the unknown and developed our potential.

#### *The Chosen Soil*

We left the colonial soil and we laboured and strived in the foreign soil with substantial effort. One day we lifted our heads from our labour and asked ourselves “Where is my true home?” We reflected upon whether we fostered a closer relationship when we suffered with our family. We wondered if the new role we assumed out of necessity had somehow enriched our background stories that from which we started our lives. We became co-authors of the story. We smoothed out past wrongs; we lived up to and exceeded our call of duty. The foreign soil bore the imprint of our labour. We built up and actualized our character and potential in the process.

If the home is a place we deemed worthy to establish new roots and a place we experienced trials and triumph and a place where we feel we belong, then what stood the test to be called home? Where would this personally meaningful space be?

Esther was elated when her elderly parents considered Canada their home and she seemed to agree with their choice of home. Having experienced Cultural Revolution in China and sojourned in Hong Kong, Canada gave them a sense of stability and security that perhaps enabled them to stay steady to plant roots.

Tiffany, like Esther, regarded Canada her chosen home. She has learned the importance of matching the location with the growing understanding of her personality. It was essential for her to immerse in and enjoy this chosen home. On this chosen soil, she can live out her true self and be freed from pretence and conformity. She was able to live a liberated life that is free from being caught in a vicious cycle of the survival of the fittest.

In a casual yet matter-of-fact manner, Tammy expressed that she seemed to have left her sense of home in Hong Kong; she was unable to find a satisfactory place to establish her belongingness that is comparable to the one she had in the colonial soil. She lamented the fact that she could not fulfil her father's desire to return to his root in Hong Kong since she was already well-connected and well-established in Canada. She was well aware of the meaning of roots. It was clear in her mind that having established a social network is not growing roots.

Similar to Tammy, Tina spoke with surety that Canada was only a place to live just like staying at someone's house. Instead, she regarded Hong Kong as home. She

learned her values in Hong Kong as a child and she would be successful in that soil, colonial or not.

Number-two wondered what life would be like had she stayed in Hong Kong all along. Although she was living a comfortable life in Canada, she thought that staying in Hong Kong would have enabled her to establish her own family, thus her home. She may also have been looked upon as highly educated and been regarded as middle or upper social class. Notwithstanding her level of education and cultural fluency in Canada, her personal and career advancement was restricted by the glass ceiling – a form of discrimination that is encountered by first generation immigrants.

#### *Friendship and Relationship – Desire for Intimacy*

Growing up as teenagers in Hong Kong, we accepted friends and other close relationships as a vital and integral part of us. We grew in the knowledge of ourselves when we knew others and were known by them intimately. Our lives spilt over to each other's. Friendship and relationship came to us naturally from within the family, extended family, in the cultural and social community. Friendship sprang up in the mundane of our lives without us going out of our way to find it or intentionally compromising our differences. Friendship flourished effortlessly and spontaneously; a sense of closeness, oneness and bonding transcended differences in personality. We were fused in mind and heart in an unspoken camaraderie.

#### *Knowing Friends*

Tammy portrayed vividly the quiet understanding she shared with her friends as a teenager in Hong Kong. She and her friends regarded each other as “brothers” (□ □ □ □), an expression that is used to describe a bonding and loyalty among friends

that transcends activities and words. Such intimate knowing enabled us to expand ourselves when we knew others and were known by them intimately. We became an enlarging person that encompassed the shared characteristics of a group. We became both a part and an extension of the group to which we felt we belonged. Perhaps this is a portrayal of a collectivistic spirit. We shared honour, shame and duty with the group and we also reflected the shape of the group.

The brotherly bonding Tammy experienced was cultivated by what was not spoken. The understanding was found in silence. The glue that bound friendship could perhaps be described as loyalty (□), a spirit in which we would stand by one another despite paying a high price for enduring personal suffering, and even unto death, for the preservation of friendship and the pledge for loyalty. The closest English translation that is similar to such kind of brotherly bonding (□ □ □ □) is kindred spirits. While kindred spirits speak to the sharing of thoughts and opinion in a quiet understanding, loyalty (□) expands to exemplify the spirit of perseverance when friends stood by each other even in dire circumstances.

Friends grew up alongside us; they reflected who we were. Knowing them was to know ourselves. We saw parts of ourselves in our close friends who also contributed a significant part of us. Although we were not bound by blood relations, we were bound by a trust and loyalty (□) for each other (that at its purest) not even death could separate.

#### *Knowing Those Who Came before Us*

While friends grew up alongside us, our forefathers wove their lives, stories and legacy into our lives. Knowing those who came before us, and from whom we came to exist, led us to know who we are.

Esther began addressing her personal immigration story by recounting the voyage of her forefathers who laboured and took risks during their time to pave the way for future generations. Her relationship with her forefathers bound tighter and deeper than friends. The most intimate of friends were joined by loyalty but our forefathers are vested by blood. Their glory and trials, success and failure, virtues and legacy were passed down along the line of genealogy, something that seemed intangible yet powerfully present.

Esther learned from her forefathers about careful financial and business planning, risk-taking and prudent leadership. She learned that temporary suffering, even persecution, was to be overlooked and endured without forsaking her dignity for the purpose of fulfilling a higher goal and a greater vision. Esther and her family sojourned in Hong Kong from China, after experiencing Communism and the Cultural Revolution, anticipating the right opportunity to immigrate to Canada. In her recollection of her experience in Hong Kong, Esther omitted the possible discrimination by local Hong Kong Chinese towards Mainland Chinese immigrants. Similar omission about possible tensions among community groups occurred when Esther recalled her early immigration experience in Canada.

Esther continued to live out the legacy of enduring temporary set-backs for a higher vision after she immigrated to Canada. She was challenged to choose between spending time to secure her finances and spending time to care for her son. When she was confronted to choose between being a responsible provider and responsible mother, she encountered a dilemma that was similar to her forefathers'. She was challenged to live out the legacy of her forefathers' prudent financial planning and instilling honour and virtues for the next generations. After a period of compromising both aspects in life, she

chose to change careers to spend time with her son. The temporary set-back and uncertainty in finances was to be endured for a higher vision of her son's character building.

### *Desiring Intimacy*

When we immigrated, we left our childhood friends behind. When the immediate and constant contact with them stopped, an integral part of us seemed to have been lost, as if the proverbial rug was pulled out from under our feet. We brought with us our need to know others and to be known by them intimately. We needed to be valued and accepted by them. After we steadied ourselves from the jolt of the removal of the rug, we found that a void was left in us. We tried to establish new friendships to re-create the shape of the void that our old friends left behind.

As we gingerly navigated around the new rules in friendship in the new land, we quickly realized that we were treading very unfamiliar waters. The unspoken rules around relationship and the shape of friendship were vastly different from those we used to know. As we waded through the different forms and shapes of friendship, we slowly realized that each of our attempts and the mismatch of the shape of our desire revealed to us what we valued and treasured in a relationship. We might not have recognized our own shape of desire for relating to others intimately had we not been torn from the security of our old friends.

As time went by, we gradually noticed the racial and cultural differences but our desire to know others and to be known intimately was unchanged. When we reached out to those who were of a different culture, we were discouraged by noticing an invisible wall as Tina would describe. Tina recognized this wall at her work place. She saw the

invisible wall that segregated her and other co-workers. She acknowledged the difference in language was the barricade causing the cultural chasm. Yet her effort at getting to know others and being known deeply was not in vain; she was able to establish supportive, understanding and open friendships with co-workers who were immigrants from other parts of the world. Would it be possible that our success in crossing the relational chasm was a mutual effort? By being open to know others, we would in turn be known.

We desired to know others and to be known by them deeply. In her effort at working out the differences with her friends, Tammy discovered that her new-found friendships remained superficial. She found that building friendships in this new land often involved effortful compromise and working out differences to maintain harmony and compatibility. Tammy found herself unable to foster the deep and quiet understanding she once shared with her friends in Hong Kong. Although she was aware of the void for closeness, she could offer little explanation for her failed attempts. She wanted to be known intimately yet she was not able to meet those to whom she could open her heart freely. To her, perhaps Karma played an intervening role in the coming and ending of friendship.

