Chinese Immigrants' Experiences of Divorce in New Zealand: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

While there have been many studies on the post-immigration adjustment of Chinese immigrants and many studies of divorce in both Western countries and China, little research has been conducted on the divorce experiences of Chinese immigrants. This study investigates the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants who live in New Zealand. It includes two projects – an interview study with Chinese immigrants who separated and/or divorced in New Zealand, and a study with Chinese professionals who work with Chinese immigrants. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 Chinese immigrants and 12 professionals. Ground theory methodology was used to guide the data analysis and the constant comparative method was employed to analyse the data. A number of themes emerged across the two research projects. Based on the findings, a proposed model to represent the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand was developed.

The results suggested that Chinese immigrants experienced serious difficulties in adjusting to life in New Zealand, including the inability to work in a previous profession. They employed a number of strategies, such as upgrading job skills, working at non-skilled jobs, and resorting to living as an astronaut family, to cope with these difficulties. These adjustment and coping experiences, including post-immigration challenges, the loss in social status, and the astronaut arrangement, appeared to put serious pressure on their marriages and increased marital conflicts. Despite facing serious marital problems, many Chinese couples felt it was difficult to make the decision to divorce because of their Chinese values around family and negative views of divorce. In this regard, the acceptance of divorce in New Zealand and the availability of social benefits for single parents appeared to let them feel more comfortable to make the decision in New Zealand.

The results also suggest that the separation created more difficulties for the Chinese immigrants. These included further loss of financial security, having to cope alone with their own adjustment difficulties and parental responsibilities, and a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. To cope with these difficulties, separated parents who remained in New Zealand focused on the well-being of their children. This child-centred adjustment approach appeared to help them manage their daily life difficulties and co-parenting. It also appeared to help them in accessing support and developing an identity as a self-reliant single parent. Overall, although marital breakdown brought Chinese immigrants persistent financial difficulties and in many cases a sense of failure, their success in meeting their children's needs and in developing a single parent lifestyle appeared to help them achieve a sense of self-growth.

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to existing studies on the post-immigration adjustment, particularly marital and family adjustments, of Chinese immigrants and on divorce in the general population in both Western countries and China. The limitations of the study, along with future research endeavours, are also discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

An Overview

In the current increasingly interconnected world, international migration has become a reality that touches almost all the countries on the earth. According to the latest international migration report by United Nations Population Division (UNPD, 2016), the number of people who live in a country or region other than their country of birth reached 244 million in 2015, which represented 3.3% of the total population in the world.

China has a long history of emigration, with a total number of 60 million Chinese now living overseas (Huiyao Wang, Zheng, & Miao, 2015). Since the adoption of the open-door policy in 1978, China has experienced a marked surge in emigration. By 2015, around 10 million of recent Chinese immigrants lived overseas. This makes China the fourth largest source country for international migration, following India (16 million), Mexico (12 million), and the Russian Federation (11 million) (UNPD, 2016). The latest Chinese international migration report suggests that in recent years, Mainland Chinese have been most likely to migrate to developed countries, with the most popular destinations being the United States (USA), Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Europe (Huiyao Wang et al., 2015). As a result of this wave of emigration, Chinese have become one of the major minorities in almost all these destination countries. For example, according to New Zealand Census 2013, the Chinese ethnic group represented 4.3 percent of the people who stated an ethnic group living in New Zealand. It was the second largest minority, following Maori (Statistics New Zealand [SNZ], 2013).

The growth of international migration and multiculturalism worldwide has led to an increasing demand for a better understanding of immigrants' adjustment after immigration, and the impact of immigration, particularly post-immigration adjustment, on

the well-being of immigrants and their families. In general, the accumulated research suggests that post-immigration adjustment is a multifaceted transition that occurs at both the individual and marital/familial level. It not only requires immigrant individuals to adjust themselves culturally and economically (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Berry, 1997), but also requires spouses and other family members to cope with changes in spousal and family roles, family structure and relationships (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Dixon, Tse, Rossen, & Sobrun-Maharaj, 2010). This multifaceted adjustment has the potential to create marked turmoil in immigrants' lives, and it leads them to experiences decrements in economic, psychological and physical well-being (Koneru, Weisman de Mamani, Flynn, & Betancourt, 2007; Rhee, 2009; SNZ, 2004; Suinn, 2010; Yoon, Langrehr, & Ong, 2011). It could also affect their marital and family relationships and represent a risk for marriage (Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Chan & Leong, 1994; Wong, 2007).

In the field of Chinese immigration research, some recent studies have in fact suggested that immigration appears to be associated with an increase in divorce among Chinese immigrants. For example, in Australia, Khoo and Zhao (2001) found that the divorce rate for China-born immigrants was one of the three highest among 31 birthplace groups, and was about twice as high as that for the total Australian population. In the USA, Y. Zhang (2008) found that Chinese immigrants, particularly women, were more likely to divorce than their counterparts in China. In New Zealand, the 2001 census showed that 3.92% (1,821) of China/Taiwan-born Chinese aged 15 and over were separated or divorced (SNZ, 2002). Given that 8.04% of these Chinese immigrants chose 'non-partnered' but did not further define their marital status, it is speculated that the actual percentage of separation or divorce for these Chinese may be even higher.

In the field of immigration research, numerous studies have examined the impact of immigration and post-immigration adjustment on the well-being of individual

immigrants (Koneru et al., 2007; Rhee, 2009; Suinn, 2010; Yoon et al., 2011). While some studies have explored immigrants' marital and familial adjustment (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Dixon et al., 2010), little research attention has been given to their separation or divorce. So far, we know little about what causes separation among immigrants, and whether immigration, particularly the life stress and challenges associated with immigration, is related to their separation. There is a call for research on the influence of immigration on marital relationships and how immigrants cope with separation on top of post-immigration adjustment. Within the field of marriage and family, a large number of studies have been conducted on divorce (Amato, 2000, 2010; Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Kitson & Raschke, 1981). While divorce and post-divorce adjustment has been well researched in Western countries, the vast majority of studies are conducted on people of European descent. So far, little is known about the divorce of minority groups, particularly immigrants, in these countries (Amato, 2010). There is a need to extend divorce research to minority groups including international migrants.

The current study focuses on the divorce of Chinese immigrants. It is a qualitative investigation of the experience of immigration, post-immigration adjustment, separation, and post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrants living in New Zealand. It includes two complementary projects that are designed to explore the phenomenon of interest from the perspective of recent Chinese immigrants who have experienced separation and/or divorce, and the perspective of professionals who have working experience with separating or separated Chinese immigrants. Because post-immigration adjustment, separation and post-separation adjustment are all likely to be associated with a number of stressors that need to be dealt with, the general stress perspectives currently used in the fields of immigration and divorce, such as Berry's (1997) bilinear acculturation model, the general stress perspective of post-immigration marital and family adjustment (Ataca &

Berry, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2003), and Amato's (2000) divorce-stress-adjustment perspective, are used to guide this study.

The present literature review has three sections. The first section briefly examines the history of Chinese migration, particularly post-1986 migration, to New Zealand. It focuses on what social factors motivated these Chinese people to emigration, what types of Chinese moved to New Zealand, how Chinese immigrants were treated by the host society, and how they settled in this new country. As such, it not only provides the social and historical context for the current research, but it also helps us to understand the sociodemographic characteristics, the immigration motivations and the settlement patterns of post-1986 Chinese immigrants who are the focus of the current study. The second section examines the post-immigration adjustment and its impact on the marital relationships of Chinese immigrants. It focuses on what life challenges Chinese immigrants might experience after immigration – as an individual, a couple and a family – and how Chinese individuals, couples and families cope with these challenges. It also identifies what influences the post-immigration challenges at each of the three levels might have on their marital relationship. This review might be helpful in understanding what leads to the separation of Chinese immigrants. The third section examines the impact of separation and post-separation adjustment. It focuses on what life challenges separated individuals might experience after separation, how they cope with these challenges and develop a single lifestyle, and what long-term consequences they might experience as a result of separation. Because litter research has been conducted on the separation of Chinese immigrants, this review focuses on studies of separated individuals in Western countries and in China. They are both relevant to separated Chinese immigrants and will provide insights into what separated Chinese immigrants might experience in New Zealand.

Chinese Migration to New Zealand

From Sojourners to Settlers – Early Chinese Settlement in New Zealand

New Zealand is an immigrant country, starting with its indigenous Maori people. The Treaty of Waitangi signed between Maori and the British Crown in 1840, permitted the early settlement of British people. Since then, the number of Europeans, particularly those from Great Britain, grew steadily and soon became a dominated ethnic group. Although Asians came to New Zealand at the same time as Europeans, they were categorized as "undesirable" and subjected to racist legislation until as recently as 1980s (Chung & Walkey, 1988; M. Ip, 1995). During this period, only a limited number of Asians was allowed to come to New Zealand. Upon to the early 1980s, New Zealand was officially a bicultural country, although it was dominated by Europeans. According to the 1986 census, Europeans and Maori consisted, respectively, of 81.23% and 12.40% of the total population in New Zealand. At this time, the number of Asians was 48,006, which made up only 1.47% of the population (SNZ, 1997).

Since British colonization, Chinese have always been the largest Asian ethnic group in New Zealand (M. Ip, 2003a). The first wave of Chinese came to the country as miners in the gold rush era in the late 19th century. From the 1860s to the 1880s, the number of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand grew steadily and reached a peak of just above 5000 in 1881 (M. Ip, 1995). In fact, the presence of Chinese immigrants in this country was a part of the picture of massive Chinese emigration in the mid-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century. During this period, wars and famine pushed millions of Chinese to migrate overseas in search of a better life. They moved overseas mainly through Hong Kong, Macau and other ports, where trading with foreign merchants was allowed. Some researchers estimated that at least 6 million Chinese moved overseas through Hong Kong during this period (Skeldon, 1996). These Chinese first moved to South Asian countries and then to countries in the Pacific rim, including the United States,

Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Pan, 1998; Skeldon, 1996). Compared with European counterparts, these Chinese were sojourners, not settlers. They were typically married men from the rural areas in Southern China. They had a strong intention to work overseas and then move back to their family with savings (Pan, 1998).

Although Chinese miners were initially welcomed by New Zealand society, anti-Chinese feelings in this society increased over time. For example, when the white supremacist theories thrived in many Western countries in 1920s, newspapers in New Zealand were also "full of talks on the Yellow Peril" (M. Ip, 1995, p. 176). Since 1881, a series of anti-Chinese laws were passed. For example, according to the Chinese Immigrants Act 1881, Chinese immigrants had to pay a poll-tax of 10 pounds for entry to New Zealand. This poll-tax was applied only to Chinese. In 1908, the Immigration Restriction Act was introduced. It consolidated all the previous discriminatory legislations against Chinese (M. Ip, 1995). From 1908 to 1952, no Chinese was awarded citizenship and their right of permanent residency was strongly denied.

Given the racist legislation against Chinese and societal hostility towards them, it is not surprising that early Chinese miners in New Zealand lived in a very poor and isolated condition. When the gold mines were exhausted in early 1900s, Chinese miners either moved back to China or to urban centres to seek an alternative means of living, typically as market gardeners and laundrymen. Many of them worked in these occupations for several decades until anti-Chinese laws were relaxed in 1950s (M. Ip, 1995). In the early 20th century, the Chinese population in New Zealand continued to decline. It reached the lowest point of 2,147, as recorded in the 1916 census (Ho & Farmer, 1994).

World War II changed the future of Chinese workers in New Zealand. After the Japanese threatened Southern China in 1939, their family members, particularly their wives and children, were allowed to come to New Zealand as war refugees. These

refugees were well accepted by the host society and subsequently entitled to permanent residency in the late 1940s. More than a thousand Chinese came to New Zealand during this period (M. Ip, 1995). Their arrival transformed the Chinese community from being merely male sojourners to Chinese settlers.

From the 1950s to the mid-1980s, the Chinese community gradually went through a unilateral assimilation. During this period, the Chinese population increased steadily. By the mid-1960s, just before the arrival of Indochina Chinese refugees, the Chinese population in New Zealand increased to over 10,000. At this time, over 75% of Chinese were New Zealand born (M. Ip, 1995). They were successful in both education and their chosen occupation and earned themselves the 'Model Minority' epithet (Chung & Walkey, 1988). In the 1970s and early 1980s, more than 9000 Indo-Chinese refugees and Pacific Polynesian-Chinese arrived in New Zealand (Ng, 1999). Their arrival pushed up the Chinese population to over 18 thousand (Ho & Farmer, 1994). In 1986, just before the arrival of the "new wave" of Chinese immigrants, the Chinese population in New Zealand further increased to about 22,000, which made up 0.67% of the total population in this country (SNZ, 1997).

Post-1986 Chinese Immigration

In the mid-1980s, the vestige of the White New Zealand Policy, which gave preference to immigrants from traditional sources including Britain, northwest Europe and North America, was finally abolished (Burke, 1986). Since 1986, the selection of immigrants has focused solely on personal qualities and potential contribution to New Zealand. This policy change was welcomed by Asian, particularly Chinese, people. Although ethnic Chinese from other countries and regions, such as Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines, also took the chance to move to New Zealand, this study investigates the homogeneous group of Chinese immigrants from Mainland China and Taiwan and refers to them collectively as Chinese immigrants.

Since 1986, a large number of Chinese from China and Taiwan have immigrated to New Zealand. Based on the number of residence approvals for the period from financial year 1987 to financial year 2001 calculated by Ho (2006), and approved residence application data for the period from financial year 1997 to financial 2011 prepared by Business Information Services (BIS, 2011), a total of 143,910 residency approvals were issued to Mainland and Taiwan Chinese in the period from financial year 1987 to financial 2011. This represented 15.61% of the total residence approvals issued to applicants from all the immigration source countries in this period. The arrival of these Mainland and Taiwan Chinese, together with Chinese from other countries, pushed up the number of Chinese in this country to more than 171,000 as recorded in Census 2013. At this time, 73.4% of Chinese in New Zealand were born overseas (SNZ, 2013).

Post-1986 Chinese immigrants are very different from earlier Chinese labour workers, who came to this country in the late 1900s and early 2000s. Compared with their predecessors, post-1986 Chinese immigrants have different socio-demographic characteristics. They come to New Zealand for different reasons and show a different style of settlement.

First, in accordance with the post-1986 migration requirement, post-1986 Chinese immigrants in New Zealand are typically professionals and businessmen. Based on the numbers of residence approvals calculated by Ho (2006) and approved residence application data prepared by BIS (2011), in the period from financial year 1987 to financial year 2011, 64.31% of Chinese applicants obtained their entry to New Zealand through the business and skilled migration schemes. In this combined category, the vast majority were professionals with internationally transferable skills. This was particularly the case for Mainland Chinese immigrants. During this period, among the 55,990 Mainland Chinese who obtained a residence approval under the combined scheme, only 1,544 or 2.8% were categorized as business migrants (BIS, 2011; Ho, 2006). It is

important to note that in 2001, New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) stopped providing statistical data for business immigrants, because the number of these immigrants, including those from China and Taiwan, had become very small (BIS, 2011). Since then, NZIS has only provided data for the combined business and skilled migration schemes.

With respect to Taiwanese immigrants, although the majority obtained their approval as skilled migrants, a significant portion was approved under the business scheme. In the period from financial year 1987 to financial year 2011, among the 36,565 approvals issued to Taiwanese skilled and business immigrants, 8,301 (22.70%) were approved under the business scheme (BIS, 2011; Ho, 2006). In 1991, the autopass 'Point System' for the General Skills Category was introduced (Trlin, 1997). As pointed out by some researchers, some Taiwanese who met the entry criteria for the Business Scheme might opt to seek entry under the General Skills Category because it was easier to obtain an approval through this category than the business scheme (Ho, 2006; M. Ip, 2003b). Given this, the actual number of businessmen among Taiwanese immigrants could be even higher. One study showed that Taiwanese business migrants were typically males, middle-aged and married, with a typical investment of NZ$200,000 to NZ$400,000 (Trlin & Kang, 1992).

Second, post-1986 Chinese immigrants, particularly those from China, are well-educated. Many Chinese immigrants have completed tertiary education before immigration (Ho, 2006; M. Ip, 2003b). This high level of educational achievement among Chinese immigrants has been shown on a number of census statistics. Based on Ho's (2006) calculation form the 2001 census data, the percentages of university qualifications for male and female Taiwanese who were 30 to 49 year old and had lived in New Zealand for less than five years were 33.5% and 22.3% respectively. The percentages for male and

female Mainland Chinese in this statistical category reached 48.2% and 37.5% respectively.

Third, post-1986 Chinese immigrants come to New Zealand for a number of reasons, such as opportunities for a life change and employment, a better future for their children, the quality of the social and natural environment, and a favourable lifestyle in the host country (A. Henderson, 2003; M. Ip, 2003b; Johnston, Trlin, Henderson, North, & Skinner, 2005). For Taiwanese immigrants, the political uncertainty, associated with increasing tension between pro-unification (with China) and pro-independence political parties in the later 1980s and early 1990s and China's takeover of Hong Kong in 1997, was also one of the most cited factors that motivated Taiwanese to move overseas in the early 1990s (M. Ip, 2003b). According to the numbers of residence approvals calculated by Ho (2006) and approved residence application data prepared by BIS (2011), among the 40,133 total residence approvals issued to Taiwanese in the period from financial year 1987 to financial year 2011, 33,331 or 83.05% were issued before 1997. These Taiwanese immigrants, just like their Hong Kong counterparts, are sometimes called "reluctant exiles" (Ho, 2003; Skeldon, 1994). They have a strong tendency to move back after obtaining permanent residency in a host country (M. Ip, 2003b).

Fourth, post-1986 Chinese immigrants are very active in transnational migration. They move back and forth between the host country and their country of origin or another host country (Ho, 2006; M. Ip, 2003b). Compared with traditional settlers or even with their counterparts from other Asian countries, post-1986 Chinese immigrants, particularly those from Taiwan and Hong Kong, are more likely to engage in open-ended transnational migration. Ho (2010) examined the transnational mobility of recent Asian immigrants, who came from six different countries and took residency in New Zealand between 1998 and 2004. She found that 46% of Taiwanese immigrants spent 75% or more of their time living outside of New Zealand, compared with 31% for immigrants from Hong Kong,

16% for immigrants from China, and less than 10% for immigrants from India, South Korea and Japan.

Among these highly mobile Chinese immigrants, the 'astronaut family' is common. In a typical astronaut family, the wife stays in the host country to look after the children and the husband returns to their homeland to work or do business (Chiang, 2006). Although the astronauting strategy could be used by immigrants of any origin, it is particularly common among Chinese particularly Taiwanese and Hong Kong immigrants in New Zealand (A. Henderson, 2003; Ho, 2010; M. Ip, 2003b). It is clearly indicated by a variety of census data. Based on Ho's (2006) calculation from the 2001 census data, the sex ratios for 30 to 49 year old Taiwanese who arrived in New Zealand in the five years before 2001 were 49 males per 100 females, while the sex ratio for their counterparts from mainland China was 83:100 (Ho, 2006, p. 49). A number of studies suggest that the astronaut family is also common among Chinese, particularly Hong Kong and Taiwanese, immigrants in Australia and Canada (Chiang, 2006; Ley & Kobayashi, 2005; Lui, 2006).

Post-Immigration Adjustment and the Marital Relationship

What causes a Chinese immigrant couple to separate is a complex topic. Since the 1980s, numerous studies in both Western countries and China have investigated the predictors of divorce or people's perceived reasons for divorce. Many predictors, including social, economic, demographic, and interpersonal factors, and perceived reasons, such as infidelity and incompatibility, have been identified (e.g., Amato, 2010; Amato & Previti, 2003; Youzhi Wang & Peng, 2003; Zeng, Schultz, Wang, & Gu, 2002). Despite little being known about what causes Chinese immigrant couples to separate, one can reasonably assume that their separation must relate to at least post-immigration adjustment, as how to build a life in the host country becomes their main challenge after immigration.

This section of the literature review examines the influence of post-immigration adjustment on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants. It has four sub-sections. The first sub-section reviews existing studies and theories on post-immigration adjustment. It focuses on what facets of adjustment that immigrants and their families have to go through in order to build a life in a receiving country. In the second and third section, current studies on Chinese immigrants' individual adjustment and family adjustment are reviewed, with a focus on how challenges associated with individual and family adjustment might influence the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants. The last section examines what marital challenges Chinese immigrant couples have to face after immigration and how these challenges might contribute to their marital conflicts and, in the worst scenario, cause them to separate.

Post-Immigration Adjustment

Post-immigration adjustment has been a research subject for more than 100 years (Rudmin, 2009). It has expanded extensively following increasing globalization and international migration in the past three decades. A search of journal articles in the PsycINFO database with the subject heading Immigration, combined with Acculturation or Adjustment or Adaptation, returned, as of January 21, 2017, 169 records for the period up to 1989, 288 for the 1990s, 814 for the 2000s, and 806 for the period from 2010 to date.