We desired to be welcomed and accepted with warmth. After integrating her life in England for two years prior to immigrating, Tara's first impressions with people in Canada, compared to her experience in England, were characterized by coldness and apathy. Her effort of initiating connections with others by offering her friendliness in public places, for example, smiling at people at bus stops, was met with an unmistakable cue of apathy. Although the response to Tara's effort was disappointing to her, she found

consolation in making amends with her father. Rekindling the love with members in her original family came from being in an intimate relationship with God.

We desired to conform in order to become accepted as part of the group. During the early days of immigration, Tamara lamented that no one celebrated her birthday with her. She felt that her level of significance as a worthwhile being had waned. As time went by, she connected with new friends through trying out new activities shared by her friends. Conformity seemed to give Tamara a sense of acceptance and belongingness. This was her effort to assert her significance. By conforming to her friends through activities, Tamara restored, perhaps partially, the sense of oneness and security relationships could give her.

Four vignettes of challenges in building friendships in the new country gave us a glimpse as to what life might be like as new immigrants. We struggled and fought to restore our deeper desires that were once satisfied but were no longer.

When we looked honestly and deeply into our desire to relate to others, we peeked into our desire to know others and to be known intimately. Without such knowing and relating, an insatiable void would seem to be inevitable. In our quest to find those friendships and relationships that we deemed worthy to satisfy our desire to be accepted and to be known deeply, we touched on a spot that reached down to the core meaning of our lives. Would it be possible that what we were looking for could be found outside of ourselves as much as within ourselves? As I continued to explore the lives of these women, I saw how having a relationship with our enlarging selves, the true selves and God or the way that is larger than us, would help fill the void in our hearts.

*Community – Desire to Live out the True Self*

As teenagers growing up in Hong Kong, we naturally blended into our community. It was not until many years later that we, as mature women who moved away from Hong Kong, would be able to comprehend the social tapestry of Hong Kong. Our recollections of the social milieu in Hong Kong sketched for us a community that coerced us to conform; a community that was driven by the need to survive to a point of compromising basic human integrity. We were shrouded in the fear of being taken advantage of (□ □ □).

Tiffany perhaps made the most honest and explicit remarks about her lived experience and impression of the social atmosphere of Hong Kong. Her perception of Hong Kong people was an inescapable pressure to conform, to compete and to climb the corporate ladder to a point where one's integrity was compromised. The community as an aggregate was masked in conformity as if it was in hiding and did not want to be seen. It was perhaps enslaving to think that the majority of the community seemed to be on a fast moving train. Had Tiffany remained in Hong Kong, she would have had to conform to the likeness of the life-style shared by the majority of the people not by choice but by necessity. Tiffany spoke with disdain about how she shielded herself from others and their malicious schemes. Such an environment not only discouraged trust and openness with others, it also promoted defensiveness, phoniness and emotional segregation. In contrast, Tiffany desired to live honestly and genuinely towards people in the community.

What was it that was so repulsive and tiring about having to wear a mask? Could it truly be our desire to connect with others intimately? When language and culture did not pose significant communication barriers, what was it that separated the human heart?

Number-two spoke about her hopes in acquiring a good education. In a casual and joking manner, she talked about how education would enable her to stay away from menial jobs like moving dirt. The phrase “moving dirt” was used as a colloquialism in Hong Kong that characterized unskilled and labour jobs in general. The “moving dirt” jobs in Hong Kong were considered less desirable and in between jobs for less skilled workers. In this short expression, Number-two painted for us a widely accepted view of socioeconomic stratification in Hong Kong. Such was the social mentality of the community in Hong Kong: You are what you do. Number-two spoke of a society that felt proud in the finance and commerce industry. Some professions, and perhaps some people who are in certain professions, were more esteemed than others. Number-two seemed to agree with this view until after she experienced being on the receiving end of discrimination after immigrating.

When we were preparing to immigrate to Canada, we wondered what life would be like in the new land. We looked forward to spending our lives in a society that is pure and white, with ample amount of space and resources and political security. When we began to establish and immerse our lives in this new community, we experienced discrimination, rejection, difficulties in communicating with others and fear of the unknown. Despite our initial negative experience, we chose to appreciate, accept, adapt and embrace the new society that we made our home.

We tried to relate and describe the new community we now belonged to. The new society seemed to encourage and liberate the true self that grew dormant within us. Tiffany became more confident in exercising her originality and individuality instead of resorting to conformity. Tiger found the freedom to discover and explore her creativity

and values and to express them in her own way, shape and time. In some way, we were encouraged to come out of our shell by the generous and open nature of this new society. We were able to discover, develop and blossom into our true selves.

The society in Canada seemed to liberate us; it enabled us to embrace the dark and ugly as well as the bright and endearing in us. It also facilitated the blossoming of our true selves – to trust and to appreciate our desires, to express and receive goodness and kindness from others and to yearn to know and to be known by others intimately. This true self emerged as an enlarging and deepening life that encompassed our memory and upbringing in Hong Kong. The expanded self also embraced what we appreciated in our newly-adopted community. We were transformed by enduring suffering and difficulties; this true self reflected what was true and unique to us and the kind of life we deemed meaningful.

#### *Education – Desire for an Enlarging Self*

Chinese parents are sometimes seen as a people who hold high expectations of their children's level of education and academic achievement. This claim may reflect some truth. When we were in Hong Kong, pursuing higher education, especially studying overseas, was esteemed and valued by many. Education would give us a hope for a brighter future. Education still offers a way to elevate us to a people of refinement and culture; education sets us apart.

These attitudes around education spoke the loudest in Number-two's life. Not only were education and school life a focus during the early periods of immigration, they represented a purpose and confidence that Number-two could count on to build a future. For her, obtaining a good education meant job security, obtaining respect and personal

refinement. She trusted and hoped that academic achievement would enable her to remain competitive and compatible to her non-immigrant counterparts in Canada.

When the initial excitement of immigration and adventure started to wear off, Number-two soon sensed the reality of a cold and untoward social climate in Canada. The wind of discrimination and economic recession was slowly and gradually weighing down on her hopes and the confidence she placed in education. Uncertainty and doubt overshadowed her future. Having experienced discrimination on the sheer basis of outward attributes, Number-two reflected resignedly that there was nothing else she could do but to continue to equip herself the best she knew how – acquiring a good education. Studying hard and well had become her duty and the only way out. She hoped that a good education could give her a fighting chance to survive and thrive in this new country.

In a calm and bittersweet tone, Number-two shared her experience of discrimination. However, the challenge of enduring difficulties sharpened and deepened her maturity. She compared her life as an enlarging and deepening life, like wine well aged. She, like wine, exuded fragrance, substance and body after enduring the maturing process through overcoming difficulties and suffering over time. The learning and growth she acquired through the maturing process far exceeded the value of obtaining a higher education. As for those who felt complacent a result of their academic achievement without enduring the acid test of life, Number-two looked at them with contempt. By the same token, she has developed an expanding acceptance of people who are different – people who speak with an accent or with out of the ordinary forms of expression – people she would once have discriminated against as strange and unacceptable.

Education alone was no longer enough to gain self respect and prestige among others. Through the story of Number-two, we saw a more fragrant, maturing and enlarging self come from a life tried, refined and overcome. Her capacity to show compassion to others has grown having experienced and worked through hardships and discrimination.

*Spirituality – Desire for Meaning in Life*

As we sought to satisfy our desires to belong, to know and be known intimately, to unveil our true selves and to embrace our enlarging selves, we were inadvertently drawn closer to the yearning of our hearts – to wonder if a pathway is set for our lives. We began to look beyond our physical existence to wonder what or who is governing the ebb and flow of life's challenges. Perhaps difficulties and joys in life urged us to look for meaning and growth. We stretched and strained our eyes in hope toward the possibilities that were larger than our lives; we derived meaning from our turmoil and contentment, success and failure, triumph and suffering, labour and rest and all the striving and struggling in life, relating to immigration or not.

Perhaps we pondered on the spiritual matter of life; recognizing that we were indeed not in control of our path; that there may be a way of life or some bigger and wiser being who governs the way life would turn out. Seeking and knowing the way of life seemed to satisfy our query about the reasons for our striving, struggling and staying alive. We would be appalled if the purpose of our struggles and difficulties was merely to seek a comfortable life or to survive. Even if our lives were about survival, we wondered for what cause or for whom did we strive to survive? What is life for?

Before immigration, Tammy in her young mind had a constricted view of Buddhism. Her knowledge of Buddhism was actualized and transformed by her lived experience, that is, through resolving her many life lessons during immigration. She ascribed to principles of Karma as an intervening role in governing the unfolding of events and relationships. She actively sought harmony by attuning to the flow of events. By doing so, she felt more content and accepting of the challenges in life.

The guiding force of Karma and her value of fulfilling filial piety also helped her to navigate through the intricacies of familial relationship. Choosing to perceive life through these lenses Tammy resolved to look beyond people's negative behaviour that masked their good intentions. She chose to take on a non-judgmental approach to people's actions. This approach to life yielded much grounding in knowing who she is and afforded contentment in harsh circumstances.

Just as Tammy's spiritual journey marked her attunement to the pathway of life, Tara's signified a joint-venture with the Creator of life. Tara's spiritual encounter with the Creator of life was an unexpected consequence of immigration. Her relationship with God gave her a reason to live. Walking in unison with God, finding His will and treating life's positive and negative events as lessons added meaning, vibrancy and direction to an otherwise meaningless existence.

Both Tammy and Tara's experience of spirituality spoke to their attunement and harmony with the force that is greater than physical existence. They subscribed to God or to the way outside of this earthly life as the source for meaning in their sojourn in life.

This was the lived experience of the eight participants through a collective lens of home, relationships, community, education and spirituality. How would they express their lived experience as bicultural individuals in their own shapes of Third Space?

### Third Space – The Shapes of Bicultural Identity

In a brief narration, I sketched an incomplete account of the immigration experience of eight female Chinese immigrants against the backdrop of the five salient life domains. Their lives were invested in resolving differences with others, overcoming challenging events and dealing with sufferings that came in the form of injustice, uncertainty and disappointment. Through each momentous decision in the seemingly mundane unfolding of an immigrant's life, their core personal values in the shape of their desires were transformed in the development of a more fluent bicultural identity. In the metaphor of developing a Third Space, bicultural, or perhaps personal, identity signifies the emergence of a novel dimension in life – a synergistic fruit of engaging in the process of opening up our vital core to new possibilities and new ways of life. Their fear and anxiety were echoed with joy in their personal growth and maturation.

To some, Third Space was taken as a construal process, a transforming cultural sense of belonging and searching for roots. In this light, bicultural identity can be aptly described as a process of finding the right cultural and personal fit for the constantly evolving self. Third Space may be associated with or not associated with a combination of cultural labels, metaphors or geographic location.

Having this tenacity to plough through challenges in life and re-construe them as teachers rather than enemies enabled us to extend empathy and forgiveness to ourselves and others. While suffering and injustice were not often accepted readily or with ease,

they did not always leave the spirit bitter and resentful. Rather, sufferings and hardships served as a softening, enlarging, deepening and inspirational agent to the human spirit to extend kindness to those who are hurting and who have been treated unjustly.

Presented are biographical sketches of the participants' Third Spaces: their experience of living in two cultures and their new-found identity.

*“Tammy” and the Hybrid (□ □ □ )*

Tammy initiated the subject of her cultural belonging half way into the interview. She was adamant that one of the research questions asks her whether she feels more like a Canadian or Chinese. In fact, there was not such a question in the interview protocol; she might have interpreted a different question with cultural belonging in mind. I did not correct or verify her memory at the time but found her comment intriguing. Her recollection of having this question in the protocol was revealing in and of itself; she was about to address an important aspect of her core identity. The issue of cultural belonging could possibly have been sitting in her mind for a long while; she could have been waiting and wanting to have a venue to speak the truth about herself.

She began speaking with a hint of forcefulness and determination in her tone; behind her casual, mellow and gentle demeanour, was fire in her eyes. She seized this opportunity by an eager grip as if she had been hungry to clarify and make known of her identity once and for all, perhaps to me but more so for herself.

She proceeded to describe her own version of 3rd Space (see note); she chose to paint her experience by first portraying what she is not. She resembled herself as a hybrid (□ □ □ ), a mythical being like the Kirin that does not take on the likeness of only one animal but several. She did not associate with cultural labels that make reference to

Canada, such as “Canadian” (expressed in both Cantonese and in English) or “Canadian Born Chinese.” She leapt into a chasm where she was unable to establish root in Canada and was detached from the root in Hong Kong. She was situated in a space that could be described as “in between.”

She continued to add colour to her identity in the 3rd Space by stating “I am who I am.” Geographical location and cultural influence did not define who she was. Rather, she was grounded in knowing herself. Her relationship with the world was based on her knowledge and understanding of the self. Perhaps what Tammy was describing was a congruent self – an internal alignment that everything else revolved around.

Was Tammy living in a state of confused identity by having a fragmented self and an integrated self? Could the breakdown and the transformation of cultural belongingness and self identity make the self more whole?

Tammy seemed to be communicating a newly created self in her own shape of 3rd Space. In this space, she lost her old roots yet she was grounded; she shed off pieces of her past self yet she was not lost in life but becoming more certain of who she is. What was lost seemed to have transformed and reborn into a new creation. Her enlarging self could not be contained by an existing form but continued to morph into a new being that is yet to be named. Perhaps her 3rd Space could be better described as a transforming process rather than a shape.

*“Number-two” and Maturing Wine*

Number-two’s version of the 3rd Space was full of aroma and flavour. Through out the interview, Number-two sprinkled her immigration experience with bittersweet pungency; she recognized the price for personal maturity. Looking back in her

immigration experience as a matured person, in a rather resigned tone she considered the challenges and difficulties as tools of refinement and growth. As she recalled the process of chiselling, sharpening and softening, she could almost taste the residual bitterness in her palate when life served up much uncertainty, disappointment and injustice. Although the process was tart, she could detect the sweet fragrance as she blossomed into greater maturity and was on the road to becoming a person with true confidence.

As much as she lamented the pain in the refining process, Number-two valued just as much its necessity to become a person with substance. She compared the suffering to the process of maturing wine. While she made light of her suffering, she accentuated the fruit of endurance as an esteemed quality permeated with fragrance and body like wine well aged. Without the maturing process, wine would remain to be a distasteful concoction of water and alcohol; a life untried and unexamined would remain shallow and unrefined. The maturing process through persevering and working through challenges adds depth to an otherwise ordinary and perhaps crude outlook in life.

Number-two felt ambivalent as she reflected on the value of the suffering and hardship she endured in exchange for personal growth. Yet she considered those who are content in their own ivory tower supercilious. Was the personal growth worth the suffering, and perhaps the terrors, she endured? Number-two could not decide but looked forward to the joy of growing into a person with true confidence.

To Number-two, a person with substance is difficult to conceal. Just like a good wine well aged and a flower in full blossom, so is the aroma of a person with true confidence. Number-two aspired to continue to grow into such a person; she was well aware that her immigration experience was instrumental to her growth in maturity.

Similar to Tammy's portrayal of an enlarging and more congruent self, so are the qualities of a person with true confidence. She extends her capacity to accept and respect the differences in others; she is assured of herself without compromising the value of others'; she is ready and willing to admit her inadequacies without feeling inferior. She is able to work with what life is handing her; she is not crushed under pressure and not despondent when discouraged. She garners her strength and wisdom in the acceptance of her true self – virtues, knowledge, shortcomings and inadequacies. From this genuine place is she able to extend her compassion to others and works in harmony with life's circumstances.

With a subtle hint of elation, as she puts together the meaning of true confidence, Number-two slowly came to the realization that she also possessed some of these qualities. Growth and maturity was not to be attained through education alone but to be tried and refined through hardship in life. Through this interview, Number-two took a second look at her immigration experience and took stock of her suffering and growth. As a concluding remark, she used a "Bucketful of Tears" (□ □ □ □) to sum up her immigration experience of trials with a touch of triumph. Her journey is bittersweet to its core.

#### *"Esther" and the Enlarged Life*

Esther began to describe her immigration story by re-tracing the footsteps of her great grandfather and grandfather. She told her story as if she could not have described it apart from a grand story that started three generations ago. The lives who she quietly observed from a distance intertwined with hers in the most intimate fashion. Esther's life is an extension of her forefathers'.