Over the past hundred years, many concepts have been developed to guide the research on post-immigration adjustment. Historically, post-immigration adjustment was a research subject for anthropology, sociology and psychology, particularly cultural psychology (Gordon, 1964; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936; Sam, 2006). Researchers in this field focused on immigrants' cross-cultural adjustment and its influence on psychological and health well-being. Within the field, assimilation, a unidirectional conceptualization of acculturation, had dominated until the 1980s (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). In this acculturation model,

acquisition of receiving-culture and retention of ethnic-culture are placed at the opposite ends of a single continuum. Immigrants are expected to discard heritage cultural norms and values while adjusting to the host culture. It assumes that the more immigrants adapt to the host culture, the better their post-immigration adjustment outcomes will be. These assumptions are well-reflected in the assimilation theory developed by sociologist Gordon (1964) and the subsequent concepts of westernization and Americanization (Salant & Lauderdale, 2003).

In the early 1980s, cultural psychologists realized that immigrants did not have to give up heritage cultural practices and values while adjusting to the receiving culture (Berry, 1980). During the 1980s and 1990s, a bilinear conceptualization of acculturation emerged and soon became dominant in the field. In this regard, Berry's bilinear model is regarded as "the broadest and most flexible approach to acculturation" (Ward, 2001, p. 434). In Berry's (1997) model, learning receiving-culture and retaining ethnic-culture are cast as independent dimensions. The intersection of the two dimensions creates four categories of acculturation: assimilation, integration (learning the host culture while retaining the heritage culture), separation (retaining the heritage culture and rejecting the host culture), and marginalization (rejecting both the heritage and host cultures). Recently some researchers have promoted using enculturation to describe the process of learning and maintaining heritage culture, because heritage-culture retention within Berry's model does not fit those immigrants who are born or grow up in the host culture (Kim, 2007). This proposal has now been accepted by many cultural psychologists (Yoon et al., 2011).

Since the 1980s, a large number of studies have investigated acculturation and its effects on immigrants' well-being (Koneru et al., 2007; Rhee, 2009; Suinn, 2010; Yoon et al., 2011). Three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment have been examined (Schwartz et al., 2010). The majority of researchers in the field focus on culture-specific skills, particularly the host language and intercultural communication. They examine the

association between learning these skills and sociocultural adjustment outcomes (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). Some researchers are concerned with changes in culture values, such as collectivism, in the cross-cultural adjustment process. They examine the effects of changes in cultural values on health outcomes (e.g., Le & Kato, 2006; Nasim, Corona, Belgrave, Utsey, & Fallah, 2007). Some others are interested in how acculturating individuals define their cultural identities in relation to the heritage and host cultures and how their dual cultural identities affect their social behaviours and psychosocial outcomes (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2010; Phinney, 1990; Umana-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, & Guimond, 2009).

Despite the difference in the dimensions investigated, researchers in the field generally focus on cross-cultural adjustment at the individual level and share similar assumptions regarding the cultural adjustment. These include: cross-cultural adjustment is associated with a number of life changes which are appraised as stressful; this stress requires immigrants to mobilize their personal and social resources to cope with it; because of individual differences in coping resources and responses, cross-cultural transition produces different outcomes for different immigrants (Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010). Because Berry's bicultural model is regarded as the broadest and most flexible approach in this field, as mentioned before, it is used to guide the investigation of the cultural adjustment of Chinese immigrants in this study.

In the past two decades, a series of literature reviews were conducted to examine the relationship between acculturation/enculturation and adjustment outcomes (Koneru et al., 2007; Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, 2003; Salant & Lauderdale, 2003; Suinn, 2010; Yoon et al., 2011). Although both acculturation and enculturation have been found to be associated with some specific aspects of post-immigration adjustment, no consistent findings have been identified on almost any type of outcomes, including sociocultural, psychological, and health well-being. Many methodological problems, such as using

convenience samples, treating immigrants with different ethnic backgrounds or at different stages of post-immigration adjustment as a homogeneous group, using a linear acculturation scale, the chronic proliferation of the scale for each study, and confounding the measurements of acculturative stress with acculturation and/or adjustment outcomes, have been identified (Koneru et al., 2007; Rudmin, 2009; Yoon et al., 2011).

Apart from the above methodological problems, others such as excluding the broad social context factors, such as globalization, multiculturalism, immigration policy and government support for settlement in research design, ignoring changes in patterns of immigration and settlement, and focusing predominantly on cultural adjustment at the individual level, might also be some of the most important reasons. As it will become clearer in the following paragraphs, post-immigration adjustment is a multifaceted transition that occurs at the individual, spousal and familial level. It not only requires individuals to adjust themselves culturally and economically (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Berry, 1997), but it also requires spouses and other family members to cope with changes that occur within the marriage and the family in the process of adjustment (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Dixon et al., 2010). With the rapid movement of globalization and associated changes in patterns of immigration and settlement, this adjustment process becomes even more complicated. As such, any research on post-immigration adjustment that does not consider the broader societal context, the changes in the patterns of migration and settlement, and the multiplicity of levels and facets of adjustment, is unlikely to be fruitful.

Since the late 1980s, increasing globalization and multiculturalism has generated different patterns of migration and post-immigration settlement. While many immigrants still follow the traditional immigration and settlement approach, i.e., migrating for a better economic future and tending to settle permanently in the receiving country, an increasing number of immigrants appear to be taking advantage of globalization and multiculturalism

and use international migration as a family strategy to meet the needs of different family members at different stages of life (D. Ip, Hibbins, & Chui, 2006; Ley & Kobayashi, 2005). For example, some immigrants, particularly businessmen, might migrate to a host country for their children's education. After obtaining their residency in the host country, these immigrants, typically husbands, might move back to their country of origin or a third country to work or do business to support their family in the host country. When their children complete education, they might move back to the host country to enjoy their retirement and other social advancements in this country. At the same time, their children might move to another country for better employment. Among these immigrants, some new patterns of immigration and settlement, such as transnationalism and astronaut families, have emerged (D. Ip et al., 2006; Ley & Kobayashi, 2005). As described earlier, these new patterns of immigration and settlement are particularly common among Chinese immigrants.

The increase of international migration and new patterns of settlement have prompted researchers from many different disciplines to join in studies on post-immigration adjustment. While some researchers focus continuously on cultural adjustment at the individual level, many others have started to investigate other facets of post-immigration transition at either the individual or spousal/family level. Rather than acculturation and its influence on psychological and physical outcomes, these researchers focus more on how immigrants and their families function in the receiving country. They are particularly interested in what challenges immigrants and their families might face in their settlement and economic adjustment in the context of globalization and multiculturalism. Two research subjects, immigration adaptation and marital/family adjustment, have emerged as common topics, particularly in the field of Asian immigration research.

Immigration adaptation studies are typically conducted by government agencies or researchers from various disciplines, such as economics, political sciences and health disciplines. These studies focus on immigrants' current level of functioning and tend to use immigration or life satisfaction to measure their adjustment outcomes (e.g., Kimura, 1994; Ying, 1996). Some researchers argue that immigrants' involvement in every aspect of life in the receiving country is conditioned by their employment status, therefore it is crucial to investigate their performance in the labour market in the receiving country (Thomas, 1992). They tend to use employment status and income to measure the immigrant's level of economic functioning (Potocky-Tripodi, 2004; Takeda, 2000). The concept of economic adjustment has been developed to capture the immigrant's economic transition (Aycan & Berry, 1996).

Methodologically, immigration adaptation studies are more oriented toward a descriptive multidisciplinary investigation of immigrants' functioning after immigration. Some researchers use immigration and census data to assess immigrants' level of economic functioning by comparing a specific group of immigrants with their national counterparts or other groups of immigrants (Boyd, 2003; SNZ, 2004). Others, particularly those from health disciplines, use multivariate statistical techniques to identify potential social and individual variables that predict immigrants' level of functioning (e.g., Takeuchi et al., 1998; Ying, 1996). Although immigration adaptation studies may intertwine with acculturation studies, the former, compared with the latter, explore the influence of a wider range of societal factors on post-immigration adjustment, for example, immigration policies, government support for settlement, local people's attitudes including discrimination towards immigrants (Abbott, Wong, Williams, Au, & Young, 2000; Department of Internal Affairs [DIF], 1996; NZIS, 2004; Ying, 1996).

Since the beginning of this millennium, the marital and family adjustment of immigrants has also attracted increasing attention among researchers from a variety of

disciplines, particularly health disciplines. It has emerged as a common research subject in recent years (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; 2009). In general, researchers in this field extend their research on acculturation and immigration adaptation from the individual level to the spousal and family level. They view immigrant couples or families as an adaptation unit and explore how immigrant couples and/or families cope with adaptive stressors in the context of globalization and multiculturalism (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Dixon et al., 2010). Theoretically, acculturation frameworks for individual adjustment and some family theories, such as the family system theory and the risk and resilience perspective, have been used to guide these studies (e.g., H. H. Chang & Ng, 2002; Dixon et al., 2010; A. Liu, 2009).

Similar to immigration adaptation research, studies on marital and family adjustment also involve a diversity of enquiries. Some studies focus on how individual cross-cultural adjustment and particularly spousal differences in this adjustment affect gender attitudes, spousal roles and power relations within a marriage (e.g., Goff, 2004; Y. Zhou, 2000). The concept of marital adaptation has been developed to capture this adjustment process (Ataca & Berry, 2002). Some studies focus on how life challenges after immigration and different levels of acculturation between generations affect family structure and functioning. The concept of family adjustment has been created to capture this adaptive process (Chun, 2006; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; 2009). Other studies focus on transnational migrants and explore how transnational migration and living as an astronaut family might affect marital relationships and family functioning (Chiang, 2006; Ho, 2002; 2010; Lui, 2006). The concepts of transnationalism and astronaut families have been developed to capture this adjustment process (D. Ip et al., 2006). These recently developed concepts are also used to guide the investigation of post-immigration adjustment of Chinese immigrants in this study.

Individual Adjustment and the Marital Relationship

This sub-section of the literature review focuses on the relationship between Chinese immigrants' individual post-immigration adjustment and marital relationship. First, the influence of acculturation on the psychological and physical wellbeing of Chinese immigrants is examined. It is followed by the examination of their economic functioning after immigration and the challenges that Chinese immigrants, particularly those in New Zealand, might face in the process of cross-cultural settlement and economic adjustment. Lastly, the influence of post-immigration individual adjustment on the martial relationship of Chinese immigrants is examined.

The influence of acculturation on psychological and physical wellbeing

Since the late 1980s, an increasing number of studies have investigated the influence of acculturation on the psychological and physical wellbeing of Chinese immigrants. Consistent with the findings from the previously mentioned series of reviews that focused on this matter among immigrants of all ethnicities, the overall findings from these studies are lacking in consistency. In general, the findings from those studies, which conceptualize acculturation as a unilinear process, appear to be very contradictory. For example, some studies found that a low level of acculturation to the host culture increases the risk of mental health problems in elderly Chinese immigrants (e.g., Abbott et al., 2003; Robert Lam, Pacala, & Smith, 1997). Others found that the level of acculturation to the host culture is positively related to distress (Mak, Chen, Wong, & Zane, 2005) or increases the risk of mental health problems for those who are highly acculturated (Hwang & Myers, 2007). Finally, one study found a paradoxical effect of acculturation on mental health (Shen & Takeuchi, 2001). In this study, acculturation to the host culture on the one hand was positively associated with stress that in turn contributed to elevated depression, and on the other hand was positively correlated with socioeconomic status, which was associated with lower depressive symptoms. Research findings from studies using a

bilinear acculturation model, compared with those using the unilinear model, are more consistent. Overall, results from these studies suggest not only a positive effect of bicultural orientation on psychological wellbeing (Lieber, Chin, Nihira, & Mink, 2001; Ying, 1996), but also a positive effect of Chinese identity on mental health (Chae & Foley, 2010; Lieber et al., 2001).

With regard to the psychological and physical outcomes, many studies found that Chinese immigrants are satisfied with immigration and are psychologically and physically well. For example, in an USA epidemiological study, Takeuchi et al (1998) investigated the prevalence of selected psychiatric disorders in a sample of 1,747 randomly selected Chinese aged 18 to 65 year old. Among them, the majority were immigrants. They found that both the lifetime and 12-months rates of major depressive episodes and dysthymia in this sample were towards the low end of the range found in their American counterparts. Ying (1996) investigated the immigration satisfaction of 95 recent Chinese immigrants in the USA. She found that Chinese immigrants were satisfied with their life in the host country. Studies with Chinese immigrants in New Zealand found similar results (Abbott, Wong, Williams, Au, & Young, 1999; P. Cheung & Spears, 1992). For example, Abbott and associates examined the adjustment and health outcomes of 271 Chinese immigrants aged 15 years or older in Auckland (Abbott et al., 1999; Abbott et al., 2000). In this sample, 90% were recent immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, with about half having lived in New Zealand for 2 years or less. Regarding adjustment outcomes, the vast majority rated themselves as well adjusted (85.6%) and having “good” or “fair” physical health (98%); the rate of psychiatric morbidity was similar to that for the general New Zealand population.

Despite these consistent findings on the psychological and physical wellbeing of Chinese immigrants, caution should be taken in the interpretation of their adjustment outcomes because of the healthy immigrant effect. This hypothesized effect, which

suggests that immigrants including Chinese immigrants are healthier both psychologically and physically than their counterparts in both sending and receiving countries, has been well documented (Chou, Johnson, & Blewett, 2010; Jesso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2004; McDonald & Kennedy, 2004; Wu, Chi, Plassman, & Guo, 2010). Furthermore, there is some evidence that the healthy immigrant effect is stronger for Chinese immigrants, compared with other immigrant populations (J. Chen, Ng, & Wilkins, 1996; Frisbie, Cho, & Hummer, 2001).

Post-immigration settlement and economic adjustment

With regard to post-immigration settlement and economic functioning, census data from different countries suggest that Chinese immigrants from different host counties experience different levels of economic adjustment. For example, according to the US Census 2000, Chinese (including Taiwanese) immigrants in the USA had only a slightly lower rate of labour force participation than native Americans, and for all the other economic indicators, particularly occupation and income, they were better than both foreign-born and native Americans. For example, the median household income for Chinese immigrants is US$49,196, compared to US$39, 444 for the foreign-born and US$42,299 for the native population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Compared with their counterparts in the USA, Chinese immigrants in New Zealand appear to experience more difficulties with economic adjustment. According to New Zealand Census 2001, which is the latest one covering the subject of People Born Overseas, immigrants from China and Taiwan, compared with total immigrants and New Zealand-born people, had much lower rates of labour force participation and median income, and much higher rates of unemployment, even though they had higher rates of university degrees. For example, the rates of labour force participation for Mainland and Taiwanese immigrants were 42.3% and 29.9% respectively, compared with 59.7% and 69% for total overseas-born and New Zealand-born respectively. Regarding their income,

while Mainland and Taiwanese immigrants earned a median income of $8,000 and $3,300 respectively, all overseas-born and New Zealand born residents earned a median income of $16,000 and $19,200 respectively (SNZ, 2002).

Because Chinese immigrants' cross-cultural adjustment, particularly settlement and economic adjustment, is likely to be affected by immigration policies and government settlement support in different host countries, with regard to post-immigration settlement and economic adjustment, this study focuses more on Chinese immigrants in New Zealand.

A number of studies have investigated the experience of the settlement and economic adjustment of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand (e.g., A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005; Trlin, Henderson, & North, 2004). One study followed up the settlement and employment experiences of 36 skilled Chinese immigrants and their families, 34 from China and two from Hong Kong, for the 4 years from 1998 to 2001 (A. Henderson, 2003). All the participants and their spouses held a tertiary degree before immigration. After having residency in New Zealand for more than three years, they still found entry to the New Zealand job market extremely difficult. At the time of the fourth interview, among the 27 participants remained in the study, only ten worked full-time, seven worked part-time, and the rest were either unemployed or worked in China. Among the 10 full-time workers, underemployment was the norm: four had a job that was related to their post-immigration qualifications and five had work that had nothing to do with their qualifications. Two other studies reveal that Mainland Chinese immigrants experience many more difficulties with employment than their counterparts from South Africa and India (Johnston et al., 2005; Trlin, Henderson, & North, 2004). As commented by Johnston et al (2005), many skilled Chinese immigrants might never have a chance to regain their pre-migration occupational status.

In New Zealand, a number of census-based reports and immigration surveys have explored what causes the difficulties that recent immigrants, including Chinese immigrants, have experienced in settlement and economic adjustment. A number of barriers, including the length of residency, the distance between the host and home culture, English language skills, discrimination by employers, statutory registration for professional jobs in New Zealand, and difficulty in obtaining recognition of overseas qualifications in New Zealand, have been suggested (e.g., Boyd, 2003; DIF, 1996; Dixon et al., 2010; SNZ, 2004; Winkelmann & Winkelmann, 1998). All these barriers have been confirmed by A. Henderson's (2003) study, which specifically focused on Chinese skilled immigrants' experiences of settlement and economic adjustment, as described earlier. In fact, some of these barriers, including low English proficiency and discrimination, have also been found to affect the settlement and economic adjustment of Chinese immigrants in the USA, even though they economically adjust better than their counterparts in New Zealand (e.g., Ying, 1996).

Without doubt, challenges with cross-cultural adjustment, including acculturation, settlement and economic adjustment create significant stress for Chinese immigrants. In a study of a nationally representative sample of 2095 Asian immigrants (including 600 Chinese) in the USA, 70% of the immigrants reported experiencing acculturative stress (Lueck & Wilson, 2010). Given the serious challenges that Chinese immigrants have faced in entering the New Zealand job market, Chinese immigrants in this country are expected to experience more stress. In fact, several immigration surveys and qualitative studies have suggested that Chinese immigrants in New Zealand experience enormous stress with post-immigration adjustment, particularly settlement and economic adjustment. Many of them suffer a strong feeling of loss of social status (e.g., Dixon et al., 2010; A. Henderson, 2003). This stress and a feeling of loss have in fact prompted some Chinese immigrants either to use the astronauting strategy to cope with their financial difficulties

or to return to their home country permanently (A. Henderson, 2003; Ho, 2002; M. Ip, 2003b).

The impact of individual adjustment on the marital relationship

To date, there has been little research on the influence of post-immigration challenges on the marital relationship of immigrants. Fortunately, within the Chinese immigrant community, several recent pilot studies have examined the impact of these challenges on the marriage of Chinese immigrants (H. F. Chang, 2004; Dixon et al., 2010; Goff, 2004; A. Liu, 2009).

Two qualitative studies have explored a wide range of challenges that could affect the marital relationship of Chinese graduate student couples living in the USA: one with ten Mainland Chinese student couples (Goff, 2004) and another with four Taiwanese student couples (H. F. Chang, 2004). Among the many potential challenges identified in the two studies, the challenge associated with cross-cultural adjustment is obviously an important one. In this regard, they suggest that a different living environment, language difficulties and cultural barriers appear to increase Chinese couples' levels of stress, affect their spousal communication, and create a sense of anxiety, emptiness, insecurity and loneliness. The Chinese couples in both studies reported that all these challenges eventually affected their marital relationship (H. F. Chang, 2004; Goff, 2004).

In a quantitative study, A. M. Liu (2009) examined the influence of the perceived stress associated with immigration and post-immigration adjustment, strategies of acculturation, and styles of conflict resolution on the marital relationship of 121 Chinese immigrants in the USA. She found that both the perceived stress and conflict resolution styles predicted the marital satisfaction of Chinese immigrants. In addition, the perceived stress also affected the styles of conflict resolution and therefore influenced the marital relationship indirectly. Given the level of challenges in settlement and economic

adjustment that Chinese immigrants have experienced in New Zealand, the influence of these challenges on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants in this country may be amplified.

Finally, in New Zealand, Dixon et al (2010) investigated the family settlement experience of Asian immigrants. The study involved 16 focus group interviews conducted with 104 individual immigrants (including 23 Chinese) and 8 family interviews conducted with 30 members from 8 families (including 2 Chinese families). The study focused on families that appeared to have experienced either a positive or less positive transition. It employed a family resilience approach to examine the barriers that prevented positive settlement and the factors that assisted them. Some of the findings covered the influence of immigration on marital relationships. In this regard, the main finding was that although almost all the family members experienced difficulties with settlement, particularly those with language, communication, education and employment, these difficulties and associated stresses had different influences on family relationships for different families. For some families, the settlement difficulties and stresses made the family pull together to cope with them. This family coping approach appeared to have strengthened the family ties and improved family relationships, including marital relationships. For other families, the settlement difficulties and stresses appeared to place a strain on family relationships and in the worst cases caused the dissolution of the marriage (Dixon et al., 2010). Apart from this main finding, the study also suggested that living in New Zealand could change family members' gender roles and power relations, with fathers being likely to lose some authority within their families. This could cause family conflicts and the breaking up of some families.

Family Adjustment and the Marital Relationship

This sub-section of review focuses on the influence of family adjustment after immigration on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants. First, challenges

associated with Chinese immigrants' family adjustment are examined. This is followed by the examination of the impact of family adjustment on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants.

Challenges associated with family adjustment

At the family level, Chinese immigrants also face a number of challenges. These include changes in how they live as a family, generational differences in acculturation and economic adjustment, and subsequent changes in family roles and functioning. All these challenges have a potential influence on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants.

Changes in how they live as a family, are the most obvious for Chinese immigrants. Prior to immigration, many Chinese immigrants in New Zealand were married and owned their own apartment or house (M. Ip, 2003b). They lived either close to or with their extended family and enjoyed socialization and support from their extended family and social network (A. Henderson, 2003; M. Ip, 2003b). After immigration, the vast majority of Chinese immigrants live away from extended families, relatives and friends in an alien society (Dixon et al., 2010; A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005). To save money and obtain mutual support, they tend to rent in a crowed area, move frequently from one place to another, and share accommodation with other Chinese (Abbott et al., 1999; A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005). For example, in a study conducted by Abbott et al (1999) in New Zealand, almost all the Chinese immigrants, predominantly from Taiwan and Hong Kong, lived with other Chinese.

For those Chinese whose parents have joined them later in the host country, three generations living under one roof is also common. For example, a recent New Zealand study concerning depression in older Chinese immigrants found that among 162 immigrants aged 55 years or older, 70 or 43.2% lived with married children (Abbott et al., 2003). Filial responsibility, financial constraints and mutual support are the main reasons

for elderly Chinese immigrants to live with their married children (Louisa Lam, 2003). Some American studies show that even long-established and American-born elderly Chinese are also much more likely than their non-Hispanic white counterparts to live with their married children, due to the strong influence of Chinese culture (Kamo & Zhou, 1994).

Living as an astronaut family is also quite common among Chinese immigrants, particularly Taiwanese and Hong Kong immigrants, in New Zealand. This has been suggested by the sex ratio data in the 2001 census, as described earlier (Ho, 2006). Some studies give a more specific picture of astronaut families among Chinese immigrants in this country. For example, Johnston and associates followed up the housing and settlement experience of 107 recent immigrants, including 36 Mainland Chinese, 36 Indians and 35 South Africans, in the four years after their arrival. In the first year, eleven Chinese, compared with 9 Indians and only 3 South Africans, experienced split family living (Johnston et al., 2005). The study by Abbott and associates involved 271 Chinese predominantly from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Among the 120 married women who lived with children, 58 had absent spouses. Eight married men with children had spouses living outside of New Zealand. Among the 52 single participants in the youngest group (15-25 year old), 21 had one or both parents absent (Abbott et al., 1999).

Generational differences in acculturation is also a challenge for Chinese immigrant families. Following immigration, all the family members face an immediate task of adapting to the host culture while maintaining Chinese values and identity. Because of generational differences in the ability to learn a new language and relate to both the ethnic and host culture, generational gaps in both ethnic and host cultures occur (Chan & Leong, 1994; Dixon et al., 2010). In this area, most research focuses on parent-child differences (e.g., Chao & Tseng, 2002; Chun & Akutsu, 2003). One Canadian study specifically investigated the similarities and differences in multiple domains of acculturation among

parents and children in recent Chinese immigrant families (Costigan & Dokis, 2006a). It found that Chinese parents and children experienced most significant differences in relating to the host culture, with children being more open to adopting the values and lifestyle of the host culture than their parents. As for the ethnic culture, while Chinese parents and children tended to be similar in regard to Chinese values and identity, they experienced a moderate difference in Chinese behavioural practices, with parents reporting more Chinese behavioural practices than children. With regard to elderly Chinese, a number of studies in the USA, Canada and New Zealand found that recent Chinese elderly immigrants experience marked difficulties with English. These elderly Chinese tend to be trapped in local Chinese communities and stick to Chinese values and practices (e.g., Abbott et al., 2003; M. Cheung, 1989; Chow, 2010; Tsai & Lopez, 1997). As such, the generational gap in acculturation between elderly Chinese and younger generations, particularly grandchildren, could be even larger than that for the parent-child dyad.

The changes in how Chinese immigrants live as a family after immigration as well as generational differences in acculturation, as noted by a number of researchers, can cause further changes in family roles and functioning (e.g., Chan & Leong, 1994; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; 2009; Dixon et al., 2010; Louisa Lam, 2003). For example, prior to immigration, many Chinese couples were used to having daily life and childcare support from extended families and/or a domestic worker. After immigration, they have to do housework and look after their children on their own (A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005; Lawrence Lam, 1994; Pe-Pua, Mitchell, lredale, & Castles, 1996). Married Chinese couples whose parents join them in the host country have to take care of their parents emotionally and financially because of their parents' difficulties with life in the new country (Chan & Leong, 1994; Louisa Lam, 2003; Tsai & Lopez, 1997). Chinese immigrant children, on the one hand, are expected to have less supervision and support

from parents. On the other hand, they are expected to take more family responsibility such as doing household work (Chun & Akutsu, 2003). Older children are often asked to help their parents and grandparents to manage social affairs, particular family communication with the outside world (Chun & Akutsu, 2009; Dixon et al., 2010).

It seems likely that more extreme changes in family roles and functioning occur in Chinese astronaut families. These family role and functioning changes have been observed by researchers and clinicians in New Zealand, Australia and Canada (Chiang, 2006; Ho, Bedford, & Goodwin, 1997; Lawrence Lam, 1994; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996). For example, astronauts, usually husbands, may have to travel between two countries and manage household work by themselves (Pe-Pua et al., 1996). Astronaut spouses, usually wives, may have to take a dual role of father and mother and manage their family life by themselves without any support (Chiang, 2006; Lawrence Lam, 1994; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996). Astronaut children may be expected to assume more family responsibilities, such as looking after siblings, than children from non-astronaut Chinese families (Ho et al., 1997; Pe-Pua et al., 1996).

The impact of family adjustment on the marital relationship

Since the late 1980s, an increasing number of studies on Chinese immigrants have investigated how acculturation disparity between generations, as well as changes in family structure, roles and functioning, might affect family dynamics and relationships, and how these might lead to different adjustment outcomes for different family members. Clearly studies in this field focus on the parent-child dyad, with many of them showing that the changes in family structure, its roles and functioning, as well as the generational differences in acculturation affect parenting, the parent-child relationship, and children's mental development (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Strom, 2003; Costigan & Dokis, 2006b; Crane, Ngai, Larson, & Hafen, 2005; Dixon et al., 2010; Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2009; Tardif & Geva, 2006; Weaver & Kim, 2008). Without doubt, all these findings have some

implications for marital relationships, as difficulties with parenting, parent-child conflicts and children's maladjustment could be a trigger for marital conflicts. This might be particularly true for Chinese immigrants, because children's well-being is not only one of their main purposes for immigration but also one of their major life focuses in the process of post-immigration adjustment (H. H. Chang, 2000; H. H. Chang & Ng, 2002; Dixon et al., 2010; M. Ip, 2003b; Johnston et al., 2005). Despite this potential indirect influence, this review focuses more on how challenges with family adjustment directly affect the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants.

On this topic, some pilot studies have in fact suggested that challenges with family adjustment affect marital relationships. For example, in the previously described two qualitative studies with Chinese graduate student couples in the USA, both researchers found that a number of challenges in relation to changes in how they lived as a family, including spousal split living, independent marital life from natal families, and the lack of support from extended family and friends, could affect these couples' marital relationship (H. F. Chang, 2004; Goff, 2004). Another USA study examined whether co-habitation with in-laws affected Chinese women's marital relationships (Louisa Lam, 2003). The study involved eighty married Chinese American women, with 90% being first-generation immigrants. All the women had in-laws living in the USA. One half of these women cohabitated with their in-laws and another half did not. The study found that Chinese women who lived with their in-laws had a significantly lower level of marital satisfaction than those who did not (Louisa Lam, 2003). A number of marital stressors were found to be related to the post-marital cohabitation with in-laws. These included the difficulties in communication with husbands regarding family daily affairs, problems with expression of affection and sex in the relationship, and a reduction of common interests and activities shared with husbands (Louisa Lam, 2003).

In Australia, New Zealand and Canada, a small but increasing number of qualitative studies have explored the adjustment experiences of Chinese astronaut family members, predominantly astronaut wives from Hong Kong and Taiwan (e.g., Boyer, 1996; Chiang, 2006; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Teng, 1994). Based on these astronaut spouses' living experiences, it was fond that although living as an astronaut family might have some benefits for marital relationships, such as reducing arguments, increasing mutual respect and revitalizing marriages (Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996), it could also create many marital problems during the period of split family living, even after the family were reunited permanently in the host country (Boyer, 1996; Chiang, 2006; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996).

During this split family living, a typical problem is the huge stress associated with changes in family roles and functioning, as described earlier. Apart from this, weakening spousal mutual trust, no longer sharing commonalties with each other, and concerns for astronauts' extramarital affairs are also reported (Boyer, 1996; Chiang, 2006; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996). After astronaut families are reunited in the host country, many astronauts may have to deal with the changes that have occurred in their spouses (Boyer, 1996). During the time of separate living, astronaut spouses could have improved their English and integrated into the host society well (Boyer, 1996; Pe-Pua et al., 1996). This could increase the couples' differences in perceptions of how things should be done. In some cases, astronaut spouses might have obtained a job and become a breadwinner (Boyer, 1996; Pe-Pua et al., 1996). This could create a role reversal if astronauts cannot find a job in the host country. In recognition of these potential problems, many researchers predict that living as an astronaut family increases the likelihood of divorce, and they call for more research in this area (Aye & Guerin, 2001; Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Wong, 2007).

Marital Adjustment and Separation

Marital adjustment after immigration is a relatively new research topic that has emerged in recent years. It was first introduced by Ataca in a study of 100 Turkish immigrant couples in Canada (Ataca, 1999; Ataca & Berry, 2002). In this study, Ataca found that the psychological, sociocultural and marital adaptation of Turkish immigrants were predicted by different groups of variables, with marital adaptation being predicted by marital stressors that originated from daily marital life and spousal mutual support. Based on this result, she argued that for married immigrants, marital adaptation represents a unique facet of adjustment. In other words, married immigrants experience post-immigration transitions both as an individual and as a couple.

The addition of marital adjustment as a unique domain of adjustment is further supported by a study of 64 sojourner couples stationed in Nepal (James, Hunsley, Navara, & Alles, 2004). In this study, James and associates confirmed that sojourners' marital adjustment was predicted only by marital factors especially the post satisfaction of spouses. In addition, the study found that marital factors, especially the spouses' satisfaction with the post, predicted these sojourners' psychological and sociocultural adjustment, even after the effects of psychological and sociocultural factors were accounted for. Based on this finding, they further suggested that spousal relationship factors should be included in any research of sojourner's individual adjustment (James et al., 2004).

In the early stage of the marital adjustment research on Chinese immigrants, a number of studies examined the influence of demographic factors and the level of acculturation and economic adjustment on marital relationships (Burns, 2005; Iu, 1982; Y. Ma, 1995; Ying, 1991). In general, almost all these factors were found not to predict marital relationships. For example, Ying's (1991) study involved 66 Chinese immigrants. Among them, 72% were born overseas, predominantly in China, and around half of the

sample had lived in the USA for less than 10 years. The study found that Chinese Americans were satisfied with their marriage. Demographic factors and the level of post-immigration adjustment, including birth countries, years living in the USA and immigrant generations (often used as an approximate index of the level of acculturation), education and occupation, failed to predict marital satisfaction. Y. Ma (1995) examined the impact of the level of acculturation on marital satisfaction among 11 Chinese American couples who were predominantly first generation immigrants. Although these couples' level of acculturation was found to correlate positively with their egalitarianism, unexpectedly both the level of acculturation and egalitarianism failed to predict marital satisfaction. Finally, Iu (1982) examined the influence of economic independence on marital satisfaction among 82 Chinese American women who were born in the USA. The study found that these Chinese women's level of economic independence did not correlate with marital satisfaction.

A small number of studies have examined whether acculturation and enculturation affect the gender ideology and marital relationship of Chinese immigrants living in the USA and Canada (e.g., Burns, 2005; Marshall, 2010). Collectively these studies reveal a very complicated pattern of the influence of acculturation and enculturation. For example, Burns (2005) studied 67 Chinese American couples during their transition to parenthood. About one half of these couples was born in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and the other half was born in America. Compared with their Caucasian counterparts, Chinese couples were less egalitarian in gender role attitudes but more satisfied with marriage. Among these Chinese participants, acculturation to American culture was associated positively with egalitarian gender role attitudes. The Egalitarian attitudes appeared to increase Chinese husbands' paternal involvement in childcare and household work. Despite Chinese women handling a majority of the household tasks, both Chinese husbands and wives were more satisfied with the division of household labour than Caucasian couples.

The author speculated that this seemingly contradictory result might be due to the clear expectation of labour division in Chinese culture. The study also found that egalitarian gender role attitudes were positively correlated with marital quality in the majority of domains. However in the domain of role orientation and conventionalism, more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles were associated with more marital distress for both American and foreign born Chinese.

In a Canadian study involving 60 Chinese dating couples, predominantly first generation Chinese immigrants, Marshall (2010) found that Canadian and Chinese culture had different influences on intimate relationships, and that these cultural impacts were different for men and women. Specifically, men's identification with Canadian culture was associated with greater intimacy, as reported by both themselves and their partners. However, women's identification with Canadian culture was associated with their partners' lower intimacy. Regarding the heritage culture, while men's identification with Chinese culture was not associated with their commitment, women's identification with this culture was associated with their greater commitment.

Several studies have further explored how acculturation and enculturation might affect Chinese immigrants and international students' family values, including attitudes towards divorce. In a study of 10 Chinese student couples described earlier, Goff (2004) found that Chinese student couples still held strongly to traditional Chinese values, particularly Chinese views of spousal and familial roles and responsibilities, despite these values being somewhat influenced by American culture. In a study of American born Chinese women described earlier, Iu (1982) found that Chinese women who were stronger in Chinese identity were more conservative about divorce. In sharp contrast, a study by Gao (1997), looking at the marital crisis of 28 Chinese international students and ex-spouses in the USA, showed that Chinese student couples' family values, particularly those in relation to marriage and personal liberty, were strongly influenced by American

culture. They were shocked by the sharp differences in sociocultural and political constraints on personal liberty between the two cultures, and they used divorce as "a way of declaring their independence from overpowering Chinese cultural and political systems" (Gao, 1997, p. 198).

It is important to consider why demographic factors and the level of post-immigration adjustment are not associated with the marital satisfaction of Chinese immigrants, and why some findings regarding the influence of acculturation and enculturation on gender ideology, family values and marital relationship among Chinese immigrants are unexpected and even contradictory. A number of possible reasons have been speculated by researchers in the field. These included using a small or convenient sample, mixing Chinese immigrants from different countries or even in different generations of immigration in one sample, using measurement scales that have not been normalized with Chinese immigrants, and the complexity of the influences of cultural factors, which involve both Eastern collectivism culture and Western individualism culture (e.g., Burns, 2005; Y. Ma, 1995; Marshall, 2010; Ying, 1991).

Apart from these potential reasons, one reason that has not been discussed by these researchers could be that almost all these studies failed to address the influence of spousal relational factors on the marital relationship. These relational factors could include spousal agreement/disagreement over immigration related matters and spousal differences in post-immigration adjustment, particularly acculturation, enculturation and economic adjustment. As described earlier, James et al (2004) suggested that studies on sojourner's individual adjustment should include spousal relational factors in the research design. Compared with individual adjustment, studies on marital adjustment have more reason to pay attention to the influences of spousal relational factors. This is because marital adjustment involves two spouses, therefore their relational factors are likely to have a more direct influence on the marital relationship than immigrants' individual factors, such

as sociodemographic factors or the level of individual post-immigration adjustment. In fact, in one of the previously described studies with Chinese immigrants, two spousal relational factors, including spousal agreement on life aims and moral behaviours, and spousal agreement on relating to in-laws and friends among male Chinese Americans, have already emerged as significant predictors of marital relationships (Ying, 1991).

In more recent years, an increasing number of studies have started to investigate the influence of spousal relational factors on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants. Two recent studies have found that spousal differences in acculturation and economic adjustment affect the marital relationship of Chinese student or immigrant couples. In a qualitative study of the impact of living in American on the marital relationship of Taiwanese overseas student couples, H. F. Chang (2004) found that a match on the level of acculturation between a husband and a wife influenced their relationship. Specifically, when husbands and wives had a similar level of acculturation, acculturation had a positive influence on marriage; otherwise it caused conflicts and decreased marital satisfaction. Y. Zhou (2000) explored the influence of pre- and post-immigration socioeconomic circumstances on the gender relations of Chinese immigrant women. The study found that gender relations of working class and middle-class Chinese women evolved on a different path after immigration. While working-class women strengthened their relative status within the relationship through financial contributions to the family, middle-class women experienced mixed changes, with many of them experiencing significant deterioration in their relative status in the relationship due to their struggle to pursue further education and secure a professional job after immigration.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that spouses' different levels of post-immigration adjustment contribute to marital violence (Jin & Keat, 2010) and that marital violence further contributes to divorce (e.g., J. Chang, 2003; Iu, 1982). Jin and Keat (2010) have examined whether Chinese immigrant couples' difference in the level of

adjustment is related to marital violence by differentiating between male immigrants' perceived (subjective) power loss and the objective power loss that is materialized by different levels of spousal post-immigration adjustment. The study involved 126 first generation Chinese immigrant men, including 64 violent men who were arrested for intimate partner violence and 62 nonviolent men as a control group. The results showed that both violent and nonviolent men experienced loss of decision-making power in favour of their wives after immigration. Further analysis revealed that while nonviolent men's perceived loss of power appeared to be offset by their significant gains in income compared to their wives, the loss of power for violent men was actually materialized by these violent men's lack of significant gains in income and their spouses' near significant gains in education. Based on these results, the authors concluded that as first generation immigrants from a traditionally patriarchal society to the USA, Chinese men are likely to experience a loss of power in favour of their wives. If this subjective loss is materialized by their lack of gains in education and income, compared with their wives, they are more like to use marital violence to regain their power in the marriage. Overall the study suggests that Chinese immigrant men's lower level of post-immigration adjustment, compared to their wives, appears to contribute to marital violence.

To date, although no study has examined whether marital violence would contribute to divorce among Chinese immigrants, a study on American born Chinese women has suggested that family violence is one of the conditions that are most likely to provoke their consideration of divorce (Iu, 1982). Furthermore, a study of Korean immigrant women has clearly suggested that physical and emotional abuse is one of the main self-reported reasons for divorce (J. Chang, 2003).

In summary, the existing studies suggest that marital adjustment is likely to be a unique domain of adjustment for immigrant couples. This adjustment is a very complicated process for Chinese immigrant couples because of the complexity of the

influences of cultural factors, which involve both collectivist culture and individualist culture. While demographic factors and Chinese spouses' individual levels of post-immigration adjustment appear not to affect their marital relationship, spousal relational factors, particularly spousal differences in acculturation, enculturation, and the level of economic adjustment are likely to affect their marital relationship. In addition, some studies suggest that Chinese spouses' differences in the level of post-immigration adjustment can change their power in the family, and in the worst scenario, contribute further to marital violence and separation.

Impacts of Separation and Post-Separation Adjustment

Marital separation can cause considerable emotional, financial and daily life difficulties for individuals. Since the 1970s, numerous studies in Western countries have investigated the impact of marital separation and post-separation adjustment (Amato, 2000, 2010; Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Kitson & Raschke, 1981). In general, studies from Western countries have found that individuals vary in how they adjust to separation and divorce. Depending on pre-separation conditions, personal and interpersonal resources, and ways of coping, some individuals can experience positive outcomes such as self-growth (Kitson & Holmes, 1992; Marks, 1996; Riessman, 1990); others might face short-term declines in economic and psychological wellbeing (Hetherington, 2003); and still others might suffer long-term economic and health consequences (M. Hughes & Waite, 2009; Lorenz, Wickrama, Conger, & Elder, 2006; Stirling, 1989).

Since the adoption of the open-door policy and economic reform in the late 1970s in China, the crude divorce rate has increased sharply from .33‰ in 1979 to 1.8‰ in 2012. By 2012, the crude divorce rate in China was in fact close to that for developed countries, for example, New Zealand (2.0‰) and Australia (2.2‰) (United Nations Statistics Division [UNSD], 2014). The continuing increase in divorce has generated

marked interest in divorce among Chinese politicians, scholars and researchers. A search of articles in China Academic Journals, China Master Theses and China Doctoral Dissertations full-text databases with divorce as a keyword in the title returned, as of April 17, 2017, 8656 records since 1984. Although the vast majority of these articles involve only a discussion of the legal and social issues related to divorce, around 100 empirical studies, including both quantitative and qualitative ones, could be identified. Most of these studies focus on the impact of divorce and post-divorce adjustment. Overall, these studies suggest that divorce has a marked impact on the economic and psychological wellbeing of Chinese individuals, particularly women and children (e.g., Y. P. Chen, 2005; Fu & Shi, 1993; Gai, Zhao, & Zhang, 2007; Lin, 1992; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Xu, Zhang, & Xia, 2007; Yi, 2005; 2006).