Esther maintained a vision that was larger than her life. Like her forefathers, she set her eyes on fulfilling higher goals and purposes to nurture honourable character and to build a brighter future for next generations. Gaining an enlarged scope of vision in life, Esther made light of their immediate and temporary setbacks in life. Personal and political persecution, financial loss and even discrimination were to be endured for the common good of the collective members in the family. Challenges and difficulties would reduce to more manageable proportions when a greater good was at stake. Her journey was piercingly bittersweet.

*“Tina” and the Rhythm in Life*

Under the shelter of a warm, supportive and harmonious family, Tina envisioned to live her life according to a life script: a pattern in life that is written in the mind of most emerging female adults. The rhythm of the script follows a widely accepted timing for school, work, marriage and childbearing. This script, however, may not be unique to the social context of Hong Kong but encompassed the universal expectations of women in most cultural settings.

Tina was driven by her desire to fulfil filial piety to her parents like a dutiful daughter would. She drew from this desire the strength in asserting herself that would go against her desire to maintain harmony; she risked confronting others. When she was confronted with a difficult decision later in her work, she wanted to experience the same drive she once had.

Tina recognized Hong Kong as her home but Canada as only a place to live. She found her root and security in Hong Kong.

What drives Tina when life is stable and secure? Could her passion in life be maintaining stability? Her journey was predictably bittersweet.

*“Tiger” and the Creative Self*

Tiger recalled her immigration experience in a chronological and matter-of-fact manner. Although she was polite and friendly, she seemed perhaps guarded before she was warming up to let me see a glimpse of her core.

Tiger was the only participant who came to Canada out of her own wish; she arranged her stay in Canada to fulfil her dreams to learn, to explore and to be creative. She was driven by her desires in a series of academic and career decisions. The disappointing reality was that when financial demand was unable to keep up with her desires, her significant relationships also grew cold. Just as dampening to her spirit was to follow a routine; it would stunt her creativity. Repetition would make her feel boxed in as if she was bent in a small space and not able to extend to the fullest (□ □ □ □ □); life would be stagnant like a pool of dead water (□ □ □ □).

She tracked and travelled through her trials and triumph. In her bicultural Third Space, she continued to fulfil her desires to expand her capacity and realize her potential as a person. Her journey was undoubtedly bittersweet.

*“Tiffany” and her True Self*

Tiffany despised the phoniness she was pressured to conform to when she was living in Hong Kong. Moving to Canada was a breath of fresh air; she did not need to put up with the pretence. She could let her real self exhale. By letting her guard down, she could then begin to value her true desires and literally start living life.

She appreciated the positive qualities in Canada. Coupled with her unmasked true self, she was able to choose for herself a suitable home that fit her personality and her desires to be unique in her genuineness.

Tiffany called Canada her home. When her heart has made Canada her new home, her actions followed. Her journey was liberating and bittersweet.

*“Tamara” and her Search for Significance*

Tamara’s carefree teenage life was cut short by immigration. She practically grew up overnight when she immigrated to Canada. She was expected to take on responsibility beyond her years. Yet her separation from familiar people who created a safe and loving environment also took away her sense of significance. She wondered if the changes in her role had brought her relationship with her family closer.

In this new land, she continued to develop into an independent young woman at her home. However, her importance at home did not compensate for the loss in friendship and sense of self. She rediscovered her sense of significance through social connections. She was restored by the camaraderie and sense of community in her friends.

Her cultural Third Space was marked by the restoration of her identity and significance in her friends. Her journey was marked by restoring her significance.

*“Tara” and the Vibrant Life*

When I met Tara at the end of a work day, I was greeted by her luminous countenance. She exuded a sense of lightness in her spirit – an effervescent yet restful spirit that gently draws and invites. There was no trace of tension or excessiveness that usually comes from a conscious effort to help, to show courtesy or to extend kindness. Hers was a quiet and comforting assurance that was not acquired; she simply was.

If it were not from her own words, I would not have guessed from her ease that she battled with emotional despair and tumultuous family relationship before arriving at her current state of contentment. Her radical transformation of the heart was almost serendipitous. Immigration opened up to her an unexpected opportunity for spirituality. Her encounter with God offered to her a doorway to a destination that matters. The ultimate accountability of her sojourn in life helped anchor and direct her to live life to the fullest.

Tara is now resolved that difficulties in family and feelings of meaninglessness in life were platforms to discover and experience a vibrant life with God. Down moments in a revived spirit can be transcended into personal growth and a closer relationship with God. Her journey was vibrantly bittersweet.

A personal and collective tapestry of eight immigrants was presented here. Their lived experience, when appreciated for its rich complexity, revealed for me how the silver and the gold threads were intricately and wittily intertwined with the dark and the unsightly. I appreciated the rich patterns of this tapestry design even more as I glimpsed the underside of the fabric.

## CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

## Process of Change in the Language of Personal Construct Theory

This study demonstrated some of the significant potential for change in engaging with life – others and events – in ROLE relationships (Leitner, 1985). ROLE relationship is based on George Kelly's Sociality Corollary that speaks to the process of understanding how others construe the world and how we interact with others based on that understanding. The process of engaging with others at an intimate level can be fulfilling yet threatening at the same time.

The process of intimate interpersonal relating as in ROLE relationships can carry functional cross-over from an interpersonal context to immigration and research process. Throughout this research process, not only did these female immigrants convey to us how they invested their lives in others, they also entrusted to us, the researcher and research team, their vital core for potential invalidation during the interview and data analysis. Their investment and risk-taking in turn transformed their perception of their past experience: who they are and how they related to others.

In response to their willingness to risk their vital processes for invalidation, we engaged and interacted with them and their stories by honouring their meaning-making process through out all stages of this research. This mutual engagement enabled us to unveil the desires of their heart through their seemingly ordinary immigration stories. By immersing in the script of their immigration experience with reverence (Leitner, 2001), much curiosity and trust of our intuition, we not only were led into the happenings of their lives, we were also invited to understand the narrators themselves by the ways they chose to respond to life.

I read and listened to their voices with an open mind; I came to understand their processes of construing the world by attempting to see the world through their eyes. By understanding their hopes, desires, fears and courage, I came to know what matters to them most. By knowing and beginning to understand how they chose to reframe their sufferings as impetus for growth and their portrayal of living out a hybridized identity, I came to comprehend through their eyes how they anticipate the future. I discovered who they are, not just what they did, but who they truly are at a deeper, richer and more authentic level. It was at this level of encounter that I met the heart and soul of a living, breathing being rather than a collection of personal facts. I can confidently say that not only was I able to behold and honour their stories reverently (Leitner, 2001) but I earned the privilege of joining in, in their construing process of their core personal values.

#### *Interpersonal and Reflexive ROLE*

A mirroring effect has been observed between participants and researcher's engagement in ROLE relationship and the ensuing development in bicultural fluency during immigration and research. While immigrants' bicultural experiences focus mainly on engaging in an interpersonal ROLE relationship in salient life domains, the researcher's bicultural fluency took on an intrapersonal or reflexive ROLE relationship during this research process. This experiential parallel speaks to the validity and vitality of ROLE relationship as exemplified in this research.

The process of conducting this study validated the versatility of the concept of ROLE relationship in understanding the process of change. Kelly (as cited in Leitner, 1985) purported in his Sociality Corollary that we manifest and maintain our deepest understanding of who we are in our being and vital processes by developing relationships

with other people. The roles we play in relation to others sustain even the most autonomic functions in life (Leitner, 1985). This suggests the importance of interpersonal ROLE relationship.

#### *Process of Interpersonal ROLE*

ROLE relationships at an interpersonal level can be used aptly in examining the process of change in immigrants in developing their bicultural identity. During immigration, immigrants invested their lives in and with people at their home, community and school; they sought to fulfil their desires to belong, to be known by others, to expand their personal capacities and to find meaning in their sojourn in life. At a micro level, in a ROLE relationship an immigrant engaged and interacted her vital core with the world – people and events that exhibit habits, traditions, beliefs and values – that are different from hers to varying degree.

Although an interpersonal ROLE relationship could foster profound connectedness, it is limited by the inevitable separateness (Leitner, 2001). Even the most extensive interpersonal ROLE relationship could only be described as two people engaging intimately in juxtaposition separated by the least distance in between. That is to say that interpersonal ROLE relationship precludes complete closeness as in a superimposed position.