A comparison of findings from Chinse and Western studies with regard to the consequences of divorce suggests that Chinese people appear to experience more negative consequences than their Western counterparts. Among the 100 empirical Chinese studies, a few report positive outcomes combined with many negative ones (Y. P. Chen, 2005; Xu & Ye, 2001; Yi, 2005; 2006), and the remaining studies report only negative outcomes (e.g., Fu & Shi, 1993; Gai et al., 2007; Lin, 1992; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Xu, Zhang, et al., 2007). Regarding the impact of parental divorce on children, although children in both Western countries and China suffer similar initial decrements in academic achievement, conduct and psychological wellbeing, they appear to experience opposite trajectories in their long-term adjustment. Specifically, while the wellbeing of most children in Western countries improve over the years after parental divorce (e.g., Amato, 2001; Hetherington, 1993), the wellbeing of children in China appears to deteriorate over time (e.g., Dong, 1991; Fang, 1991; Lo & Wu, 1990). These different adjustment trajectories are also suggested by a literature review that directly compared the consequences of divorce on children from China and the USA (Z. Zhou, Bray, Kehle, & Xin, 2001).

This section of the literature review focuses on adults' post-separation adjustment. It includes six sub-sections. In the first sub-section, Western theories regarding post-separation adjustment are reviewed. It is followed by a review of Chinese family values and traditions regarding divorce. In the third sub-section, studies concerning how individuals cope with emotional, financial, and daily life challenges after separation are reviewed. Detaching from ex-spouses and developing co-operative parenting relationships with them is also central to post-separation adjustment. Studies concerning how individuals redefine parental relationships after separation are reviewed in the fourth sub-section. Social support has been documented as the most consistent protective factor for post-separation adjustment (R. Hughes, 1988; Krumrei, Coit, Martin, Fogo, & Mahoney, 2007; Smerglia, Miller, & Kort-Butler, 1999), so current studies on social support after separation become the focus of the review for the fifth sub-section. In the last sub-section, a brief review of the long-term consequences of divorce is presented. Because almost no studies to date have been conducted on the post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrants, this review focuses on research in Western countries and in China.

Western Theories of Post-Separation Adjustment

Since the 1970s, a number of theories and conceptual perspectives have been employed to explain how individuals cope with the loss of marriage and associated life challenges, and how divorce and associated life challenges lead to diverse outcomes for individuals (e.g., Amato, 2000; Carbone, 1994; Emery & Dillon, 1994; Hetherington, 1999). Some theories and perspectives are applied to a specific group of people or a specific aspect of post-separation adjustment. For example, the feminist theory on divorce focuses on the adjustment of divorced women (Carbone, 1994). It explains how gender role ideology, such as women's domestic particularly child rearing responsibility, and divorce policies, such as limited provision of child support, put divorcing women at a disadvantaged position and lead to a bleaker economic outcome than for divorced men

(Carbone, 1994). The attachment perspective on divorce focuses on the individuals' management of their psychological relationship with an ex-spouses (Feeney & Monin, 2008). It explains how the continuing emotional bonds, including both positive and negative ones, with an ex-spouse after divorce affect post-divorce adjustment and lead to different adjustment outcomes (Feeney & Monin, 2008). The family system theory focuses on the redefining of post-divorce parental and parent-child relationships. It explains how different types of parental and parent-child relationships might lead to different adjustment outcomes for children (Emery, 2012).

However, the vast majority of research in the field, as commented on by Amato (2000), focuses on generic post-divorce adjustment processes for adults and/or children, and links their work to well established stress perspectives, such as the family stress and coping theory (Hill, 1949) and the general stress theory (Thoits, 1995). Some researchers have modified a general stress perspective and developed a model specifically for post-divorce adjustment, such as the double ABCX model for children's post-divorce adjustment (Plunkett, Sanchez, Henry, & Robinson, 1997), and the risk and resiliency perspective for divorce and remarriage (Hetherington, 1999). Because these general stress perspectives and modified models have much in common, Amato (2000) combines their various elements into a general divorce-stress-adjustment perspective.

The divorce-stress-adjustment perspective views divorce as a process rather than a discrete event (Amato, 2000). This process starts from a feeling of estrangement while a couple are still living together and ends long after the legal divorce is completed. The divorcing process sets up numerous stressful events and life challenges, such as moving from a family home to more affordable accommodation, coping with financial loss and economic hardship, difficulties with raising children and working, challenges with single parenting or non-residential parenting, and loss of support from in-laws and friends (Amato, 2000). These stressors, such as economic hardship, can be viewed as the short-

term outcomes of divorce, and on the other hand, represent a mechanism through which divorce leads to different long-term consequences for different individuals. Whether divorce brings an individual a negative, natural or positive outcome depends on a number of protective factors, including people's view of divorce, their personal resources, such as savings, employment status, and personal social skills, their interpersonal resources, such as support from extended families and friends, and societal support, such as community services and single parent benefits (Amato, 2000). For example, if an individual sees divorce as a personal tragedy, has less personal resources and social support, and lives in a less supportive society, he or she might experience more negative outcomes in the long-term. As stated by Amato, the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective "explicitly focuses on the contingencies that lead to negative, positive, or mixed outcomes for individuals" (Amato, 2000, p. 1273).

Because this study focuses on the general process of Chinese immigrants' post-separation adjustment, and also because Amato's divorce-stress-adjustment perspective, Berry's bilinear acculturation model, and concepts of post-immigration marital and family adjustment are all based on general stress perspectives, Amato's perspective of post-divorce adjustment has been chosen to guide the investigation of the post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrants in this study.

Chinese Family Values and Traditions of Divorce

The family has been viewed as the most fundamental institution in Chinese society for thousands of years. This view of the family originated from the Chinese philosophy of Confucianism. With a history of 2500 years, Confucianism is deeply imbedded in Chinese culture. It provides a basis for moral conduct and interpersonal relationships for Chinese society (Yao, 2000). Confucian doctrines stress the importance of five cardinal relations, including ruler-minister, father-son, elder brother-younger brother, husband-wife, and

friend-friend, for the stability and harmony of a society (Yao, 2000). Among the five relationships, three relations exist within a family.

In traditional Chinese society, family roles and relationships were clearly defined in a hierarchal structure, with generation, age and gender being the most important parameters (Yao, 2000). Within this hierarchy, ancestors and elders were respected. Male elders and a father had ultimate authority over family affairs. A woman was supposed to follow the males in her family: her father before she married, her husband after she married, and her sons in widowhood. Children were expected to bring honour to the family and to take care of their elders. Sons were expected to carry on the ancestral line. The intergenerational tie between a father and his son(s) superseded the marital bond (Pimentel, 1994). Extending the ancestral line, mutual support between family members, and maintaining the family's social status were viewed as the most fundamental family functions. Individual members were required to sacrifice themselves if their needs contradicted with family interests. Although this rigid hierarchy might restrict the freedom of individual members, it gave them a strong feeling of security, belonging and identity (Louisa Lam, 2003).

In traditional Chinese society, a marriage was usually arranged, with the purpose of carrying on the family line. Once married, Chinese women had to live with and serve their husband's family. There was little space for love and romance in this marriage (Pimentel, 1994). Consistent with Chinese family values, divorce was viewed as an aversive familial and social event, as it affected not only family functioning but also social stability. This is indicated by a Chinese saying, "breaking a marriage is worse than destroying ten temples" (Xu, Zhang, & Amato, 2011). Traditionally divorce was decided by a husband's parents and other elders in his extended family. It was decided by considering the interests of the whole family rather than the well-being of an individual spouse. Since the seventh century, "qi chu zhi tiao" (seven conditions under which a

husband could divorce his wife) had been a well-established reason for divorce until it was abolished by the Chinese government in the 1950 Marriage Law (Freedman, 1979; Shek, 2006). It included filial disobedience, having no son, adultery, jealousy, deadly disease, gossip and theft. Under this rule, a wife was unable to divorce her husband. This is seen in the Chinese saying "marry a chicken, live with the chicken; marry a dog, live with the dog". After divorce, children would live with the farther and his extended family and the wife would go back to her natal family. The links between children and their mother and between the two extended families would be cut completely (Freedman, 1979).

Since the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese government has been another source of influence shaping Chinese families (Shek, 2006). With the party's 'sacred mission' to liberate the oppressed, particularly women, some feudal practices, such as arranged marriage and bride-purchasing, were abolished. Since 1949, women have achieved much political, educational and professional equality with men. They are granted equal rights to divorce and property arrangements (Diamant, 2000). Despite all these changes, the family's political and social functions are still emphasized, due to the party's emphasis on state interests and the lack of social resources to look after elders. Although the 1950 Marriage Law entitled an individual's right to divorce, it was based on the concept of "fault divorce" (Tian, 2004). It required a couple to follow through a complex procedure before they could obtain a divorce decree. This included consents from both spouses, a recommendation letter from spouses' employers or neighbourhood committees, and a lengthy court mediation. Overall, in China, divorce was strongly discouraged and was difficult in practice until recent decades (Tian, 2004). This might be one of the reasons why the crude divorce rate in China remained as low as .33‰ in 1979 (UNSD, 2014).

Since the adoption of the open-door policy and the economic reforms in the late 1970s, China has experienced dramatic social changes. These include rapid improvement

in the economy and family finances, ongoing industrialization, capitalization and globalization, and increasing exposure to different cultural values and social movements (Shek, 2006). At the family level, women have achieved more economic, educational and professional equality with men (Shek, 2006). All these changes have influenced Chinese family values, functions and relationships. Shek (2006) summarized the changes in Chinese family values that have occurred in the past 30 years as a gradual shift from traditional collectivism to westernized individualism. During this period, Chinese attitudes towards marriage have also shifted from meeting biological needs and carrying on the ancestral line to meeting a couple's emotional needs and their expectations for a quality life. As a result of these changes, an increasing number of Chinese now view divorce as an acceptable solution to an unhappy marriage (Tian, 2004).

Since 1980, the Marriage Law has been amended three times with the purpose of adopting the concept of "no fault divorce", simplifying the administrative process for divorce, and protecting women and children's rights (Tian, 2004). In 2003, the new Marriage Registration took effect. It further simplified the administrative procedure of divorce to the extent that a couple could get divorced instantly if they could reach an agreement on divorce and settlement (Tian, 2004). These legal changes contributed not only to the continuing increase in divorce, but also to the changes in divorce and settlement (Tian, 2004). As suggested by a number of Chinese census data, court divorce records and studies, in the past three decades, the majority of divorces were initiated by women. During this period, the percentage of women who obtained custody of children increased from about a quarter in the early 1980s to nearly half in recent years. In this period, the majority of custody parents obtained an alimony settlement, either one-off or continuous payment, from non-custody parents to cover their living costs and particularly the children's living costs (e.g., H. Liu, 1998; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Tian, 2004; Xu,

2007; Xu, Zhang, et al., 2007). All these represent a marked change from Chinese traditions of divorce and settlement.

Without doubt, the ongoing social changes in China have had a marked influence on Chinese family values and traditions of divorce. Some scholars argue that these social changes have put Chinese families at the crossroads of modernism and traditionalism. They anticipate more changes towards Westernized individualism to come (Quach & Anderson, 2008; Shek, 2006). Many others, however, argue that the family in China remains universal and stable. They believe that traditional Chinese family values as well as Chinese traditions of divorce will remain influential because of the resilience of Chinese culture and the ongoing influence from the government (Y. Y. Chen, 2003; Louisa Lam, 2003; Quach & Anderson, 2008; Xu, Xie, Liu, Xia, & Liu, 2007; Xu & Ye, 1999). It is important to note that, on the political level, the Chinese government still stresses the social functions of the family and discourages informal partnership and divorce (Y. Y. Chen, 2003; Xu, Xie, et al., 2007). In fact, informal partnership in China is illegal and children born from this relationship are not entitled to civilian rights. Although the divorce rate in China has recently increased to a level similar to that for Western countries, some scholars argue that the actual rate of divorce in China might be still lower than that for Western countries, because partnership is rare in China but common in Western countries and the dissolution of this relationship is not counted into the rate of divorce (e.g., Xu, 2011).

In terms of perception of divorce, many Chinese people still view divorce as a very negative family and social event. Divorced women, particularly those with children, still experience difficulties in finding a job or developing another intimate relationship due to the strong stigma attached to divorced women (Xu, Zhang, et al., 2007). With regard to divorce settlements, while an increasing number of children now live with their mothers, more than half of them, particularly those in rural areas, still live with their fathers and

even extended families after parental divorce. If a couple has two children, it is likely that each parent will have one child after the divorce (H. Liu, 1998; Shijun Wang, 2002; Xu, 2007). Although the vast majority of custody parents now obtain alimony from ex-spouses on their divorce agreement or court orders, many non-custody parents refuse to pay. In some cases, custody parents decline this payment because they worry about the negative effects of the continuing parental contact on their children (Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003). To date, in China shared child custody is rare, and co-parenting is particularly difficult. Chinese studies found that at least half of divorced parents experience a high level of conflict after divorce and many of them simply cut off all the parental links (Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003).

Because recent Chinese immigrants hold strongly to Chinese culture, as described earlier, Chinese family values and traditions of divorce are likely to have a strong influence on their divorce and post-divorce adjustment. Therefore, the Chinese culture perspective is also used to guide this study.

Managing Life Challenges after Separation

Economic difficulties following marital separation are significant for most adults, especially women. Many studies in Western countries show that women experience a marked decline (ranging from 23% to 40%) in family income in the first year after marital disruption, with a substantial portion falling into poverty (e.g., Avellar & Smock, 2005; Smock, Manning, & Gupta, 1999; Tach & Eads, 2015). In China, a number of studies suggest that divorced women, particularly those with custody children, suffer severe economic hardship following divorce, with up to 50% of single mothers having to rely on extended families for accommodation and financial support (Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2006). Many factors have been found to contribute to separated women' economic hardship in Western countries. These include less work experience during marriage, disproportionate childcare and financial responsibility for children after

separation, and incompatibility of daily childcare and full-time work (Holden & Smock, 1991). For divorced women in China, difficulties in finding a job due to employers' discrimination against divorced women, lack of government financial support for single mothers, and limited child support from ex-husbands also contribute to women's financial difficulties (Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Su, 2010; C. Zhang, 2006; Xu, Zhang, et al., 2007).

Marital separation also affects men's economic conditions. In Western countries, while some men might experience substantial gains in income after separation, the majority suffer a decline in their living standard, particularly when their ex-wives were the primary breadwinner before separation (McManus & DiPrete, 2001). Marital property and financial resources are also divided between the couple, often leaving each person less well off financially. In China, almost no study has, to date, investigated the economic condition of divorced men. Given that more than half of the children live with their fathers after parental divorce (H. Liu, 1998; Shijun Wang, 2002; Xu, 2007), and that Chinese men are less likely to ask for alimony from their ex-wives due to the influence of Chinese traditions of divorce (Freedman, 1979; C. Zhang, 2006), divorced Chinese men are also likely to experience economic difficulties following divorce.

A number of studies have found that economic hardship following divorce mediates the impact of divorce on post-divorce adjustment, with unemployment, decreased income, and a decline in social status associating with worse social and psychological adjustment (Booth & Amato, 1991; Kitson & Holmes, 1992; Marks, 1996; Pett & Vaughan-Cole, 1986; Thabes, 1997). So far no study has investigated separated Chinese immigrants' economic condition and its impact on post-separation adjustment. Given that many recent Chinese immigrants, particularly those in New Zealand, experience serious difficulties in economic adjustment, as described earlier, this adjustment difficulty is likely to undermine separated Chinese immigrants' ability to cope

with further economic hardship caused by separation, and therefore amplify the influence of economic hardship on their post-separation adjustment.

For separated parents, managing daily life difficulties after separation is another challenge. For resident parents, the most common challenges include daily care and responsibility for children, difficulties in finding affordable childcare, managing incompatible demands of work and/or study and daily childcare, managing distressed children, and filling in the parenting role that was previously assumed by ex-spouses (Hamilton, 1999; Hetherington, 1999; Whitaker, Whitaker, & Jackson, 2014). Although these challenges are typically associated with separated mothers, in the past two decades an increasing number of fathers involved in shared or sole care of children also face these challenges (Nielsen, 2011; Smyth & Moloney, 2008). As for divorced fathers in China, more than half of them become residential parents after divorce and therefore have to face these challenges. Based on studies conducted in Western countries, all these challenges, particularly sole childcare responsibility, are negatively associated with the post-divorce adjustment of resident mothers (Goldberg, Greenberger, Hamill, & O'Neil, 1992; Kitson & Holmes, 1992; Parlin & Johnson, 1977; Simons & Associates, 1996).

Managing daily life difficulties, particularly those associating with non-residential parenting, is also a challenge for non-resident parents, typically fathers. In Western countries, a number of non-residential parental role strains have been identified. These include: loss of contact with children, concerns about their welfare, difficulties with meeting child support payments, challenges with child visitation, maintaining parent-child relationships, and disciplining children when they visit (Bailey, 2003; Frieman, 2002; Umberson & Williams, 1993; White & Bloom, 1981). All these parenting challenges have been found to mediate the impact of divorce on the adjustment of non-residential parents, with more parental role strains associating with a higher level of distress (Lawson & Thompson, 1996; Stewart, Schwebel, & Fine, 1986; Umberson & Williams, 1993).

In China, both fathers and mothers have an almost equal chance of becoming non-residential parents after divorce. While some Chinese non-residential parents experience parental role strains similar to those experienced by their Western counterparts, others have to face 'the loss of children' because resident parents do not allow them to have any contact with their children (Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003). Many of these non-residential parents, particularly women, reported worrying about their children's wellbeing, but felt there was nothing they could do to change either the child(ren)'s living arrangements or the co-parenting relationship due to the lack of clarity of the relevant regulations and the lengthy legal process (Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Su, 2010; C. Zhang, 2006). All these parental role strains, particularly 'the loss of children', are likely to affect the post-divorce adjustment of Chinese non-residential parents, but no study in China has to date explored this effect.

A number of qualitative studies in Western countries, Hong Kong and China have explored how separated adults, typically women, cope with life challenges after separation (e.g., Bailey, 2003; Hamilton, 1999; Hung, Kung, & Chan, 2004; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Molina, 2000; Rawlins, 2014; Wiener, 1996; Yi, 2005). These studies involve separated adults from different ethnic backgrounds including whites, American Africans, and Chinese in Hong Kong and China. Overall, the common coping strategies identified in these studies include: justifying divorce and reconstructing a positive single-parent identity (Hamilton, 1999; Hung et al., 2004), adjusting job or education expectations to meet their children's needs (Molina, 2000; Rawlins, 2014), matching work and/or study schedules to parental responsibilities (Molina, 2000; Rawlins, 2014), learning daily life skills and residential or non-residential parenting skills (Bailey, 2003; Rawlins, 2014), redefining the parental relationship (Hamilton, 1999; Wiener, 1996), and seeking family and social support (Hung et al., 2004; Rawlins, 2014; Wiener, 1996; Yi, 2005).

It is important to note that for divorced individuals, particularly women, in China, the main coping strategy is asking for support from extended families. For example, in a study involving 500 divorced women, mostly single mothers, the vast majority relied on extended families, particularly their own parents, for financial and childcare support, with 52% of the women obtaining accommodation from their parents and relatives immediately after the divorce (Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003).

Redefining the Relationship with the Ex-Spouse

Redefining relationships with ex-spouses, including psychological detachment and developing a co-parenting relationship, is also challenging for separated individuals (Hamilton, 1999; Kitson, 1982; Spanier & Casto, 1979). Detaching from the ex-spouse is likely to evoke strong emotional responses, as many individuals have established a strong emotional bond with each other during courtship and marriage. For individuals who have children at the time of marital dissolution, divorce only means the end of the marital relationship but not the co-parenting relationship. Even though they have strong emotional responses towards each other, they have to communicate and develop a co-parenting relationship. For these individuals, the strong emotional responses would make it more difficult to manage co-parenting, and vice versa. In this sub-section, studies on these two related topics, detaching from ex-spouses and developing co-operative parental relationships, are reviewed.

Many studies in Western countries have explored spousal attachment after separation and the effects of this continued attachment on post-separation adjustment. A number of studies have found that this psychological attachment, including both positive attachment, such as preoccupation with the ex-spouse, feelings of love or affection for the ex-spouse and wish for reconciliation, and negative attachment, such as intensely negative feelings for the ex-spouse, anger towards and chronic conflicts with the ex-spouse, are common after marital separation, with at least one quarter of individuals experiencing

intense attachment for a significant period of time after divorce (e.g., Berman, 1985; Brown, Felton, Whiteman, & Manela, 1980; Kitson, 1982; Spanier & Casto, 1979). This ongoing attachment after marital disruption is found to affect post-separation adjustment, with stronger attachment, particularly persistent negative emotions towards the ex-spouse, associating with more problems in adjusting (Berman, 1988; Thabes, 1997; Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989).

A number of pre- and post-separation factors have been found to predict spousal attachment after separation. In general, those individuals who have low-status jobs and little education (Berman, 1985), who have more positive feelings towards the ex-spouse prior to separation (Berman, 1985), who do not want divorce and have not initiated the physical separation (Berman, 1985; Brown et al., 1980; Kitson, 1982), who have more young children, particularly male children, at the time of separation (Berman, 1985), and who experience more difficulties with single parenting or more tension in contact with the ex-spouse after separation (Berman, 1985; Kitson, 1982) are more likely to experience prolonged attachment after separation. In addition, the individual's attitude towards divorce is also found to predict continued attachment after separation, with people who hold negative attitudes towards divorce, such as viewing divorce as immoral, having stronger attachment after separation (Hongyu Wang & Amato, 2000).

In China, a number of studies have suggested that intense spousal attachments after divorce are common (e.g., Li & Feng, 1991; Yun & Pan, 1992). For example, Yun and Pan (1992) investigated the psychological statuses and emotional responses of individuals to their ex-spouses following divorce. The study involved 1254 divorced couples. All these couples obtained divorce papers through an intermediate people's court in Jiamusi City, a city in the northern province of Heilongjiang. Through checking the court records and face-to-face interviews, the researchers found that the vast majority of spouses experienced both positive attachment, such as preoccupation with ex-spouses, and feelings

of affections for ex-spouses, and negative attachment, such as anger towards ex-spouses and hatred of them. It is important to note that around one third of spouses in this study expressed very intense anger. Some of them in fact took action to revenge their ex-spouses, for example, emotionally hurting their ex-spouses by not allowing them to visit their children, destroying ex-spouse's reputation by disclosing his/her private matters to the public, or making ex-spouses suffer economic hardship by refusing to take custody of the children or to pay the living costs of the children (Yun & Pan, 1992). Chinese people's family values, such as viewing marriage as a life-time commitment and divorce as an aversive family and social event, may be an important factor that contributes to this intense spousal attachment after divorce (Yun & Pan, 1992).

Compared with spousal attachment after separation, the post-separation co-parenting relationship appears to have attracted more research attention. This could be due to the well-documented negative impacts of post-separation parental conflicts on the adjustment of adults and particularly children (e.g., Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington, 1999; Leon, 2003; Masheter, 1991; G. Nelson, 1981).

Numerous studies in Western countries have investigated the types of post-separation co-parenting relationships and how parental relationship had evolved over time. Several patterns of post-separation co-parenting relationships have been reported. In general, while some parents display a low level of parental conflicts and a high level of parental co-operation at the time of separation and remain stable over time (Drapeau, Gagne, Saint-Jacques, Lepine, & Ivers, 2009), more than half of the parents appear to experience a moderate to high level of parental conflicts and have inadequate co-operation in parenting (Bacon & McKenzie, 2004; Drapeau et al., 2009; Maccoby, Depner, & Mnookin, 1990; Whiteside, 1998). Among parents with a moderate to high level of conflict, a majority appear to improve their co-parenting in a short period of time after separation; however, up to a third either maintain the high level of conflicts for years or

increase their level of conflicts over time (Bacon & McKenzie, 2004; Drapeau et al., 2009; Fischer, De Graaf, & Kalmijn, 2005; Maccoby et al., 1990). For these conflicted parents, co-parenting is particularly difficult and some parents simply drop out of their children's lives completely (Maccoby et al., 1990).

A number of Western studies have examined the factors that might contribute to post-separation parental conflict. In general, while child living arrangements appear not to systematically relate to parental conflicts, many other factors, such as low family income, a high level of conflict before and during the time of separation, and styles of conflict resolution, have been reported to contribute to ongoing parental conflicts after marital separation (Camara & Resnick, 1989; Drapeau et al., 2009; Fischer et al., 2005; Maccoby et al., 1990).

Developing a co-operative parental relationship after divorce appears particularly difficult for divorced Chinese couples. As described in the Chinese Family Values and Traditions of Divorce sub-section, divorced Chinese couples experience many problems with child custody, alimony payment, and child visitation, with many spouses simply cutting off all parental links after divorce. A number of studies have explored the factors that contribute to this extremely conflicted relationship among divorced Chinese spouses. At the societal level, the influence of Chinese traditions of divorce, the lack of norms for post-divorce co-operative parental relationship in the society, and the ambivalence of co-parenting related laws and regulations in the Chinese legal system have been suggested (Su, 2010; C. Zhang, 2006). At the individual and family level, pre-divorce spousal conflicts, particularly physical abuse, lengthy legal fighting over child custody, ongoing and sometimes extremely negative emotions towards ex-spouses, and worries over the negative effects of continuing parental contact after divorce on the children's well-being are commonly reported to contribute to this extreme pattern of parental relationship after divorce (e.g., Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003).

Social Support after Separation

How separated individuals mobilize individual, interpersonal and social resources to cope with separation and associated life challenges is also an integrative part of post-separation adjustment. Of all these resources, social support attracts the most attention (Amato, 2000). Some studies have suggested that separated individuals, especially women, are more likely to seek social support than married counterparts, particularly during the period of separation and the immediate aftermath (G. Nelson, 1995; Tietjen, 1985). Many studies have documented social support as a consistent protective factor that moderates the impact of divorce and associated stressors and promotes the well-being of separated individuals (R. Hughes, 1988; Krumrei et al., 2007; Smerglia et al., 1999).

Numerous studies have investigated the sources, forms, and determinants of social support after marital separation. Regarding the sources, support from extended families, including parents, siblings and children, and personal networks including friends, particularly same sex friends, neighbours, acquaintance and new partners, are mostly common; this is followed by support from self-support groups, church communities, and social service agencies (Chiriboga, Coho, Stein, & Roberts, 1979; Duran-Aydintug, 1998; M. Henderson & Argyle, 1985). Apart from these sources, some studies found that men seem to obtain more support from new partners and social networks, while women tend to obtain more support from families and friends (Burrell, 2002). In addition, some studies found that the family of origin is less likely to provide support if they disapprove of the divorce (Kitson, Moir, & Mason, 1982). Regarding the forms of support, emotional support, financial assistance, practical support with childcare and other daily life difficulties, and the provision of information and advice are commonly reported (M. Henderson & Argyle, 1985; McKenry & Price, 1991). Finally, in terms of determinants, while some studies found that being a woman, being young at the time of separation, and having a higher level of education are associated with more support after marital

disruption (Chiriboga et al., 1979; Duran-Aydintug, 1998), other studies found that divorced individuals with more life stressors, such as rearing more children or experiencing other life stressors in addition to divorce, are more likely to obtain support (Duran-Aydintug, 1998; Kitson et al., 1982).

A number of studies have also investigated the differential effects of social support on post-divorce adjustment. Krumrei et al (2007) reviewed studies in this field and concluded that support from network relationships, such as a single parent group or a church community, seems to be more important in promoting positive adjustment such as daily life functioning and life satisfaction, while support from specific relationships, such as one-on-one contact with a friend, appears to be more important in protecting individuals from maladjustment such as distress and depression. In addition, some studies found that socioemotional support, such as having someone listen to personal problems, is more likely to have positive effects on post-divorce adjustment than material and practical support, such as financial assistance and baby-sitting (Smerglia et al., 1999). In fact, a small number of studies show that for divorced individuals, receiving material support, particularly receiving it along with advice, is associated with higher psychological distress (Kitson & Holmes, 1992; Miller, Smerglia, Gaudet, & Kitson, 1998).

A number of studies in China have also explored social support after divorce, with its protective effects on individual's adjustment being consistently suggested (e.g., Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Xu, 2007; Yi, 2005). With regard to the sources and forms of support, while divorced Chinese individuals do not receive much support, particularly financial, legal, and mental health support, from government and social service agencies (Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Xu, 2007; Yi, 2005; C. Zhang, 2006), they obtain, as described in the Managing Life Challenges after Separation and Chinese Family Values and Traditions of Divorce sections, enormous support, including emotional, housing, financial, childcare, and practical daily life support from extended families, particularly parents, and personal

networks, especially friends (Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2005;). The lack of support for divorced people, particularly single parents, in China's welfare and social service system, collective family values and particularly Chinese people's belief in mutual support between family members, are commonly viewed as contributing to this unique pattern of social support in China (Y. Y. Chen, 2003; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Su, 2010; Xu, 2007; Yi, 2005; C. Zhang, 2006).

To date, little research has examined social support among separated Chinese immigrants. However a number of studies have investigated the support-seeking behaviours among Chinese immigrants with medically unexplained fatigue, emotional distress, and other emotional problems. Among this population, the underutilization of support from health services has been commonly reported (e.g., Kung, 2003; R. Lee, Rodin, Devins, & Weiss, 2001; Loo, Tong, & True, 1989; Ying & Miller, 1992). For example, a study on 1747 Chinese Americans (95% being immigrants) in the USA found that 75% of respondents did not seek any help for emotional distress. Among those who did, the vast majority sought support from relatives and friends, and only 6% sought support from mental health specialists and 4% from medical doctors. Among those with a diagnosable mental disorder, only 19% sought support from mental health or medical services. Based on these results, the author concluded that Chinese Americans are much less likely than their American counterparts to utilize health services for their emotional distress and mental disorders (Kung, 2003).

Among Chinese immigrants with medically unexplained fatigue, emotional distress, and other emotional problems, a number of cultural and immigration-related barriers to social support have been identified. These include limited English skills, the unavailability of help resources, particularly Chinese-speaking service providers, concerns of service providers' ability to understand the social context of Chinese immigrant's lives, and Chinese beliefs about personal problems and coping, such as seeing personal and

emotional problems as a lack of will power and immaturity, and viewing the disclosure of personal problems to outsiders as a shame to the family (Kung, 2003; R. Lee et al., 2001; Loo et al., 1989; Tse, 2004; Ying & Miller, 1992).

Long-Term Consequences of Divorce

Studies in the past 50 years have shown consistently that divorce has a marked impact on the individuals' economic, psychological and physical well-being, particularly in the short term (Amato, 2000, 2010; Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Kitson & Raschke, 1981). Numerous studies found that separated and divorced individuals, especially women, experience greater financial difficulties when compared with their married counterparts (Forste & Heaton, 2004; McManus & DiPrete, 2001; Smock et al., 1999; Teachman & Paasch, 1994). For divorced women, particularly those who divorce at a young age, the economic cost of marital disruption could last for years (Stirling, 1989), despite some evidence that this cost of marital disruption for women appears to be lessening in more recent years due to the improvement in married women's earnings and their receipt of income from child support and personal networks (McKeever, 2001; Tach & Eads, 2015). A large number of studies also found that separated and divorced individuals, compared with their married counterparts, experience a lower level of happiness and a higher level of psychological distress, anxiety and depression (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Bierman, Fazio, & Milkie, 2006; Lorenz et al., 2006; Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2009). This psychological impact is greater for women than men and greater for mothers with young children than childless women (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). Once again, some studies found that the psychological impact of divorce could be a long-term consequence (Johnson & Wu, 2002; Lorenz et al., 2006). Finally, a number of studies found that divorce is associated with the individuals' poor physical health. This consequence, unlike the distress that increases immediately after separation, appears to

develop slowly over years and is more likely to be a long-term cost of marital disruption (M. Hughes & Waite, 2009; Lorenz et al., 2006).

A number of studies have suggested that divorce seems to have similar impact on individuals' well-being irrespective of their culture and nationality. For example, two cross-nation studies found that separated and divorced individuals had in general lower psychological well-being than married individuals in 21 countries such as Mexico, Japan, Germany, Netherland and Australia (Mastekaasa, 1994; Stack & Eshleman, 1998). Studies in China suggest that divorced individuals, particularly women, suffer serious financial difficulties and psychological distress, anxiety and depression (Du, Cui, Du, & Cui, 2002; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2005; 2006; Yun & Pan, 1992).

Although individuals suffer a marked decline in economic and health wellbeing following marital disruption, and some individuals might never recover, the majority appear to adjust well and function adequately in their daily family and social roles in a short period of time following marital disruption (Hetherington, 2003). Some individuals could even experience positive outcomes after marital disruption. In this regard, although some specific positive outcomes, such as divorced mothers' improvement in career opportunities (Acock & Demo, 1994), are reported by an individual study, the most consistently reported positive outcome is personal growth, including a higher level of autonomy, more self-confidence, a stronger sense of control, and more interpersonal skills (Kitson & Holmes, 1992; Marks, 1996; Riessman, 1990). In China, women's personal growth after divorce, such as a higher level of autonomy and self-confidence, is also reported by a small number of studies (e.g., Y. P. Chen, 2005; Yi, 2005; 2006).

In recent years, an increasing number of studies have investigated what factors promote positive adjustment, particularly personal growth, after divorce. Some studies found that the quality of the pre-separation marital relationship affects individuals'

adjustment after divorce, with individuals who experience a higher level of pre-separation marital conflicts, reporting better psychological adjustment, including an increase in happiness and a decrease in depression after divorce (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Wheaton, 1990). Relief at escaping from an aversive marriage is commonly used to explain how this positive adjustment outcome could occur (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Wheaton, 1990). Qualitative studies in China also found that divorced women who suffered chronic marital conflicts, particularly marital abuse, before divorce, reported a higher level of autonomy, a stronger sense of control, and increased self-respect and self-confidence after divorce (e.g., Y. P. Chen, 2005; Yun & Pan, 1992). An American study on divorced Korean immigrant women who suffered marital abuse found a similar result with regard to personal growth after divorce (Y. Lee & Bell-Scott, 2009).

Other studies, typically qualitative ones, explored individual's experiences of positive adjustment, particularly personal growth after divorce, by examining how they manage their lives and develop an identity and lifestyle that is not tied to their previous marriage. In this regard, a small number of studies, including a study on divorced Chinese women in Hong Kong, found that managing multiple life difficulties after divorce is very challenging for divorced individuals but this process has a potential to promote their personal growth, particularly self-confidence and self-respect (Duffy, Thomas, & Trayner, 2002; Hung et al., 2004). This is particularly the case for those single mothers who have successfully met their children's needs, pursued their own dreams, and developed an identity as a self-reliant single parent (Duffy et al., 2002; Hung et al., 2004). Some Western studies also show that the development of a social life and particularly an intimate relationship not only benefits divorced individuals' economic and psychological wellbeing, but also helps them develop an identity and lifestyle that is not tied to the previous marriages (Tschann et al., 1989; Hongyu Wang & Amato, 2000). Some

qualitative studies suggest that individuals are likely to experience personal growth in the process of developing this 'new' identity and lifestyle (e.g., Duffy et al., 2002).

In summary, although marital disruption can cause marked turmoil in individuals' lives, there are variations in adjustment outcomes: some suffer constant economic, psychological and/or health consequences, some experience a temporary decline in economic and psychological well-beings, and still some others experience positive changes in their lives and themselves. As commented by Amato in the decade review of divorce studies, if more studies had explicitly searched for positive outcomes, more positive effects of divorce might have been found (Amato, 2000).

CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

Introduction

Divorce has been a topic of research for about fifty years (Amato, 2000, 2010; Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Kitson & Raschke, 1981). However, in one area of the research, "studies of racial and ethnic minorities are frustratingly rare" (Amato, 2000, p. 1282). Chinese immigrants are one of these neglected minorities, and they might be the most neglected ethnic group within immigrant communities.

In the past three decades, Chinese immigrants have been one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in common immigration destination countries (Huiyao Wang et al., 2015). Some studies have suggested that immigration might be associated with an increase in divorce among recent Chinese immigrants (Khoo & Zhao, 2001; Y. Zhang, 2008). Despite this research, fewer studies on divorce have been conducted on Chinese immigrants, compared with those on Hispanic and African immigrants (e.g., Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Frank & Wildsmith, 2005; Phillips & Sweeney, 2005; Rogers, 2004). Among Asian immigrants, some studies have investigated the experience of divorce within a specific Asian ethnic group such as Korean immigrants (J. Chang, 1999; Y. Lee & Bell-Scott, 2009) or Asian immigrant women as a combined group (Song, 1991), but little research has to date explored the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants. Because of the lack of studies on this population, we know little about what is going on with Chinese immigrants when they divorce.

This study investigates the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants who live in New Zealand and who have experienced separation and/or divorce. It includes two research projects designed to complement each other through the different perspectives provided by the two groups of participants. The first project, referred to as the immigrants

project, investigates the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants who separated and/or divorced in New Zealand. The second project, referred to as the professionals project, investigates the same phenomenon from the perspective of professionals who have had working experience with divorcing and/or divorced Chinese immigrants in this country. The two research projects, including the methods employed and the results from each project, will be presented individually in the following three chapters.

In this chapter, the rationale and methodological approach that guide the overall planning and research process are presented. These include the aims of the study, the overview of the two research projects, the qualitative approach to the studied phenomenon, the strategies and methods for data collection and analysis, and finally a statement of my professional and personal connections to the study subject.

The Aims of the Study

This study has three broad aims. The first and also the central aim of this study is to understand the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants. The validity of this aim is strongly supported by the lack of understanding of the divorce of Chinese immigrants, as described in Chapter One and the beginning of this chapter.

In the study, the Chinese immigrants' entire experiences in relation to their divorce in New Zealand will be explored. These include, but are not limited to, their experiences of post-immigration adjustment stress and coping, their experiences of how this adjustment stress and coping process influenced their marital relationships, their experiences of marital conflicts and decision-making in relation to divorce, their experiences of challenges after separation and how they coped with these challenges and adjust to life after separation, and finally their experiences of the consequences that resulted from separation and/or divorce. As outlined in the previous chapter, in recent

years, Chinese immigrants' motivation for immigration, post-immigration adjustment, marital relationship, separation, and post-separation adjustment are likely to be affected by transnational migration and multiculturalism. As such, the influences of living as an astronaut family, the host and home culture, and the settlement policies and social services in the host country on marital relationships, the decision to divorce, and post-immigration adjustment are likely to be important parts of Chinese immigrants' experiences of divorce. Therefore Chinese immigrants' experiences in this regard will also be explored in the study.

In order to achieve the in-depth, trustworthy and valid understanding of the divorce of Chinese immigrants, a qualitative methodological approach has been chosen and a number of research strategies and methods have been employed. The designing of the methodological approach, research strategies and methods will be presented in the following sections.

The second aim is to contribute to the development of divorce theories in general and divorce theories concerning first-generation Chinese immigrants in particular. In order to achieve this aim, the findings from this study will be applied to those from existing studies on the post-immigration adjustment, particularly marital and family adjustments, of Chinese immigrants and on divorce in the general population in both Western countries and China, as outlined in Chapter One. Some tentative explanations for the similarities and differences in relation to the findings between this study and the existing studies will be developed. As such, this study will not only contribute to the development of divorce theories in general, but also to divorce theories concerning first-generation Chinese immigrants in particular.

The third aim is to provide practical implications for policy makers, social service providers, clinicians and divorcing Chinese immigrants. This study has a strong

commitment to providing practical implications. During the project planning and research process, a number of strategies and methods were planned and employed to fulfil this commitment. These include focusing on the inner experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants; paying close attention to the social and cultural constraints that affect their marital stability, the divorce process and adjustment after separation; giving voice to Chinese immigrants on social and cultural issues in relation to their divorce and adjustment; exploring their attitudes, knowledge and experience in relation to social services, particularly marital and health services; and finally comparing Chinese immigrants' experiences of divorce with professionals' perceptions of their divorce. To date, little is known about the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants, so the results obtained through these approaches will be very useful in increasing the societal level of understanding of divorce within this ethnic minority. This information will be particularly useful to politicians who plan immigration, marital and health policies in relation to Chinese immigrants, to social service providers who provide service to Chinese immigrants, to clinicians who work with Chinese immigrants, and finally to Chinese immigrants who are divorcing.

In congruence with the aims of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the planning and research process of the study.

1. What challenges and stresses did Chinese immigrants experience in adjusting to life in New Zealand, how did they cope with these challenges and stresses, and how did this stress and coping process impact their marital relationships and contribute, if at all, to their separation?

2. What challenges did Chinese immigrants experience after separation, how did they cope with these challenges and adjust to life after separation, and what long-term consequences, if at all, did Chinese immigrants experience as the result of divorce?

3. What influences, if at all, did both the home and host culture, as well as social services in New Zealand, have on the post-immigration adjustment, marital separation, and post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrants?

4. What, if at all, do the findings from this study contribute to the development of theories of divorce in general and theories of divorce of Chinese immigrants in particular, and what, if at all, are the social and policy implications of these findings?