#### *Process of Reflexive ROLE*

Regarding this last note about two people or entities engaging in a ROLE relationship in juxtaposition, there is an intrapersonal parallel that signifies a segregation of mental or psychological components within a person. During this research, I, the principal researcher, engaged in an intrapersonal or reflexive ROLE similar to the

interpersonal ROLE relationship I established with the eight female immigrants and the research team. My reflexive engagement with myself and the research team was particularly instrumental to two synergistic fruits of ROLE relationship: first, the development of bicultural fluency, and second, the transcendence of personal impasses. These two facets of ROLE engagements were echoed by the immigrants' development of a bicultural identity and re-construal of sufferings during immigration. My reflexive experience helped illustrate how cultural frame switching and constructive alternativism facilitated the development of a hybridized bicultural Third Space.

*Hybridized identity and cultural frame switching.* In this study, the development of bicultural identity in immigrants was often expressed as a hybrid, as in "Tammy's" description of her Third Space. The metaphor of hybrid signifies the internalizing and identifying with more than one culture having interacted with a second culture. During the translation and transcription data processing, I was required to perform a prolonged cultural frame switching between the Chinese and Canadian frames. This process shed light into the process of developing bicultural identity that Berry and other recent bicultural researchers (e.g. Hong et al., 2000, 2006) attempted to explore. My frame switching experience can answer two questions: What is the experience of integrating separate cultural frames within a person? Would a superimposed ROLE relationship be possible if done reflexively?

The simultaneous translation and transcription data processing was marked by intimate engagement as in ROLE relationship between my linguistic and contextual knowledge of both the Chinese and Canadian cultural frames. Prior to the translation and transcription process, these two cultural frames were distinctly separate in my mind. This

process required me to listen to Chinese audio narratives and to translate them into English in a Canadian context. These two frames required that I switched back and forth several times for verification of aptness of the translation and transcription. Experientially, I placed the Chinese and English content in juxtaposition. During this phase of data processing, speaking English had become increasingly effortful. After completing the translation and transcription process, I noticed that I was able to integrate the Chinese and Canadian verbal, contextual and conceptual materials in my mind without having to switch frames. In short, I was able to superimpose the content in both the Chinese and Canadian frames. Experientially, I can visualize an enlarging new cultural space that was diminished in scope because of the engagement but complemented, integrated and encompassed the original cultural frames. I call this new mental capacity “Third Space” to signify its novel nature. The emergence of Third Space was also accompanied by the return of my English fluency.

*Bittersweet and Constructive Alternativism.* Another bicultural quality seen in the results was portrayed in immigrants’ perception of their immigration experience as bittersweet. While the hybrid metaphor and bicultural identity signified the internalizing of two or more cultures, the bittersweet metaphor represented the changing construal of past events. “Number-two” held this view of life as she compared her immigration journey as a process of maturing wine. She appreciated the refining and sharpening quality of suffering as an essential element for personal growth. She overcame her “terrors” (Leitner, 1985) of engaging intimately with others by reopening and reconsidering the meaning of relational injuries, social injustice and existential fear. This

process ascribes to the concept of constructive alternativism when “previous interpretations of past events were subject to revision” (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2004).

Early on in the data collection process, I allowed fear to take over me and I refused to examine some unhealed relational injuries. I carefully guarded the wounded parts of myself from others. My unwillingness to accept my wounds put me into an outsider stance as a Canadian researcher eavesdropping as the participants were reconstructing their immigration experience. In essence, I was attempting to engage in a ROLE relationship as an observer, expecting the participants to open up the core matters of their lives without the same willingness to open mine. I was unwilling to be a co-author. Experientially, I felt as though I hit a wall during the interview; my outsider stance distanced myself from the narrating process of the participants. The way I interacted with the participants became increasingly contrived and effortful. I became a research stranger (Leitner, 1999a) who resorted to doing research and performing interviews rather than being present and co-creating the process with the participants.

With much frustration with myself and despite the terrors, I was determined to examine the areas that I so carefully kept hidden. I engaged with my emotional pain that was imposed on the integrity of my personhood. I began to realize that I was shielding my shameful self behind a professional front and perfectionism hoping that performance would redeem and reclaim my worthiness. Having faced the terrors of my wounds I began to notice and embrace the decency of my core being. My wounds were no longer shameful but an enabling agent to nurture compassion toward myself. In this short period of self-reflection, I was able to re-engage, re-construe and integrate a shunned aspect of

myself by revising the previous meaning of my wounds. My emotional injuries were indeed bittersweet.

To summarize the versatility of ROLE relationship, some of the processes of this study seen in the previous descriptions helped illustrate the experiential dimension of ROLE between researcher and participants, immigrants and second culture, researcher and data, Chinese and Canadian culture frames, and researcher and unexamined aspects of herself. Leitner (1999a, 2001) also elaborated on the experiential aspects of ROLE in a therapeutic setting. While the clinical implications of ROLE are beyond the scope of this study, I could confidently focus on the inspirational quality of ROLE relationship.

#### *Inspirational Quality of ROLE*

The vitality of the process of ROLE relationship led us to the inspiring quality of interpersonal ROLE; it guided us to reflexivity and personal growth to contemplate greater possibilities. Leitner (1999a) commented that reflexivity and personal growth remain central processes in the therapist in order to engage optimally with the clients. Like the co-creating process in therapy, the process of engaging in research should be a mutually contributory endeavour between the participants and the researcher. While the participants were re-construing their world, the researcher could not avoid re-examining her own construal. Thus, both parties are evolving. This mutuality in the process of change rang true in me and in the participants. As the participants formulated new awareness, thus new meaning, of their lives in the research process, I was also urged to examine in comparable depth my internal experience that led to a more congruent, genuine and integrated self. As I created a space for the participants to re-construe their immigration experience and joined them in their re-construing process, they became open

to consider the value of their immigration stories. Such is a pivotal impact and an experiential marker of co-creating meaning in narratives – both the participants and the researcher acknowledged their share of contribution and effort in this research process.

### *The Desires of the Heart and ROLE*

I would like to make a final note on what can be made out of the findings and processes of this study in relation to ROLE relationship. In this study, I used ROLE relationship as a window to the dynamics of the process of change. In honouring relational depth in the research process I modeled how to relate to others so to satisfy the core desires for belonging, intimacy and meaning in life derived from the research findings. The participants, who were once strangers in this foreign land, enabled me to see glimpses of their longing and effort to connect with others not just to fulfil socially-defined roles but to touch their vital core and inspire them to search for purposes in sufferings and wounding. By listening closely to the desires of their hearts, I peeked into a window through which I caught a glimpse of their process of making meaning in life through relationships. I wonder what loneliness and emptiness would enshroud those who lack this essential aspect of human experience.

### Implications for Research on Biculturalism

This study was one of the first attempts in bicultural research to look closely at the processes of how individuals interact with others in cultural and personal dimensions of life. Through an experiential lens, we magnified for the bicultural research community the process rather than the outcome that researchers are increasingly seeking to enquire (Hong et al., 2000). An Experiential Constructivist approach to bicultural research can begin to bring to light the complexity of making meaning during intercultural interaction.

To address a greater recognition of the intricacy in interacting with a second culture and to supplement the lack of uniformity in the theoretical basis to intercultural research, Boski (2008) attempted to broaden the conceptualization of integration. His overview of bicultural conceptualization also enables us to position our study in the landscape of cross-cultural, cultural and bicultural research.

Boski's review of existing literature helped summarize five conceptualizations for integration. Berry (2003) introduced integration in his bidimensional acculturation framework as a desirable psychological strategy; he suggested that an overall preference and attitude for living in both cultures signifies integration. Subsequent researchers recognized the emergence of a third value as an indicator to fusion of two cultures. Other researchers viewed integration as conduct of survival in response to the rules governing the public and private life domains. More recent bicultural researchers attempted to link cultural identity with cognitive styles. The development of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) further substantiates that a harmonious, as opposed to a conflicting, identity and cognitive style combination would indicate greater bicultural competence. Lastly, researchers began to recognize that bicultural integration may simulate marginalization when intercultural permeability takes precedence over cultural identification.