An Overview of the Study

The Immigrants Project

This project aims at understanding Chinese immigrants' lived experiences of divorcing after immigration to New Zealand. It includes two separate parts, with the first part focusing on the participants' life experiences leading to marital separation, and the second part focusing on the participants' life experiences after separation, including their experiences of the impact of separation, post-separation adjustment and the long-term consequences of separation and/or divorce. As outlined in Chapter One, immigration and post-immigration adjustment, such as post-immigration adjustment stress and coping, particularly spousal differences in the adjustment and coping, could impact the marital relationship and contribute to the divorce of Chinese immigrants. It is likely that the impact of immigration and post-immigration adjustment on marital relationship is an important part of the participants' experiences of divorce. To explore more on this research topic, the immigrant project was divided into two parts. Despite this division, the two separate parts of the project, shared the same participants and the interviews with them were conducted at the same time.

The immigrants project was based on in-depth interviews with 25 separated and/or divorced Chinese immigrants. The data from the interviews was analysed by following

grounded theory methodology. The methods employed and the results from this research project are presented in full in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

The Professionals Project

The professionals project investigates the professionals' experiences and views of the divorce of Chinese immigrants who have separated and/or divorced in New Zealand. These professionals are regarded as 'key informants' (Bryman, 2012). It is assumed that these professionals have in-depth understanding of the experience of divorce among Chinese immigrants, based on their experiences of working with separating and separated Chinese immigrants. It is also assumed that these professionals are able to interpret the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants and to bring their particular insights into the phenomenon, based on their professional knowledge and analysis. In this sense, the professionals project is in itself an appropriate approach to investigate the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants. On the other hand, it could also serves as a comparison group for the main project that works with immigrants. This kind of triangulation not only adds trustworthiness to the study, but also "increases scope, depth and consistency" to the findings (Flick, 2009, p. 445).

The professionals project was based on the in-depth interviews, including both individual interviews and group interviews, with 12 professionals who had first-hand working experiences with divorcing and/or divorced Chinese immigrants. The interviews focused on the professional's experiences and views of the divorce of Chinese immigrants. The aims, methods and the results from this project are presented in full in Chapter Five.

The Qualitative Methodology of this Study

Strengths of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research refers to a field of inquiry across many disciplines in the humanities, social and even physical sciences (C. Nelson, Treichler, & Grossberg, 1992). It involves a wide range of interconnected research approaches and methods. These approaches and methods are historically associated with positivism, postpositivism, structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and post-humanism, and are constantly being shaped by social movements as well as the ethics and politics of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

While these research approaches and methods are diverse and sometimes in contradiction with each other in terms of their underlying ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, they share some common characteristics that distinguish them as qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005). Firstly, qualitative researchers maintain that reality is either socially constructed (as constructivists do) or influenced by social, cultural and historical factors (as post-positivists do), therefore the dynamic interaction between the researcher and what is studied, is essential in capturing this reality (Charmaz, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005). Secondly, consistent with their assumptions about reality, qualitative researchers employ a naturalistic and interpretive approach to the phenomenon of interest. They study the phenomenon in its natural settings and attempt to understand the phenomenon in terms of the meanings people ascribe to them. They emphasize processes and meanings rather than the measurement of variables and the analysis of causal relationships between them. To better understand the phenomenon in question, qualitative researchers typically engage themselves in interpersonal contact with the studied subject, and collect a variety of empirical materials, such as case studies, life stories, personal experiences, interviews and participant dairies, that “describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in

individuals' lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4). Thirdly, qualitative researchers believe that each approach and method can provide an important insight into the studied phenomenon. They attempt to employ multiple approaches and methods, i.e. triangulation, in their research practice, in order to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 1992). Finally, qualitative researchers believe that researchers' values cannot be eliminated from the research process. Consequently, they are likely to claim their value positions explicitly and then take cautious measures to either bracket (as post-positivist researchers do) the influence of their values on research process and outcomes, or use their values (as critical qualitative researchers do) to enhance the research process and outcome (Charmaz, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005).

Qualitative research has many strengths, with the major strength lying in the development of an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Flick, 2009). Qualitative researchers are interested in the lived experiences of participants. They locate themselves in naturalistic settings, engage themselves in an intense interaction with participants, and focus on contextual factors and dynamic processes through which participants create meanings. This naturalistic, interactive and interpretative approach allows the researchers to develop an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experience. Unlike quantitative researchers, who have a strong commitment to replicability, generalizability and prediction, qualitative researchers are interested in developing an explanatory theory about a phenomenon inductively. With their naturalistic and interpretive approach, qualitative researchers are able to describe the properties of a phenomenon, identify the contextual and situational factors that influence the phenomenon, and document complex processes. In addition, the findings from qualitative research are embedded in local contexts and built on the inside view of the participants. In marked contrast, findings from quantitative research may have little meaning within the

view of the studied individuals, societies or cultures, due to the researchers' detached view brought to bear on an inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Qualitative research can serve many types of research purposes (Flick, 2009; Rosenblatt & Fischer, 1993). This approach is appropriate for exploring a research topic that has not been adequately studied as it allows new concepts, assumptions and theories to emerge from the data. It is also helpful for examining a well-researched topic, as its inside views brought out from the participants could be used to challenge the existing findings in the field. Qualitative research is particularly useful in investigating a research topic or area where perceptions, feelings and views are complex, ambivalent, situational or changing with time, and where the complexities of social process make it difficult for quantitative research to operate. Given its strength and flexibility in serving different types of research purposes, it is not surprising that qualitative research has increasingly become the choice of inquiry in many disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As Ponterotto (2005) commented, psychology in North America "is in the midst of a gradual paradigm shift from a primary reliance on quantitative methods to a more balanced reliance on quantitative and qualitative methods" (p. 126).

Types of Qualitative Approaches

Since the 1970s, the dominance of traditional quantitative research in social science has been challenged (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Accompanying this challenge has been the development of numerous qualitative approaches and methods across different disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These diverse approaches and methods can be broadly organized into four paradigms: positivist, postpositivist, constructivist, and critical paradigm, based on their underlying assumptions about ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the relationship between the researcher and researched), and methodology (the way of knowing the world and obtaining knowledge of it) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative researchers are often

called upon to situate their research within these paradigms, so that other researchers and readers can better understand their research findings (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Ponterotto, 2005). In the following paragraphs, I briefly describe the four common paradigms and the qualitative research approaches within them, and then situate this study within these paradigms.

The positivist paradigm believes in a single reality, which is apprehensible (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ponterotto, 2005). Positivists employ strict scientific methods and procedures to uncover causal relationships, with the aim of predicting and controlling of the phenomenon in question. Positivism values objectivity and stresses a detached researcher role in an inquiry. Positivism is predominately a foundation for quantitative research. It had dominated social science research until it was challenged by postpositivism and constructivism in 1980s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The postpositivist paradigm is a modified version of positivism. According to this paradigm, there is a single reality but it is only imperfectly apprehensible (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). Because of the lack of absolutes in nature and flawed human intellectual mechanisms, we can never capture a reality fully (Ponterotto, 2005). In association with this modified realism, postpositivists emphasize theory falsification rather than theory verification as positivists do (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). Methodologically, multiplism or triangulation is stressed as a way of falsifying hypotheses (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Despite these differences, postpositivism shares much in common with positivism. Both paradigms value objectivity and a detached researcher role in an inquiry and focus on cause-effect linkages, with the ultimate aim of prediction and control of the phenomenon of interest (Ponterotto, 2005).

Postpositivism is a primary foundation for quantitative research. However, qualitative research can also work within this paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994;

Ponterotto, 2005). Within the postpositivist paradigm, qualitative research focuses on gaining insight into the meanings participants ascribe to their actions, identifying situational factors and processes that influence the experience of the phenomenon in question, and generating a grounded theory to explain the phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). Within this paradigm, qualitative research usually involves intense interaction, typically an interview, with participants in a natural setting. In order to capture the single approximal reality of the participants' collective experience without eroding objectivity, a number of cautious and consensual measures have been put in place. These include using a brief semi-structured interview with a relatively large number of participants, applying the same interview protocol to all the participants, using multiple interviewers, being cautious about the influence of the researcher on the participants, following rigorous data analysis procedure, using participant and peer checking, and using consensus among multiple raters to identify emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ponterotto, 2005).

Constructivist and interpretive paradigm adheres to a relativist ontology and subjective epistemology, which is in marked contrast to positivist naïve realism and objective epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivist assumes multiple realities that are socially constructed, apprehensible and equally valid. For constructivists, the reality of the research participants' experience is subjective and influenced by contextual factors, such as the social environment, the participants' personal experiences, and the interaction between researchers and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, a dialectical researcher-participant interaction is essential to understand and interpret this transactional and subjective reality. Constructivists acknowledge that their own expectations and values inevitably influence the research process, therefore they should be specifically described and bracketed. Constructivists employ a naturalistic, interactive and interpretive set of strategies and methods to understand the multiple

realities of the phenomenon from the perspective of the people studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln et al., 2011; Ponterotto, 2005). These include using prolonged face to face interviews with a relatively small number of participants, interviewing participants in their native language, using interviews with an evolving protocol, engaging in an intense interaction and dialogue with participants, and using the researcher' relevant life experience to enhance rapport and facilitate the interaction with participants.

Criticalists believe in a historically constructed reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This reality is mediated by the power relations in a social and historical context. It is shaped by social, economic, cultural, ethnic, gender and political values. Critical paradigm maintains a transactional and subjective epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Criticalists believe that investigators cannot separate themselves from the investigated subject and their values inevitably influence the inquiry, therefore a dialogue and dialectical interaction between the researcher and participants is necessary to uncover the participants' perceptions of oppression and privilege, and to engage and empower them to work toward egalitarian and democratic changes and transformations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical research is usually value driven, with an aim of empowering and emancipating oppressed groups such as women, ethnic minorities and disabled people. Feminist and queer studies usually fall under this paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005).

The Qualitative Approach of this Study

Chinese immigrants' experience of divorce is likely to be a very complicated phenomenon. This phenomenon can be approached from a positivist, postpositivist, constructivist or criticalist perspective, depending on the aim of a study and the ontological assumptions the researcher hold on this phenomenon. For example, some researchers may wish to approach this phenomenon from a criticalist perspective. They might assume that the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants are historically constructed and mediated by power relations in the social and historical contexts. They

might focus on the minority status of Chinese immigrants and wish to empower them. In order to achieve this aim, they would work collaboratively with divorced Chinese immigrants to examine how social, cultural and political factors, such as insufficient immigrant services and negative societal attitudes toward Chinese immigrants, might create stress for their marriage, contribute to their marital conflicts and separation, and affect their post-separation adjustment. Although this type of study in itself is worthwhile, it might not contribute directly to the urgent need for an in-depth understanding of the divorce of Chinese immigrants, as described earlier in this chapter.

In this study, my aim is to understand Chinese immigrants' experiences of divorce. This is not only to meet the urgent need for in-depth understanding of the divorce of Chinese immigrants, but also to improve social services to this population. To maximize the theoretical and practical significance of this study, I am interested in identifying the common elements or themes in their collective experience of marital breakdown following immigration. Identifying these common elements or themes would make the findings not only more readily applicable to the existing findings and theories in the field, which is dominated by quantitative studies (Amato, 2010), but also to be more easily utilized by policy makers, social service providers and clinicians to improve social services to this population, given the common impression that Chinese immigrants tend to underutilize health and other social services (e.g., Kung, 2003; R. Lee et al., 2001).

In this study, the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants is assumed to be an apprehensible phenomenon with some common identifiable elements or themes, although I assume that this phenomenon is likely to be strongly influenced by the social, cultural and historical factors that Chinese immigrants have experienced. Similar to separated individuals in their home country, the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants involves their perceptions, feelings, thoughts and responses in relation to marriage, family, marital conflicts, separation, and divorce. All these perceptions, feelings, thoughts and

responses are likely to be shaped by economic, political, cultural, religious and historical factors. Compared with separated individuals in their home country, the influence of these sociocultural or historical factors might be particularly strong for separated Chinese immigrants. As a group of typically middle-aged Chinese, Chinese immigrants, particularly those from China, have experienced so many social changes, as described in Chapter One. After immigration, they have faced a new culture, which is very different from their own. All these social and cultural changes have happened in a relatively short period of time. How Chinese immigrants perceive and react to these changes could affect their perceptions, feelings and cognitions in relation to marriage, family, marital conflicts, and as well as divorce if it happens, resulting in their different experiences of divorce. Despite these potential sociocultural and historical influences, all the separated and/or divorced Chinese immigrants in New Zealand have grown up in the Chinese culture and they have experienced the similar social and cultural changes before and after immigration. These common life experiences could result in some common and identifiable elements or themes among their collective experiences of divorce. Taking the two assumptions together, it is appropriate to say that the ontological assumption of this study, despite being influenced by the constructivist paradigm, falls in the postpositivist paradigm.

Strategies and Methods for Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis is central for a qualitative study. In this study, a number of strategies and methods, such as in-depth semi-structured interviewing and constant comparison of data, have been employed to collect and analyze the data. The designing of these strategies and methods is not only based on the aims, ontological assumption, and methodological paradigm of the study, but also is strongly influenced by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), particularly post-positivist grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Hence, in this section, an overview of grounded theory and the

rationale for choosing these strategies and methods are presented. This is followed by the introduction to the main research strategies and methods employed in this study. The details of data collection and analysis process, as well as the specific strategies and methods, will be described in each individual project in Chapter Three and Chapter Five.

Grounded theory can be defined as a qualitative research approach for developing an innovative theory that is grounded in data. The data is collected from the participants, typically through intense face-to-face interviews, on the basis of their lived experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As a specific research method, grounded theory refers to the qualitative approach first introduced by Glaser and Strauss in their studies of the "awareness of dying" (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), with its aim of providing a specific method and guidelines for the construction of social scientific theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory method involves a set of specific research strategies developed over time by Glaser, Strauss and its major proponents such as Corbin and Charmaz (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser, 1992). The main grounded theory strategies include: simultaneous and iterative data collection and analysis; transparent data analysis and memo writing; constructing a theory through inductive and iterative coding, conceptualizing and theorizing; focusing on actions and processes rather than themes and structures; theoretical sampling which involves sampling and collecting data based on the emergent theory that is constantly being verified and modified through data analysis until theoretical saturation is reached; and constant comparison, which involves constantly comparing every new piece of data to other pieces of data and emerging concepts until no new concepts, categories, or themes are discovered (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The appliance of these strategies makes grounded theory studies differ from other qualitative works, particularly those that focus on simply describing the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded theory has multiple ontological and epistemological roots and can be applied within different paradigms (Charmaz, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005). When Glaser and Strauss (1967) first developed this qualitative method, they brought into the approach different philosophical and methodological presuppositions. Specifically, Glaser brought in his positivism and quantitative sociology tradition from Columbia University, while Strauss brought in his pragmatism and qualitative sociology tradition from the University of Chicago (Charmaz, 2006). As a result, grounded theory contained different and even conflicting ontological and epistemological components from its beginning. Since the inception of this methodology, the originators have continuously developed this method, and their perspectives regarding how to generate a theory diverged further (Ponterotto, 2005). Meanwhile many researchers with different research backgrounds have joined the development of this approach. They adapted this approach into their own versions and applied it within different paradigms. As a result of this continuing development and adaptation, many versions of grounded theory have been developed (Charmaz, 2011). Depending on how it is conceptualized, grounded theory can be applied within all the paradigms (Fassinger, 2005).

Charmaz (2011) categorized extant grounded theories into three versions. (1) Objectivist grounded theory holds ontological and epistemological assumptions that are in line with the positivism paradigm. It aims for parsimonious abstract generalization of a theory and emphasizes the detached role of researchers in data collection and analysis (Glaser, 2001). (2) Constructivist grounded theory is built up on the social constructionism inherent in Strauss's symbolic interactionism. It applies traditional grounded theory strategies within the constructivist paradigm by integrating relativity and reflexivity into the research process and by taking into account the researchers' role and interaction with the participants in the construction of meanings (Charmaz, 2006; Rennie, 1998). (3) Postpositivist grounded theory is represented by Strauss and Corbin's versions of

grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It takes the middle ground between the objectivist and constructionist versions. It maintains a fluid and changing reality, yet applies strict preconceived coding and analytic frameworks and techniques to the data to achieve the objectivity of the theory.

Grounded theory has a profound influence on the development of qualitative methods. It has in fact been regarded as the most influential qualitative research method in social science (Charmaz, 2011; Denzin, 1997). Grounded theory methodological strategies, such as inductive coding, simultaneous data collection and analysis, and constant comparison of data, have evolved into very flexible and general strategies that permeate qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). These strategies have been adopted widely by many researchers who come from different disciplines, use different methodologies, address different social issues, and focus on different levels of data analysis or even carry out investigations that are not qualitative in their intent (Charmaz, 2011; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003). The strengths, flexibility and adaptability of grounded theory, particularly its strength in constructing an innovative theory on a phenomenon that involves complicated social processes, its flexibility with different paradigms, and its adaptability for studies with practical constrains in data collection, make it an appropriate choice for this study.

In congruence with the aims, ontological assumptions and paradigmatic approach of the study, a number of post-positivist grounded theory data collection and analysis strategies and methods have been designed and employed in this current thesis study. These include in-depth interviews with both immigrant and professional participants; the use of a semi-structured and evolving interview protocol to facilitate concepts emerging; forming some interview questions based on the themes that emerged from the existing studies; conducting interviews in the native language; trying to cover the interview protocol across all the participants; inductive and iterative coding and conceptualizing;

memo writing; focusing on actions and processes; constantly comparing data and identifying themes; comparing themes emerging from the professionals and immigrants project; discussing the data analysis and emerging themes with my supervisor as the study processed; consulting two cultural advisors about the emerging themes at the beginning and end of data analysis; and finally bracketing the influence of my own values and judgements around divorce on the results by acknowledging my professional and personal connections to the research subject. All these research strategies and methods are designed to ensure a disciplined approach to the research subject and to support the development of representations that validly reflect the lived experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants.

Ethics approval

Ethics approval was given by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee for this study (Reference Number: 2007/311). This included the payment of a NZ$25 voucher for participation in the immigrant project. The details of the ethic approval were included on the Participants Information Sheets and Consent Forms for each group of the participants.

My Professional and Personal Connections to the Research Subject

Studies conducted with both postpositivist and constructivist paradigms are encouraged to report the researchers' professional and personal connections to the research subject (Ponterotto, 2005). Postpositivist researchers acknowledge and record their personal interests and values in relation to the researched subject, and then take cautious measures to ensure that their personal interests and bias do not confound the findings (Ponterotto, 2005). Although constructivist researchers see themselves as a research instrument and use their personal and professional connections with the studied subject to build rapport with the participants and facilitate understanding of the lived experience of the participants, they are also encouraged to describe their connections with the research subject. They do this not only to scrutinize their own role in the production of

research findings, but also to enable the readers to assess the trustworthiness of the research findings (Charmaz, 2006; Elliott et al., 1999; Ponterotto, 2005). As discussed earlier, this study is conducted within the postpositivist paradigm and is influenced by the constructivist paradigm. As such, it is important for me to acknowledge my personal experiences, interests, values, and expectations in relation to the studied subject.

I grew up in a small village in China where divorce was not accepted and the incidence of divorce was rare. In my twenties and early thirties, I attended postgraduate study in psychology and worked in different places, from a small town in a less developed province to the most developed city of Shanghai. During these years, divorce rates in China, as described before, increased rapidly, but nobody in my extended family and personal network was divorced. My personal philosophy surrounding my own marriage is that I would want to make every possible effort to maintain a healthy marriage and family. However I recognize that all the best efforts cannot guarantee a successful marriage. In this case I am supportive of divorce.

In my late twenties and early thirties, I worked in China as a psychology lecturer and practised psychologist for eight years. As a lecturer, some of my teaching involved interpersonal and marital relationships. As a cognitive-behavioural therapist, I had experience in working with people's inner worlds, and some of my practice involved working with Chinese couples to improve their marital relationships. In the early 2000s, I immigrated to New Zealand under the General Skills Category, just like most of the immigrant participants did. Similar to many immigrant participants, I have two children born after immigration. As a new immigrant, I experienced challenges associated with cross-cultural settlement and adjustment. As a parent with young children, I know how difficult it is to look after children without much support from extended families. I understand how much all these challenges could affect martial and family relationships. During these years, I witnessed the marital conflicts and divorce of some of my friends

and acquaintances. These people shared with me what they struggled with when they went through their divorce and the adjustment process.

My personal and professional experiences led to my interests in understanding the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. I believe that these experiences would enhance rapport and communication with my research participants and help me see their experiences of divorce from their perspective. I have a commitment to contributing to the development of divorce theories in general and divorce theories concerning first-generation Chinese immigrants in particular. I believe that knowledge of the immigration, post-immigration adjustment, marital separation, and post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrants will have a wide range of implications for policy makers, researchers, clinicians, divorcing Chinese immigrants and their families.

CHAPTER THREE: CHINESE IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRATION AND MARITAL SEPARATION

This chapter presents the methods employed in the immigrants project and the results in relation to the participants' life experiences leading up to separation.

Introduction to the Immigrants Project

This project investigates Chinese immigrants' lived experience of divorce. It has two separate parts. The first part focuses on how immigration and post-immigration adjustment might affect Chinese couples' marital relationship and contribute to their separation, from the perspective of first-generation Chinese immigrants who separated and/or divorced in New Zealand. In this regard, the study explores what life challenges and stresses participants and their ex-spouses experienced after immigration, how they coped with these challenges and stresses as an individual, a couple and a family, what marital conflicts they experienced after immigration, and how their individual and family stress and coping processes might contribute to their marital conflicts and separation. The participants' experiences of decision-making in relation to divorce, and particularly how the home and host culture, as well as social services in the host country, might affect their decision to divorce were also examined. All the results in relation to the participants' experiences in these areas are presented in this chapter.

The second part of the project focuses on understanding the participants' life experiences after separation. In this regard, the study examines what life difficulties and co-parenting problems participants experienced after separation, how they managed these challenges and adjusted to their single lives, what approaches they employed in order to access family and social support, what long-term consequences they experienced as a

result of separation and/or divorce, and finally what influence both Chinese and New Zealand cultures as well as social services in New Zealand might have on their separation settlement and post-separation adjustment. The results in relation to the participants' life experiences after separation will be presented in the next chapter.

Method

Participants

Twenty-five Chinese immigrants, including 14 females and 11 males, participated in this study. They immigrated to New Zealand from China (23) and Taiwan (2) between 1992 and 2007; 21 obtained residency as skilled (19) or business (2) immigrants, and four immigrated for family reunion. At the time of interview, participants ranged in age between 35 and 72 (M=44, SD=8.9). Of the 25 participants, two participants, aged 62 and 72 respectively, were much older than the remainder. If these two participants are excluded, the average age of the participants, at the time of interview, would have been reduced to 42 years (SD=5.7). At this time, the participants had lived in New Zealand for 8.7 years on average and had been separated for an average of 4.7 years (SD=3.7), with 17 having obtained a divorce decree. By this time, five participants had secured a professional job or established a business. The remainder either worked at unskilled jobs or depended on social benefits for a living. Annual income before tax was below NZ$25,000 for 14 participants, six earned between NZ$25,000 and NZ$40, 000, and five earned over NZ$40,000.

Before immigration, all but two of the participants had obtained a tertiary degree, 21 participants worked as professionals, and four had well-established businesses. At the time of immigration, 21 participants had been married in their home country for an average of 8.4 years; two participants had been in a partnership for 1 to 2 years; and the remaining two were single. At this time, 14 participants had children under 14 years.

Among the 23 participants who had been in a marriage or partnership before immigration, 18 participants reported a normal spousal relationship prior to immigration, and five participants reported that they had experienced problems in their marital relationships prior to immigration.

Prior to separation, the participants had lived in the marriage for an average of 3.5 years (SD=2.3) post-immigration. At the time of separation, all but three had one or two children under 14 years, and 12 participants had at least one child at the age of five or younger. At this time, only three participants had secured a skilled job, and the remainder was studying English or a local degree, working at a non-skilled job, or looking after young children full-time. Regarding the initiator status, nine participants (7 females and 2 males) were initiators, seven participants (3 females and 4 males) were mutual initiators, and the remaining nine (4 females and 5 males) were non-initiators.

Procedure

Participants were recruited in Auckland, and the criteria for selection included being immigrants from China and Taiwan who had separated in New Zealand within 10 years prior to the interview. Separated Chinese immigrants who had a non-Chinese spouse were not included.

A number of recruitment approaches, including networking, advertising on Chinese websites, and advertising through Chinese or Asian community service organizations were employed. The research advertisement was presented in both Mandarin and English (see Appendices A and B). Following the recommendations on sample size for a qualitative study from Creswell (1998) and Fassinger (2005), I intended to recruit 20 to 30 immigrants.

In the initial stage of recruitment, a significant difficulty was encountered. After advertising the research on local Chinese websites and through one of the main Chinese

immigrant service organizations for half a year, only five Chinese immigrants volunteered to participate. The sensitivity of the topic of divorce may have contributed to the recruitment difficulty. In order to recruit enough participants, the originally-designed inclusion criteria of separation in five years prior to the interview was extended to 10 years. Also, many more Chinese or Asian service organizations were approached and recruiting through networking was emphasized more. These recruitment strategies appeared to have improved the recruitment outcome, as twenty-five participants were eventually recruited.

An initial meeting was arranged with each of the potential participants who volunteered to participate. At the meeting, the Information Sheet (see Appendix C) was provided, the confidentiality and anonymity of the research was stressed, and their questions about the research were answered. This meeting also allowed for an opportunity to develop some sense of familiarity and to ascertain if these potential participants were comfortable talking about their experiences of divorce. After the meeting, two immigrants decided not to participate in the research, and one immigrant was excluded from the research because her ex-spouse was not Chinese.

Data Collection

Individual face to face interviews were conducted at a place of the participants' choice, typically their home. Participants were given a NZ$25 voucher to compensate for their time. Prior to the interview, participants signed the Consent Form (see Appendix D) and completed a brief form designed to collect social demographic and family background information (See Appendix E). Given that little is known about the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants, a brief semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix F for the Interview Guide) was developed to guide the interview (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This protocol included an opening question, which asked the participants to talk about their experiences of immigration and divorce, and a list of potential topics.

The main topics that were relevant to the first part of the immigrants project included: post-immigration settlement and adjustment, adjustment stress and coping, marital conflicts after immigration, the influence of post-immigration adjustment and coping on marital relationships, the process of decision-making in relation to divorce, and the influences of the home and host culture on the separation and the divorce decision-making. The main topics which were relevant to the second part of the project included: the impact of separation, post-separation adjustment, child care arrangement and post-separation parenting, co-parenting and parental relationship with ex-spouse, family and social support, cultural influences on post-separation adjustment, the influence of immigration and associated challenges on post-separation adjustment, and the consequences of separation and/or divorce. These general topics were intended to focus participants' thoughts but allowed them to talk freely.

It is important to note that the topics in the interview guide were updated overtime. In general, the topics in the early stage of data collection were relatively broader, as they gave participants more flexibility to tell the interviewer whatever they thought was important in relation to their divorce. As research went on, the study focused more on the aspects that had emerged as relevant and significant. As such, some topics, such as the main reasons for divorce, were removed from the interview guide. Some topics, such as the influence of post-immigration adjustment and the home and host cultures on the marital relationship, were more specifically defined or stressed more in the following interviews. This updating process was guided by grounded theory principles for the development of interview protocols (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The interview guide listed in Appendix F was the one used in the later stage of data collection.

Like some well-known grounded theory researchers who face practical constrains with data collection (e.g., Fassinger, 2005), I accept the risk of data redundancy and conducted interviews that were sufficiently lengthy to produce the depth and breadth of

data that I thought I might need. The interviews lasted 110 minutes on average. All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin and were voice recorded.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and translated into English. Twenty-three interviews were transcribed and translated by myself. Three interviews were transcribed and translated by an English-Chinese translator and a Chinese doctoral student who both signed the Confidentiality Agreement (see Appendix G). The data were entered into an NVivo 10 database. In order to maintain the anonymity of the research, numbers were assigned to both immigrant and professional participants, with M01 to M25 for immigrant participants and P01 to P12 for professional participants. The assigning of these numbers was based on the research group that the participants belonged to and the alphabetical order of their surnames. These numbers are also used in the quotations in the finding sections in Chapters Three to Five. Because of the design of the project, data concerning the participants' life experiences before and after separation were entered into the database separately.

During the transcription, translation and initial examination of the data, it became clear that the participants' life experiences from deciding to immigrate through to making a decision to divorce could be divided into four stages: dreams of immigration, settlement and adjustment, marital crisis, and making a decision to divorce. Similarly, the participants' post-separation life experiences could be divided into three areas: the immediate impacts of separation, post-separation adjustment, and the long-term consequences of separation and/or divorce. As such, the data concerning the participants' life experiences prior to separation were divided into four sets – one set for each stage. The data concerning the participants' life experiences after separation was divided into three sets – one set for each area. The seven sets of data were then analysed separately by using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The data analysis involved coding the data, grouping codes into categories, grouping related categories into themes, and exploring the relationship between the categories and themes that emerged under each of the four stages or each of the three areas. Based on the findings from this project, along with those from the professionals project, a proposed model that represents the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand was developed. This data analysis, including the development of the participants' four life stages up to separation, the three areas of life experiences after separation, the themes and the proposed model, was regularly reviewed and discussed with my supervisor, and adjustments were made before the proposed model were established. At the beginning and end of the data analysis, two cultural advisors were also consulted. Their suggestions about the emerging themes were also considered in the process of data analysis, including the development of the proposed model.

Results

The results concerning the participants' life experiences up to making a decision to divorce are presented below. Table 1 outlines the themes that were derived from the four sets of data. All the themes are presented with quotes from the participants for illustration.

Themes in Relation to Dreams of Immigration

All the participants reported that immigration was the biggest individual and family decision they had ever made. Despite having many worries about settlement and adjustment, they made the decision to pursue their personal and family dreams.

Table 1

Themes in Relation to Chinses Immigrants' Experiences of Immigration and Marital Separation

Dreams of immigration	Settlement and adjustment	Marital crisis	Making the decision to divorce
Individual overseas dreams Immigration for the family	Settlement and adjustment stress Losses associated with immigration Individual and family coping strategies Spousal and gender differences in adjustment and coping	Post-immigration marital conflicts Impact of adjustment stress and losses on marital relationships Impact of spousal differences in adjustment and coping on marital relationships Impact of living as an astronaut family on marital relationships	Saving the marriage The process of decision-making Easier to make the decision in New Zealand

Individual overseas dreams

Participants talked passionately about their own and/or their ex-spouses' dreams of moving to a western country. They called this an "overseas dream" (出国梦). While some participants and ex-spouses developed this dream not long before immigration, many had this dream for many years, even since they were children.

> Chinese don't have a lot of chance to move overseas even now. It was very rare 30 years ago. In those years, immigration seemed to be a privilege exclusively for very rich families or people who were extremely good with study and awarded a scholarship by oversea universities. When I was a child, one of my classmates had a relative who moved overseas. All the people in my neighbourhood talked about him and saw him as a hero or a movie star. Since that time, I had made up my mind to grab whatever chance I had to move overseas. (M03)

Participants gave many reasons for their overseas dreams. The most common reasons related to 'western advantages'. These included a beautiful environment, a better political and social system, more freedom, better education for children, and a relaxed lifestyle.

> We had so many reasons for immigration. Basically, we thought moving overseas would give us a better future: a clean and beautiful environment, a better economy and political system, and a quality education for children ... In China, we had so many cultural or political constraints regarding what we could do as an individual. Moving overseas would also give us more freedom and less pressure to pursue our personal interests. (M12)

Dissatisfaction with some aspects of China was another common reason. Participants reported that before immigration they did not have any concerns about income and family finance, but they were dissatisfied with the political, physical, cultural and moral environments in China. Many stressed that although they had had overseas dreams for many years, it was their dissatisfaction with China that urged them to make the decision to immigrate.

> When we lived in China, we had no problems with family income, as both of us had a good job, but we were not happy with everything else there: pollution and corruption everywhere, complicated interpersonal relationships at work and elsewhere, deterioration in moral values. All in all we just felt very tired of living there. This pushed us to make the decision. (M14)

Immigration for the family

At the time of immigration, nearly two-thirds of the participants had one or two children or the women were pregnant. Many of them stated that immigration was also a decision they made for the future of the family, particularly their children. This was especially true for nearly half of the families in which one spouse did not have a personal overseas dream.

> At that time, I was doing well in a big state-owned company. The company was training me to be a leader. But they [ex-wife and her parents] wanted to immigrate. It was kind of acceptable to me … because it was good for my son and the whole family, even though not so good for me. (M05)

Prior to immigration, five participants experienced some marriage difficulties: two cases involved the spouse' one-off or short-term extra-marital affairs and three cases involved marital conflicts and a lack of intimacy in the marriage. For these participants, immigration was also to "save the family."

> My other dream was to pull him to NZ. I thought if he lived in a different environment, he might change his ideas about money and marriage, etc., so that we might be able to live a peaceful life here. (M15)

Themes in Relation to Settlement and Adjustment

The post-immigration adjustment of participants was influenced by the government policy that excluded immigrants from financial support for the first two years. It made the first two years very difficult as the immigrants experienced significant financial problems. When participants were asked how they felt about their life post-immigration, a typical answer was that it was "all about stresses, losses and coping".

Settlement and adjustment stress

All the participants described the initial settlement as extremely stressful. Although they acknowledged that the pressure stemmed from managing multiple settlement tasks at the same time, most participants stressed that the core experience of their settlement was how to survive in this new land. Many stated that they never tried to seek a professional job at this stage, because their prior qualifications and working experiences were not recognized in New Zealand. But language and cultural barriers meant that even an unskilled job was difficult to secure, creating huge financial pressure for them. The settlement stress described by the participant below was common among many participants.

> Yeah, it was very difficult. We came here with two bags of clothes, nothing else. We were not familiar with anything, could not speak much English, and had no local network or work experience. We needed an income but there was nowhere we could get it … To save money, we had to find a cheap place to stay. Initially, we rented just one room from a Chinese family. All of us, including my daughter, lived in one room. Later on I found a part-time cleaning job, so we rented two rooms … Before renting this house [after buying a cleaning business], we moved a total of seven times in two years. (M07)

To cope with the financial difficulty and stresses associated with this, more than half of the participants chose to live as an astronaut family, with one spouse, typically a father, returning to their home country to work or do business. This was particularly common at the initial stage of post-immigration adjustment. In fact, two thirds of these

participants started living as an astronaut family at the beginning of their immigration. Although this living arrangement could relieve some stress with family finances, it made the life particularly difficult for those spouses, typically women, who had to cope with life challenges in New Zealand alone, as the woman participant below described.

> We knew it would be difficult to find a job in New Zealand, so I came to this country with my four year old son first, and he continued with his work in China. At that time, I was unable to drive and had problems with English. It was really hard for me to manage our life here. Initially he planned to join us in one year. In the end, I lived like a single mother in this new country for three years, until I found a nursing job. You can see how difficult it was for me to do all these things on my own: studying English and then a nursing degree, working part-time, and looking after my son (laughing and tearful). (M04)

In general, the participants reported that they felt more settled two to three years later. By this time, many had secured an income, typically from a low-paid job. Most astronaut spouses had also joined their families in New Zealand. With this income and the now-accessible government financial support, the participants' focus changed from simply surviving to adapting themselves to long-term life in New Zealand. While some focused on upgrading their jobs or establishing a business, many tried to improve their career by completing a local degree. Regardless of the approach they adopted, adjustment seemed to be an endless process.

By the time of the interview, the participants had lived in New Zealand for more than eight years on average. Despite more than a half having completed a local tertiary degree, only five had secured professional jobs or established a business. The rest of the participants either continued to work in unskilled jobs, such as sales people, caregivers, and restaurant workers, or depended on social benefits for their living expenses. Many commented that the adaptation was no less stressful than the settlement. During this phase, pressures to secure a reliable income, manage family finances, and work and/or study while looking after children were common.

> Yeah, we had a terrible life in the three study years … We did not have any help from our extended families, so we had to manage the two babies ourselves. The money we got from

> StudyLink was never enough. He had to work while studying, but his job was never secure. We had a lot of pressure: study pressure, financial pressure, and daily life pressure… Even now, after living here for 6 years, I am still struggling to find a suitable job. (M13)

Losses associated with immigration

Almost all the participants reported that they and their ex-spouses experienced a strong feeling of loss after immigration. Many participants stated having experienced feelings of losing everything at least at some stage. Among all types of loss, the loss of social status, social networks, and social identity was reported as being the most distressing.

The loss in social status involved the loss of a professional job or business, work achievement, respect, financial security and even a lifestyle.

> I have a sense of loss in my social status. Before migration, I worked as a manager. My income and family finances were all good. I wore suits and a tie and had dinners in expensive restaurants every day … Look at me now, I work as a truck driver. I have to get up at 3am to load vegetables and then deliver them to Chinese shops and restaurants. To get enough money for living, I have to work 12 hours a day. Anyone who experiences this change would feel a loss. (M01)

In association with the loss in social status, some participants also reported they or their ex-spouses suffered a loss of the social identity that they had developed in their country of origin. In these cases, the participants' family financial situation pre-immigration was usually far better than average. The woman below was one of these participants. She reported that people in her networks used to call her "Richwoman" (富婆) prior to migration. After immigration, she lived on savings for two years and then decided to work. She found her first job as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant. On her third day at work, she met a Chinese man from her previous network. She described below how this incidence trigged the sense of loss of her social identity.

> He came here for lunch. When he saw me, he tried not to make me feel embarrassed by turning his face away. But this made me embarrassed more. … When we finally looked at each other, all my self-confidence and self-respect were immediately destroyed. I managed to stay there until the end of work. But when I got into the car, I could not control my tears

> anymore. I cried and cried … How a Richwoman could end up with a life like this. You know, this loss was so big, too big for anyone to tolerate. (M15)

As well as the loss of social and professional status, the participants suffered a loss of social networks. Immigration meant that they lost their previous network, including extended families, relatives, friends, and colleagues. After immigration, most participants faced a challenge in making friends in both the Chinese and local communities, as explained by one participant.

> The language and cultural barriers were huge. As new immigrants, the people you could have contact with were limited to Chinese, but they were always busy, and no one was in the mood to chat with you. You cannot get involved in Kiwis' lives. They could not understand you. They did not care about you, although they did not do anything bad to you. (M18)

In many cases, the loss of social networks created a sense of loss of social belonging, loneliness, isolation and helplessness.

> All my family members, classmates, colleagues, and friends lived in China. I was here in this alien land by myself [her husband has worked in China most of the time since her immigration] ... In my first year here, I did not belong to any group including those in local Chinese communities. I did not know anyone. Because I could not speak much English, there was nowhere I could ask for help. Yeah, I felt really alone and helpless. (M22)

Individual and family coping strategies

Coping with adjustment challenges was an essential part of the participants' experience. A number of individual and family coping strategies were reported. Among these strategies, accepting that they were "starting again from scratch" was the most common one. In fact, "starting again from scratch" was a general coping principle that participants used to cope with all types of adjustment challenges. In the following excerpt, a woman described why she used this strategy to cope with her career development.

> You have no local working experience, educational background or personal network. You have nothing so you have to start from scratch. … I started my work here as a cleaner and then a care giver. I have worked for several different organizations and accumulated some work experience. My job is getting better. Now I am planning to study further to improve my career. (M22)

Feeling stressed by their new circumstances and feelings of loss were a constant reality for all the participants. Another strategy participants used to cope was to balance these, in their own mind, with gains. Many found that emphasising what their children could gain was the most effective way to cope with their feelings of loss and distress.

> During my down times, all I needed to do was to think about my daughter, and to imagine what a beautiful future she could have … I just told myself "I came here for her future. I had to do whatever I could for her". This made me feel better. (116)

Almost all the participants reported that they coped with their post-immigration difficulties as a family and described a variety of family coping strategies. There were some instances in which one spouse stopped studying to support another in his or her role, and some cases in which extended families helped them with finances or came to New Zealand to help them with childcare during a difficult period.

Among all these strategies, living as an astronaut family was the most common one, particularly at the early stage of settlement, as described earlier. Initially this coping strategy was planned by the participants as a temporary strategy to cope with their financial difficulty in a new country. As their difficulty with securing a reliable income continued, many families had to extend split family living and use this strategy to cope with the uncertainty of their long-term adjustment outcomes, as showed in the second quote from a woman in the settlement and adjustment stress section. In the end, more than a third of the participants had lived in an astronaut family for more than half of the time before separation.

Spousal and gender differences in adjustment and coping

All the participants talked about how they were different from their ex-spouses in post-immigration adjustment and coping. Three quarters of the participants, mainly women, reported that their adjustment at the time of separation was better overall than that of their spouses. They stated that they were more actively engaged with learning English

and becoming familiar with New Zealand culture and believed that this contributed to their difference in adjustment, as the woman below said.

> Immigration meant a big change in our life. Prior to immigration, I worked in a foreign company that operated in China, I had good English. I also knew a bit of their culture. So living here was not a big problem for me, but it was a big problem for him. His English was not good. He had no confidence in learning it. … He could not understand Kiwi culture and values. He thought Chinese people were warmer, so he only socialized with Chinese and could not integrate into any Kiwi group. (M17)

Some participants, usually women, also reported they were more comfortable accepting low-paid jobs and happier with their life in New Zealand than their spouses. They believed that this contributed to the differences in adjustment, at the time of separation, between them and their spouses. The woman below explained why she was "more realistic about taking a painting job" than her husband.