Researchers who adopted any of these streams of bicultural research largely employ a quantitative method to understand intricate bicultural processes, for example, transforming identity and developing coping strategies during immigration. On a paradigm level, those who embark on a quantitative approach assume that rich cultural processes and experience can be reduced to small and discrete items, which can be further deduced to objective realities by numeric measurements. We, however, argue that

engaging in a reductionist approach to examine intercultural processes may yield partial understanding to human processes; a constructivist approach to research can be complementary to this incompleteness.

Embracing an experiential and constructivist aspect to enquiring complex human dynamics like bicultural engagement and identity development, we can offer the bicultural research community an elaborated look at how events were construed through the eyes of the meaning-makers in a personally significant way. For example, an individual who obtains a low index on the BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) can be translated into someone who experiences internal struggles to cope with competing and conflicting cultural and personal values to pursue harmony with others and contentment with the self. By adopting a narrative approach to research, we can begin to make explicit the process of how a person transforms sufferings into exuberating growth.

The emergence of a third value was an indication of fusion between two cultures without value conflicts, as suggested by researchers who adopted a cognitive-evaluative merger of two cultures approach. Our biculturalism study can elaborate on the personal experience of developing and living in this third fusion zone – namely Third Space in our study. However, the experience of living in this Third Space did not exclude value conflict but encompasses both contentment and tension as a continual interactive process. Conflict, tension and harmony were found to be a natural discourse of human experience; our meaning-making processes are by no means static but are constantly evolving.

The characteristics of Third Space resonate with Bennett and Bennett's (as cited in Boski, 2008) conceptualization of constructive marginality as a bicultural individual transcends and permeates among cultural boundaries. An example of cultural detachment

as a new found identity can be seen in Tammy's rendition of being a hybrid (□ □ □). She did not identify with any cultural group but was grounded in herself.

Arendt-Toth (as cited in Boski, 2008) suggested that we engage different coping strategies according to the demands in the public and private arenas. We believe that human life and experience is constantly changing; interpersonal relating is bound to be messy and complex. An Experiential Constructivist bicultural research approach offered a holistic view to human development and experience. Our study helped elaborate on the experiential cross-over in psychological life domains; a holistic view can aptly complement the effort of a compartmentalized examination of human behaviour.

In sum, our study can offer the research community a broadening view of biculturalism based on an Experiential Constructivist approach to research. We believe that this approach not only can enrich our understanding of what has changed during bicultural engagement but also the processes and experience of being transformed by interacting with other cultures. By engaging with the participants in their meaning-making process, we, as researchers and fellow partakers in life, were rolling ourselves with them in the mire of "the real complexities of life" (Boski, 2008, p. 152).

#### Implications for Counselling Psychology

The results of this study suggested that aside from dealing with settlement issues in the home, community and school, immigrants sought to fulfil their deeper desires such as sense of belonging, intimate relating, uncovering the true self and making meaning in life. This study may shed light for counsellors who would like to help immigrants uncover primary desires. These desires could be a driving force that is sometimes under the guise of practical need or even physical ailments. Although immigrants may not be

able to identify or verbalize their deeper yearnings, counsellors can be conscious of immigrants' emotional interpersonal connection as a potential source of ineffective coping in life.

The understanding of desiring and fearing closeness as essential human conditions can help counsellors to extend unconditional positive support to immigrants. While the counsellors may not share comparable cultural familiarity or compatible values with the immigrants, they can share an openness to seek an understanding of how people resolve tension that comes from approach and avoidance. Affirmation of this process and experience may help validate immigrants as worthy, valuable human beings.

This study may also open a doorway of hope for both counsellors and immigrants to see what change and wellness may look like. Positive change and wellness could mean developing resilience in working through difficulties and reframing suffering as opportunity for growth. This may give counsellors and immigrants a refreshing look into their current challenges and previous failures.

#### Limitations and Future Research

Given the limited time and resources for a Master's thesis and the richness of the participants' stories, I was unable to fully explore all cultural and personal significance conveyed by the participants. Only the most salient aspects of the participants' stories were reflected in the results. The intentional omission of the less central materials was by no means an indication of lesser value. Some of these materials were incorporated and integrated as background information during data analysis and in the results section. Future bicultural researchers may want to consider conducting a case study so that the cultural and personal nuances could be better attended to.

With the goal of achieving a functional equivalent during the translation and transcription data, I was unable to avoid losing some culturally and contextually significant data in translation. For example, colloquial expressions that are heavily influenced by the mass media or pop culture would not carry a cultural equivalence once they are taken out of the context. Once the context is removed from the language, the words themselves sometimes do not convey the intended meaning.

Similar to the loss of cultural content during translation, the relational dimension of the interview was unable to be fully conveyed in the transcription. Nonverbal cues in the relationship and the atmosphere and the venue ambience were lost in the transcription. My ability to relate to the participants in an engaging and respectful manner perhaps was directly related to the quality of the data. To compensate for this shortcoming, nonverbal and circumstantial information was taken into consideration during data analysis.

While I acknowledged how developmental stages in emerging adulthood may play a significant role in identity development, I chose to focus on the intrapersonal and experiential dimension of bicultural identity development. Perhaps the developmental aspects of identity formation could be addressed in future research studies.

Similar to our limited coverage on developmental stages, our elaboration of the lived experience of developing a hybridized identity in bicultural persons was only partial. Future research studies on the process and lived experience of hybridization could be considered.

## Conclusion

Adopting an Experiential Constructivist approach to bicultural research enabled me to successfully elicit the process of core personal values change during immigration. By honouring people's stories, I was bringing to light implicit values and desires embedded in their lived experience. The process of paying reverence to people (Leitner, 2001) often requires the listener, as much as the speaker, to wade through the richness of the stories in order to reach down to the matters of the heart. Without such willingness to work through thick, value-laden descriptions, I would not have earned the moral right to see glimpses in the core.

To echo Boski's (2008) observation, I concur that engaging in a second culture is a complex process. With the help of Personal Construct Theory, the concept of Sociality and ROLE relationships (Leitner, 1985), I was given a language to aptly communicate the intricacy of the interpersonal, intrapersonal and communal dynamics. To some immigrants, becoming fluent as a bicultural may signify the emergence of a new Third Space. This new cultural space encompasses the experience of living in two or more cultures. To others, life as a bicultural person suggests a continual process of making new meaning in past events. Out of this re-construing process comes a greater understanding of the self, an increasing compassion to others and an expanding capacity to embrace the unknown. The passage to this enlarging self is to turn inward and trust where the desires of the heart will lead.

As a final note to this study, I would like to acknowledge the changes I have undergone through engaging with the research team and immersing in the participants' life stories. I have become more attuned to listening to the underlying messages – the

desires and pain in others – as if I have grown new auditory nerves in my heart; I listen more reverently. I let my intuition guide me through this research process as if I have revived my trust in my once wounded self; I live more authentically. I allow life to slow down so to nurture greater trust and emotional depth in relationships; I relate more compassionately. I savour the process of engaging with others academically and intellectually as well as emotionally and soulfully. This study was indeed process-focused to its core.

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## APPENDIX A

## Sample Questions for Use in the Interview Process

**Immigration experience:**

To begin our discussion, could you please give a summary of your experience of moving from Hong Kong to Canada?

Do you recall how the idea of immigrating to Canada came up (for you)? How was that decision finally made?

Some people experience surprises, difficulties, or welcoming events during their immigration and during the adjustment process. Can you please describe any surprises you encountered? Any difficulties? Anything that helped you feel satisfied about immigrating?

Some people run into important changes in family, friends, or work during immigration. I just want to check with you to see if anything like that happened to you. And some people comment on changes in their sense of personal identity during immigration and adjustment periods. Have you noticed any shifts in your sense of who you are as a person?

**Moving into significant values:**

Focusing (or thinking back) on the time of your transition from Hong Kong to Canada, was there a major chapter in your life that stands out for you? What makes it stand out?

From the people you know, who would be a good example of someone having the qualities or kind of character you value? What do you respect about that person?

You have mentioned some challenges that came up in your experience. How could the situation have been better? Why is that kind of situation better from your point of view? Can you describe another situation that supports that specific value?

When you look back now, was moving to Canada a positive experience for you? What has been positive or negative?

**Seeking similarities and differences**

When you look back to the time before immigrating to Canada, would you consider a specific value an important value in your life at that time? Does that value hold the same importance now as it did then?

When you look back, in what ways did you hope to live out specific values before immigrating? How are these ways of living out your values similar or different to the ways you live now?

**Concluding questions**

Have you noticed how those changes have come about in your life? How have you maintained stability in your core values?

If you were to choose a word to describe the changes you have made, what would that be?

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

**Trinity Western University**  
Graduate Program in Counselling Psychology  
7600 Glover Road, Langley, B.C., V2Y 1Y1

Date:

**Project Title:** Biculturalism and Core Values among Female Immigrants from Hong Kong

**Principal Investigator:**

Name: Ming Chau  
Department: Counselling Psychology  
Contact info: (604) 513-2034 or HKValueStudy@gmail.com

**Thesis Supervisor:**

Name: Dr. Marvin McDonald  
Department: Counselling Psychology  
Contact info: (604) 513-2034 or mcdonald@twu.ca

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**Purpose:**

You are invited to participate in this study to explore core personal values and adapting to your life in Canada. My goal is to talk with you about how you make sense of your immigration experience.

Your experience and opinions shared in this study can contribute to knowledge of multiculturalism and may help foster greater sense of community among Chinese in Vancouver.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to participate, I will arrange a time with you for an interview that takes about 1½ to 2 hours. Subsequent to the interview, you will be contacted via e-mail or phone to clarify your responses in the interview for the purpose of analysis.

**Potential Benefits and Discomforts:**

For some participants in projects like this, the reflection and insights gained in the interview can help them to appreciate accomplishments made in adapting to a new culture. Due to the exploratory nature of the questions, some people may experience some psychological discomfort about sensitive or confusing topics. Should you feel any

discomfort, distress or have any concerns anytime during the study, please feel free to inform the interviewer or anyone on the research team. If you have any ethical questions regarding this study, you may contact Ms. Sue Funk in the Office of Research and Faculty Development at Trinity Western University at (604) 513-2142 or [sue.funk@twu.ca](mailto:sue.funk@twu.ca).

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity will be kept in strict confidence within the limits of the law. Confidentiality may be breached in cases of suspected child abuse, if someone's life is in danger, or research records are subpoenaed by a court of law. Upon signing of the Informed Consent Form, you will be assigned a pseudonym, which will be used in all written and electronic records.

The written and electronic records that contain research data will be kept at a secured location when the research is in progress. Only the research team will have access to those records. All records will be stored in a locked cabinet at the Department of Counselling Psychology at Trinity Western University after the study is completed. The information you provide will be used for research and educational purposes only.

**Compensation:**

Upon signing this Informed Consent Form, you will be given a \$20 T&T Supermarket as a token of gratitude for participating in this study.

**Consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study and that your responses may be put in anonymous form and kept for further research use after the completion of this study.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature of Principal Investigator

---

Date

- Yes, I would like to be informed about the result of this study.  
I would like to be contacted by:

---

- No, I do not wish to be informed about the result of this study.

## APPENDIX C

### Debriefing Script

Thank you for taking part in this study to examine core personal values in women who have immigrated from Hong Kong. The experience and personal insights you shared will be used to enhance the understanding of people with your background. The knowledge obtained may enable helping professionals to deliver more effective service to immigrants in future.

Please be ensured that you are welcome contact me at any time to clarify any questions regarding this study or to ask questions about the interview process. I will try my best to answer any queries arisen from your experience. Contact information is available on the informed consent form.

If you would like to be notified about the result of this study, please indicate so by checking the appropriate box at the bottom of the informed consent form.

Once again, I thank you for sharing your insights with me in this study.

APPENDIX D

Confidentiality Agreement

**Trinity Western University**  
Graduate Program in Counselling Psychology  
7600 Glover Road, Langley, B.C., V2Y 1Y1

Date

Name of Translation Partner

Re: Biculturalism and Core Values among Female Immigrants from Hong Kong

Thank you for your participation in the translation verification process. To preserve the confidentiality of the interviewee, please do not share any information about the interview with anyone. If you recognize the voice of the interviewee, please stop listening to the recording immediately and contact Ming Chau.

Please do not make copies of the audio CD and the paper transcript.

Your help is much appreciated!

Ming Chau  
chau\_ming@hotmail.com  
(604) 250-8405

I agree to this confidentiality agreement.

---

Translation Partner

## APPENDIX E

## Translation Verification Instruction

Core Personal Values in Female Hong Kong Immigrants

By Ming Chau

Tel: (604) 250-8405 Email: chau\_ming@hotmail.com

M.A. in Counselling Psychology

Trinity Western University

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this exercise is to verify and ensure the authenticity of the translation of a segment of an interview. The goal is to preserve the clarity and originality of a Cantonese interview after translating into English text; to point out anything that is lost in translation.

**Instruction:**

1. You are given an audio CD of an interview conducted in Cantonese and a 10-minute transcript of the interview in English.
2. Listen to the audio interview (in Cantonese) and read the transcript (in English) simultaneously.
3. Mark on the transcript the word, phrase or expression that you think could be conveyed in a better / alternative way in order to preserve the literal meaning expressed by the speaker based on a Chinese perspective.
4. Provide an alternative translation.
5. After each paragraph (unit of meaning), rate the level of clarity / authenticity (see below for rating scale) of the translation compared to the original interview.

**1 – Same:** translation is basically the same as the original interview

**2 – Something is missing but no alternative:** translation is basically good enough but something is missing yet no alternative can be provided

**3 – English alternative that is as equally as good:** there is an alternative that could express the meaning just as equally as well

**4 – English alternative that is slightly better:** there is an alternative that could express the meaning better

**5 – Strong difference:** there is a strong difference between the translation and the original interview

6. Lastly, please identify those English phrases, thoughts and expressions in the transcript that are lost in the process of translating. That is to say, those Cantonese expressions that are not fully and sufficiently represented into English transcript.

## APPENDIX F

**Interpretive Transcription & Adaptation Strategies:  
Bilingual Transcription Protocols**

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**Project protocols**

*Intentional strategies are beneficial for identifying culturally embedded or distinctive experiences/frames in bilingual qualitative research. Interview protocols, team-based debriefing, research journals, personal researcher debriefing, informant consultation, and social contextualization all offer practice resources. Because salient dimensions of many participants' experiences are unspoken, tacit, or deeply contextual, interview practices, translation-interpretation protocols, and analysis strategies are prudently adapted to address unspoken meanings. Research strategies and paradigms with particular relevance to psychological mode of multilingual &/or multicultural investigation include Personal Construct Theory, voice-centred feminist inquiry, hermeneutic versions of grounded theory, socio-cultural models inspired by Vygotsky, dialogal phenomenology, and many variations of ethnography. Typically research teams are required to tailor strategies to research questions and to community contexts for investigation.*

Translation & interpretation process outline: Formulated for English-language-based research team activities

1. Focal translation direction: Source-language(s) to English as target-language, grounded in cyclical- and back-translation sensibilities
2. Language proficiency profiles: For much cultural psychology research, most research team members will contribute by drawing upon first-hand experience residing in multiple communities differing in language and culture, at least for substantial periods of sojourns. Presumably, sufficient team member competencies will involve (a) bilingual and bicultural experience involving source-language culture and communities relevant to the domains under investigation, and (b) English fluency in the domains under investigation.
3. Data gathering: The team will establish interviewer training, strategies for recruitment of participants, recording and data protection procedures, ethical resources for supporting cultural sensitivity and respect, liaison with relevant community settings as needed, and so on. Research team debriefing of data gathering activities (interviews, focus groups) helps guide and contextualize initial translation processes.
4. English "draft" reviews: "inquiry phase" (target-language [English] & bilingual review – potential development of a "glossary" for guiding translation with topic-salient vocabulary & context descriptions; protocol tailoring in collaboration with

research team members; and protocol adaptation to project contexts & situational developments.

5. Translation partner(s): English–Source-language bilinguals with comparable language proficiencies to the interviewer(s) are recruited to review portions of English draft transcripts
6. Version comparisons & transcription reviews: the generation of edited versions of English drafts are reviewed by bilinguals and/or English-fluent reviewers
7. Revising English transcripts: employing bilingual &/or target-language editors
8. Cultural reviews: additional target-language-fluent researchers explore possible gaps in translation and transcription process in consultation with translators

*Multilingual Interviewing & Transcription: Outlines for protocol development*

1. Language proficiency profiles: for interviewers, participants, research team members
2. Cultural familiarity profiles: for all project stakeholders, including resources for sustaining respect & ethical reflection
3. Research Team preparations: training, multicultural engagement & debriefing, outlining research journal protocols, team-building
4. Data gathering protocols: identifying focal priorities for inquiry, social ecology of project, establishing recording practices human resource access, including bilingual speakers & cultural consultants with a range of backgrounds; examine relational profiles & formats for recruitment & data gathering;
5. Translation protocols: outlining language profiles for interview recordings; interpretation-translation strategy design; language partner & checking processes; cultural review processes; process debriefing & adaptations; design interactions among interpretive levels & cross-checking opportunities;
6. Translation strategies: Experience-far translation strategies emphasize socially common meanings with wide degrees of familiarity among bilinguals and both source- and target-language communities. These approaches often emphasize formal contexts, stranger-based interactions, and larger numbers of research participants and research team members. Experience-near translation strategies emphasize contextually rich, “thick” descriptions of meanings. These approaches often emphasize extensive immersion in data protocols, focused consideration of implicit meanings, and depth of analysis. [cf. Geertz, 1973]

*Cultural Review Processes in Interview-based Bilingual Studies*

A key purpose of a “cultural review” in qualitative research is to identify passages in an interview that reflect culturally distinctive influences on discussions. Some cultural distinctives are obvious through the use of specific vocabulary (in either language) or other explicit references to cultural values or expectations (by the Participant or the Interviewer or both). Other cultural distinctives are less explicit and can be identified by researchers and other reviewers as “unspoken” assumptions or tacit values as they are reflected in the interview conversation. The following steps outline two procedures for cultural review that identifies and rates the distinctiveness of passages in interviews for a

bilingual study. An extensive protocol for cultural review was reviewed in this study but was not fully implemented (McDonald, 2007).

*Translation & Interpretation Gaps in Bilingual Interview Transcription*

In monolingual interviews, many kinds of communication gaps or misunderstandings can emerge between interviewer and interviewee. Topical variability in levels of awareness is quite common (e.g., many adults in Canada are more familiar with discussing their occupational activities than they are their personal philosophy of life). Research topics that unfamiliar as foci of conversation can lead to misunderstandings. Social distance and differences of many kinds can lead to gaps through unfamiliarity with specific social contexts (e.g., job experience, community settings, social class). Topical constraints can also foster communication gaps when cannons of respect or politeness limit directness with which certain topics can be address (including socially undesirable topics, intimate topics, and so on). Interviewer training, research practices such as confidentiality, and community support are typical resources employed to increase access to life experiences that would be impolite or disrespectful to address in public relationships. Gaps can also emerge between interviewer-interviewee conversations and transcript readers in relation to transcription conventions as well as all social distance factors. In many Canadian research settings, transcription conventions allow for minimal degrees of omission or other “editing” of interview content in terms of (a) relevance to the research question, or (b) maintenance of confidentiality. The greater fidelity sometimes offered by video recordings of interviews in relation to audio recordings relates to relevance of greater access to more paralinguistic features of interview conversations. Transcription practices can allow for the incorporation paralinguistic elements of interview process of either recording-based or interviewer-memory-based observations. When multilingual or multicultural contexts emerge in research interviews, cultural and linguistic diversity can exaggerate and/or ameliorate such influences. Multicultural research teams typically develop protocols for addressing all such concerns.

It is helpful to illustrate some of the ways that bilingual research can take into account pertinent facets of interpretation, translation, and transcription. In oral interpretation, gaps can emerge in relation to constraints of “real time” interpretation, for instance, when extended explanations of nuance or context disrupt a flow of communication. Text-focused translation gaps emerge at many levels, including distinctive vocabulary in either language, losses emerging from implied sonic nuances (e.g., when translating sonically distinctive vocabulary, tones in tone languages, or dynamics of stress patterns), grammatical ambiguity within or between languages (e.g., ambiguity of singular/ plural in English second person pronoun – “you”; loss/ambiguity of status / relationship markers when omitting honorifics), and so on. Monolingual transcription protocols also vary in the degrees of emphasis on discursive patterns (stress patterns, gestural accompaniments, timing and pauses in speech, etc.) and semantic patterns (e.g., “smoothing” of transcripts to make the contextually-grounded meanings more readily evident to a reader of the transcript). Any or all of these facets of bilingual or multilingual may involve differing degrees of cultural salience for various combinations of research questions, interview settings, social environment, and

researchers. In principle, research teams formulate and adopt interpretation, translation, &/or transcription practices that establish priorities among these various considerations in relation to the focal research question.

*Tailoring Translation, Interpretation, and Transcription procedures*

In the present study, the methodology chapter outlines a number of strategies implemented to address these sets of concerns. For instance, the translation-transcription process was conducted in phases, “literal” translation, “functionally equivalent” translation, and identifying of “losses” in translation. Translation partners were recruited during the early phases of translation-transcription to help guide the process. Research team discussions addressed both principles and content of the translation process. Elements of cultural gaps emerging from the translation process were revisited at several points throughout the analysis process.

An example of translation gaps would be 随机应变 : “to remain flexible and devise a suitable solution when problems arise.” The origin of this particular expression comes from a well-known martial arts novel series written by a contemporary Hong Kong author in the 1950s, Jin Yong (金庸). His novels are still widely read and made into TV series today. The expression describes how a person is wise to remain pliable and flexible when combating her enemies using martial arts. When she is attacked with style that employs strikes with fists or feet, she would observe the strike and deflect it in a way that is most effective and usually in the most energy-conserving manner. Brute force may not always be the most effective in combat but remaining flexible and clever in using energy wisely may help overcome enemies with the least effort. When the cultural origins of the expression are removed, the rich sense of wisdom in using soft power is distorted. Certainly insights from Western traditions reflected in the slogan “brains over brawn” celebrate the capacity of wisdom and cleverness to triumph over brute force. And although Eastern traditions of martial arts have become familiar to people around the world, the distinction between “soft” and “hard” martial arts traditions is not widely understood. Furthermore, the cultural transformation of Eastern martial arts traditions into “sports” in Canada, the USA, and Europe, for instance, tends to compartmentalize martial arts practices, losing the holistic sensibilities of character development, way of life, and spiritual maturity inherent to many Eastern traditions of martial arts. In contemporary Hong Kong and presumed in the work of Jin Yong (金庸), this broader, whole-person understanding of human nature is evoked by the phrase 随机应变. Thus even attempts in English translations to draw upon shared metaphors such as “the strength of the willow” tends to seriously distort the significance of the phrase in Chinese, and specifically in the context of the interviews conducted for this study.

Another illustration of important translation gaps arises in the expression 乡下来的 : “someone who came from Shung Tak in the Province of Guangdong.” When the term is pronounced in Cantonese, it sounds like 乡下来的, which means “someone who is accommodating and easy going.” The former expression (乡下来的) is used phonetically in a humorous way and the humour relies directly on pronunciation. An accurate

semantic translation of the term conveys neither the intended humour nor meaning of the phrase as used in the interview.

In both of these examples, it is both possible and necessary for translation protocols to require the insertion into transcripts of the kinds of cultural-linguistic glosses and explanations that identify phonetic humour, unspoken or implied meanings, relational dynamic conveyed by honorifics, and other contextually embedded meanings. Such glosses help to identify in the transcript those features of each interview that are not directly translatable into English. For the purposes of qualitative research, however, adding glosses and notes into transcripts, regardless of the basic intellectual and historical adequacy, does not suffice to convey the experience-near richness required for effectively conducting bicultural interviews or for bilingual/ bicultural analysis of interview protocols. Identifying translation losses helps research teams both to maintain cultural grounding for conducting analyses and to help evaluate potential qualifications on results and interpretations. When appropriate, cultural review protocols can be developed for systematic clarification of culturally distinctive dimensions of results or of research processes. The existence of translation gaps is one important criterion to consider when tailoring translation practices or designing cultural review protocols.

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