> We bought a painting business soon after migration. But it turned out to be a terrible decision. For him, to do this monotonous job all the time was intolerable. But for me, because I grew up in rural area and used to do lots of farming jobs, or because I was a woman and have a different personality, or because I liked living in NZ and would like to settle down as soon as possible, I had no problem with this job at all. (M09)

More than half of the participants, also predominantly females, stated that their ex-spouses had stronger feelings of loss than they had. In comparison, only a few male participants reported stronger feelings of loss than their ex-wives. Among the group of participants and ex-spouses who had a stronger feeling of loss, 'poor English' was common. For the male ex-spouses involved, most of them were reported to have had high social status pre-immigration and to have strongly held onto Chinese values associated with being a man and a husband. Together, these factors made it hard for them to fit into their life in New Zealand. In fact, at the time of interview, the majority of ex-spouses involved, predominantly males had moved back to China or Taiwan. The woman below explained how these factors contributed to her ex-husband's strong feelings of loss as well as his reverse migration.

> He was very proud of himself being a provincial bank governor [before immigration]. He enjoyed his power and earned a lot of money. He saw these as the most important thing for a man and husband. When he came here, he felt he came down to Hell from Heaven. … He tried to adapt to life here, by finding a job or doing business, but all these efforts failed. One thing that held him back was that his English was really no good and he could not find a job that could maintain his self-respect ... So he only stayed here for the time required by immigration policy and returned to China immediately after he obtained his residency. (M04)

More than half of the participants also reported spousal differences in coping. While some of these were disagreements about whether their family should live as an astronaut family, many were related to the two spouses' different opinions on what were the main challenges for them and how they should cope with these challenges as a family, as one participant said.

> After migration, everything in his mind was how to get money. He thought that if we had money, everything would be fine. He spent all his time doing business and did not look after the children at all… You know, we had two young children. The younger one was just one year old at the time of separation. I thought, at this stage of his life, he should give priority to the family and spend more time with the children. For me, as long as we could survive and the children could grow up healthy, it was fine. We didn't need a lot of money. (M08)

Themes in Relation to Marital Crisis

All the participants reported experienced increased marital conflicts after immigration. While some conflicts were the re-occurrences of 'old problems', many were problems that related to their post-immigration life. Regardless of whether these conflicts were 'old' or 'new', they all escalated into a marital crisis that eventually led them to make the decision to divorce. This section presents four themes. While the first theme captures the participants' experience of post-immigration marital conflict, the remaining three capture their experience of how post-immigration adjustment and coping impacted their marital relationship and contributed to their separation.

Post-immigration marital conflicts

The participants reported a number of spousal conflicts after immigration. The most common one concerned the sharing of household chores and childcare. Many explained that they were always extremely stressed with studying and/or working while

looking after children after immigration, and therefore the lack of one spouse's engagement with these tasks would become a serious marital problem.

> In those years, we both studied full-time. He studied English and I studied for a postgraduate degree. I started my study during the pregnancy of my daughter and finished the study when my son was just one year old. We were both tired. It was true that he had a lot pressure, as he had to work while studying for our survival, but it was also true that he did not want to do house chores, especially changing nappies and bathing children. I am not a physically strong woman, so how could I manage my study, two young children, and house work on my own? It was really hard for me and I felt I was living in a hell. That was why we had more and more arguments, even [physical] fights. (M13)

Conflict over how to manage family finances when under financial pressure was a typical 'new' marital problem that occurred after immigration, and it was experienced by over a third of the participants. In many of these cases, the conflict was caused by one spouse's 'extreme saving' rather than overspending.

> We had a lot of arguments over his extreme saving behaviours. For example, he never bought any toys for my daughter. He did not even allow me to turn on a heater when I breast fed my daughter in the freezing cold at night. We argued about these things all the time. (M03)

A third of the participants reported that their ex-spouses were involved in extramarital affairs after immigration. Half of these affairs happened during periods when they lived as an astronaut family. All these participants reported they were shocked by the affair and saw it as the main reason for the divorce. This was particularly the case for male participants, who saw the affair as an unforgiveable reason for divorce, as one man explained below.

> How to put it? No Chinese man can tolerate "wearing a green hat" [a Chinese phrase for the impact of a wife's extramarital affair on a man] ... It is related to very traditional Chinese values. Chinese people place huge value on their dignity. If an affair happens, they will lose face. It leaves them with no option but divorce. (M05)

Domestic violence was also reported by a sixth of the participants, including three women and one man. All the three women applied for a protection order and two of them spent some time in a women's refuge. Although most of these participants commented that their ex-spouses were somewhat controlling and engaged in violent behaviour

occasionally before immigration, in all the cases, serious physical violence occurred only after immigration, as one woman described below.

> He had strong masculinity and a desire for power over me… it became worse one year after migration. Previously, he might just curse at me a bit and smash a few things, but later on he cursed me more often and eventually he hit me … After I moved back [from the women's refuge], he hit me seriously again ... I called the police and they gave me a protection order. (M17)

Impact of adjustment stress and losses on marital relationships

Most participants believed that the adjustment stress and the losses associated with immigration impacted their marriages. They reported that the losses and stresses of everyday living disturbed the mood of both spouses and altered the way they communicated and cooperated. These experiences increased the chance for 'new conflicts' but also intensified any 'old conflicts' that existed before migration, as one participant explained below.

> It was a process, a quantitative change over time. After immigration, our life became so difficult. This definitely affected our mood and made it easier to get angry with each other. … We had different opinions over daily living before migration, but the life pressure here made them more serious. Since our life here was hard, these conflicts made our life more difficult, so it was better to separate. (M12)

Some participants, mostly women, reported that the mental health and daily functioning of their ex-spouses were seriously affected by their marked loss in social status. This was reported to contribute to marital conflicts and even physical violence in a few cases. Continuing from the quote in the spousal and gender differences in adjustment and coping section, participant M04 talked further about how her ex-husband's feelings of loss contributed to serious physical violence.

> He felt he had lost everything. So what he did everyday was sleeping or surfing and chatting on internet. He was depraved and confused with who he was … He became crazy. There was one period when he fought with me almost every day. He complained I had destroyed him, because he followed me when I immigrated here. So whenever he heard about his friends in China earning a lot of money or getting promoted to a higher position, he would hit me. (M04)

Impact of spousal differences in adjustment and coping on marital relationships

Almost all the participants reported that spousal differences in adjustment and coping affected their marital relationship. More than a half reported that they experienced differences in adopting New Zealand customs and practices in daily living, parenting and managing family finances. They observed that this contributed to their conflicts.

> Our conflicts were all about daily living things, such as whether or not to let the children drink tap water [some Chinese believe that this can cause sickness] or buy them second-hand clothes. All these things were not common in China … We are Chinese not Kiwis. But we live here, the NZ culture is part of our life. We cannot avoid it. In fact, our differences in accepting Kiwi customs and practices definitely contributed to our conflicts. (M19)

About half of the participants, mostly women, reported that their spousal difference in the overall level of adjustment changed their power relations. This was believed to trigger many conflicts and sometimes even physical violence, typically by a man to his wife. Continuing from the quote in the post-immigration marital conflicts section, participant M17 explained below how this could contribute to her ex-husband's violence.

> He always wanted to compare himself to me and felt my English was better. Actually he felt I was better in every aspect ... He had a sense of inferiority. He feared I would leave him one day. This might have contributed to his controlling and violence. (M17)

In some cases, the spousal differences in the level of adjustment and other circumstances led a couple to make different decisions on reverse migration. This different decision was reported to directly lead to their divorce.

> I liked living here, but she didn't. I adapted to the life here easily as I could endure hardship, but it was not easy for her to bear all these difficulties ... She still had her business in China, but I didn't. She could restart her life easily there, but I had to stay here to make money. Yeah, basically this was our story. (M20)

Spousal differences in how the family should cope with life challenges after immigration also contributed to marital conflicts and divorce. While many participants experienced arguments over these differences from time to time, over a quarter reported that they had always argued but were never able to resolve their differences. Continuing

from the quote in the spousal and gender differences in adjustment and coping section, participant M08 explained how their conflict over family coping escalated overtime and eventually led to their divorce.

> We could not agree on what the main challenge for the family was. We argued and fought all the time, but were never able to resolve this problem … this made me feel he did not treat me as a wife at all [tearing] … Recalling it now, this was definitely the main reason for our divorce. (M08)

Impact of living as an astronaut family on marital relationships

Over a third of the participants stated that living as an astronaut family affected their marital relationship. They all reported that this split family living made daily life difficult for each spouse, particularly the one who lived in New Zealand, as described earlier. This life difficulty placed a marked pressure on their marital relationships. Apart from this, many of these participants also stressed that living as an astronaut family led the participants and their ex-spouses to have different experiences with the host culture. This different life experience caused the two spouses to view life differently and led them to have less things in common. Compared with daily life difficulties, their different living experiences appeared to do more damage to the marital relationships of astronaut couples. Continuing from the quote in the settlement and adjustment stress section, participant M04 talked further about how their daily life difficulties caused by split family living, as well as the different daily living experiences of her and her ex-husband as a result of this family living arrangement, affected her marital relationship and eventually contributed to her divorce.

> During this period [of split family living], we both had a hard life. This created problems between us. But the more serious problem was that we now could not understand each other. We lived in different cultures and had different experiences of life. We started to understand things differently … Because we could not understand each other, we started to complain about each other for what we had suffered, and then this suffering and complaining became hate. In the end, whenever we talked, we would fight. This is why I told new immigrants in my church that split family living had damaged my marriage. I told them not to consider this option, ever. (M04)

Some participants reported that living as an astronaut family, especially the changes in spousal roles associated with this family living arrangement, sometimes precipitated extra-marital affairs. In fact, about half of the cases of extra-marital affairs among the families involved in this study happened during the period of split family living. Although these extra-marital affairs happened under different circumstances, split family living was clearly one of the reasons, as reported by a male participant below.

> We lived separately for two years. She told me that in that period she got a diagnosis of a cancer which was found to be wrong later on. Her mood was very low during the period of medical investigation. That man looked after her, so she fell in love with him. ... Regardless of whether it was true or not, we were basically unable to look after each other for two years. Because of my absence, if she looked for something, either emotional support or intimacy, she would seek them from another person. … This [split family living] was definitely a reason for her extra-marital affair. (M25)

Themes in Relation to Making the Decision to Divorce

Three themes in this section captured the participants' experience of making a decision to divorce in New Zealand. They included their efforts and reasons for saving the marriage, the process of making a decision to divorce, and lastly the cultural influences on their decision-making.

Saving the marriage

Most participants reported that they tried hard to save their marriage. In many cases, this included seeking help from friends, trying to change themselves to meet their spouses' needs, sacrificing their own interests, and tolerating what were seen as extreme responses from their ex-spouses. Many participants stated they kept trying for years until they felt that all their efforts had failed.

> During those years, I tried really hard to save the marriage. I tried to forget what she did to me by focusing only on the future. I gave her the money she needed for her family and did whatever she asked for to look after my daughter. I also talked to her family and friends ... But none of these worked for her. (M01)

Rather than simply saving a marriage, some participants, typically the women, clearly stated that they had tried to rebuild a healthy marriage. The experience of the woman below was typical in this regard.

> Later on I realized that I also had a big responsibility for our problem, his affairs. This calmed me down. I started to think what I should do to build a healthy marriage, rather than just fix problems. ... I talked to him expressing my desire. I consulted the minister in my church. To be honest, in that year I made the biggest change in my life ... I spent all my time on the family and focused exclusively on the relationship. (M09)

The participants talked about a number of reasons for wanting to save a marriage. These included keeping the family intact, strong emotional attachment to spouses, commitment to the institution of marriage, "saving face", financial concerns, and religious beliefs. Among all these reasons, concerns for children were the most important one.

> For me, nothing is more important than my children. You know, we gave up our jobs and came to this new country for children. Children need an intact family, not a broken family. That was why I tried again and again for two years to save the marriage. (M23)

The process of decision-making

Participants described the decision-making process as emotionally charged. It involved anger, confusion, worry, exhaustion, desperation, and many other emotions. This emotional complexity, along with other personal circumstances, made each case of decision-making unique. Despite this, some basic patterns of decision-making were identified.

Some participants viewed the decision-making as a long journey, but claimed to have a clear mind regarding how to resolve the problem. They were aware the problem was serious, but decided to try to rebuild a healthy relationship, as one woman described in the previous theme. For this woman as well as some other participants, the failure of endless efforts of their own, and in some cases of their spouses, brought them to the decision to divorce.

> We both tried to save the marriage. When we eventually broke up, I felt I had fulfilled my responsibility 100%, maybe 200%. Even now I still believe I won't feel regret for it in the future. (M09)

Some participants regarded their decision as straightforward. In all these cases, the marital crises were caused by a single problem: an ex-wife's extramarital affair (see the third quote in the post-immigration conflicts section) or a spousal disagreement over reverse migration. Despite their claim of an otherwise good relationship, they all believed their problem was unsolvable, so they had to be realistic and make or accept the decision, as one participant explained below.

> In those days, I kept telling myself: 'you have to be realistic'. She was still very kind to me. She was not a bad woman. This [divorce] only happened because we made different decisions on which country we should live in. 'There is no way you can turn it around, so the only thing you could do is to bless her'. (M20)

Around two-thirds of the participants regarded their decision-making as a chronic off-and-on process. They seemed caught up in the spousal battle and the complexity of the decision. While some said they constantly delayed their decision, others described moving between separating and reconciling for years. Many of these participants reported that their marital conflicts had eventually escalated into a 'hot war' or 'cold war' in which hostility, frustration and hopelessness took control of their relationships. For them, it was the intolerability of the 'cold war' or 'hot war' that eventually pushed them to make the final decision.

> It was a cold war ... We still lived together and looked after two children but we did not talk. We disagreed with each other, but we did not argue. We hated each other but did not fight … it was really terrible to live in this war for one year. It drove everyone crazy. In the end, it became very clear that divorce was the only choice. (M23)

Easier to make the decision in New Zealand

Almost all the participants stated that it was much easier to make the decision to divorce in New Zealand than in China. While some participants stressed that they did not experience any interference from extended families or people in their social networks because they lived in New Zealand, other emphasized that they did not need to consider

how to face the stigmas associated with divorce and people's negative attitudes towards divorce and single parents because people in New Zealand saw divorce differently. This made them feel it was easier to divorce in New Zealand.

> Divorce is well-accepted here. There is no such thing as family mediation or public pressure in New Zealand ... In China, your family and friends will definitely persuade you not to divorce. All the people around you look at those who are divorced, particularly single mothers, differently. If you consider divorce there, you have to take that into account. (M06)

Many female participants also stressed the differences in financial support for single parents between the two countries. This made them feel lucky to divorce in New Zealand.

> Here the social welfare is so good. It guarantees that a single parent with a baby can live a life. There is no such support in China. I cannot imagine how I could survive had my divorce happened there. (M03)

Some participants, who had considered divorce from time to time before immigration, commented that the differences in the familial and social influences on divorce between the two countries had in fact contributed to their divorce.

> Our marriage was arranged. … There was no intimacy between us, ever. I had considered divorce before migration but was unable to make the decision. Why? In China, I was a manager of an insurance company and had to communicate with a lot of people… I had to consider how other people and people in my branch would see my divorce. I had to consider my daughter. How would her classmates see her? … After coming here, I did not have all these concerns ... this would have a direct effect on my decision to divorce. (M07)

Summary of Findings

This part of the immigrants project investigated the participants' life experiences leading to separation. A number of themes emerged from the data. Based on these themes, three main findings could be identified.

First, the results suggest that Chinese immigrants came to New Zealand to pursue a number of individual and family dreams. After their arrival, they encountered many barriers to adjusting to life in New Zealand, particularly entering the local job market. These included language and cultural barriers, institutional barriers against achieving

skilled jobs, and lack of support from the government and their personal networks. To cope with their difficulties with daily life and family finances, the Chinese immigrants employed a number of strategies, including working long hours at non-skilled jobs, studying a local degree, and resorting to living as an astronaut family. While these strategies appeared to be helpful for family finances, they increased life stress for Chinese immigrant couples, particularly for those who had young children.

Second, the results suggest that immigration and post-immigration adjustment created many conditions and circumstances at different family levels that could trigger marital conflicts. At the individual level, the adjustment stress and the losses associated with immigration, such as the loss of social status, appeared to not only put marked pressure on Chinese couples' relationships, but also affect their spousal communication and mutual support. In some cases, the stress and losses could affect Chinese spouses' mental health and contribute to more serious problems, such as physical violence. At the spousal level, many Chinese couples appeared to have experienced different levels of cultural and economic adjustment, with some immigrants, mostly women, adapting better than their ex-spouses. These different levels of adjustment appeared to increase the Chinese couples' conflicts in many areas of daily living such as managing family finances. In some cases, their differences in adjustment could also change their roles and power relations in the family and contribute to more serious marital problems. At the family level, living as an astronaut family was common among the Chinese immigrants involved in this study, particularly at their initial stage of adjustment. Although this living arrangement could assist family finances, it markedly changed the spouses' family roles and made life difficult for both spouses, particularly the astronaut mothers with young children. This family living arrangement could also create a physical and emotional distance between the spouses. In some cases, it appeared to have contributed to extramarital affairs which were likely to become a direst reason for divorce.

Third, the results suggest that making a decision to divorce was a difficult process for many Chinese immigrants because they were influenced by both the home and host cultural approaches to marriage and divorce. In this regard, while their Chinese family values, such as viewing marriage as a life time commitment and divorce as a shame for the whole family, appeared to have discouraged divorce and drawn them back to marriage, the greater acceptance of divorce and the availability of financial support to single parents in New Zealand appeared to let them feel relatively more comfortable about making the decision to divorce in this country.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHINESE IMMIGRANTS' POST-SEPARATION EXPERIENCES

Introduction

This chapter presents the results in relation to the immigrant participants' post-separation life experiences in three main areas: the impacts of separation, post-separation adjustment, and the long-term consequences of separation and/or divorce. Eight themes emerged from the data in these three areas, see Table 2. Two themes – Coping with Life after Separation and Social Support: Barriers and Access – include a number of sub-themes. All these themes and sub-themes are presented with quotes from the participants for illustration.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes in Relation to Chinese Immigrants' Post-Separation Experiences

Impacts of separation	Post-separation adjustment	Long-term consequences
Psychological difficulties	Coping with life after separation	Negative consequences
Financial difficulties	Focusing on parental responsibility and financial needs	Positive consequences
Daily life difficulties	Managing to become a self-reliant parent overseas	
	Developing new dreams	
	Managing the parental relationship and co-parenting	
	Social Support: Barriers and access	
	Support from extended families and personal networks	
	Support from local communities and social services	

Themes in Relation to Impacts of Separation

Marital separation had serious impacts on the Chinese immigrants involved in this study. When the participants reported the impacts of separation, they had a strong tendency to link these impacts with the settlement and adjustment difficulties they experienced as new immigrants. At the time of separation, participants had on average lived in New Zealand for three and half years. At this time, only three participants had secured a professional job. The remainder of the participants and the vast majority of their ex-spouses were studying English or enrolled in a tertiary degree, working in a non-skilled job for survival, or staying at home looking after young children. They all described experiencing serious stress with everyday life and continued to suffer a strong sense of loss. Many participants commented that because of the difficulties they experienced as new immigrants, their marriage breakdown overseas had more impact than what they might have experienced had they divorced in China. The following three themes captured the participants' experiences of what they had suffered as a result of their 'marriage breakdown in the alien land'.

Psychological Difficulties

The participants experienced a number of psychological difficulties after separation. Among these difficulties, the strong feeling of loss was the most common one and was in fact reported by all the participants. Many stated that in order to pursue their personal and family dreams in New Zealand, they had to leave behind almost everything in their country of origin, including their professional jobs, business, and personal networks. The breakdown of marriage made them feel there was nothing left for them. This feeling was extremely strong among participants who had lost their children to their ex-spouses.

> I felt I had lost everything after he left the country and took my son with him. I felt nothing but empty for more than one year. I was completely lost … During that time, I would sit on the beach for hours and hours, and ask myself: "why do I work every day? What is it for?" (M04)

The participants also reported that they felt angry and/or guilty. Most participants commented that they could not stop thinking about how divorce could happen after immigration. Around half of the participants blamed their ex-spouses for damaging the marriage. This emotion was particularly strong among participants whose ex-spouses engaged in extramarital affairs or were physical violent, typically men towards women.

> She had the affair, but never admitted it. She damaged the family, but never said sorry. Everyone makes mistakes. If I had made this mistake, I would have said sorry to her. Even though she actually did not have a sex with that man, she could have stopped contacting him. This would have saved the family … I had all these thoughts in my mind for many years. Even now I am still angry. (M01)

The other half of the participants wondered whether they could have saved the marriage if they had done something differently. They felt guilty about their failure in maintaining the relationship. They also felt guilty towards their children because they could not give them an intact family and provide them with a better chance for education.

> I had all kinds of doubts for several years.… I wondered if I had done something wrong and pushed him out of the family. I had doubts about why I could not tolerated his affair. It created a strong feeling of guilt, particularly when I planned my daughter's education. If I had been able to maintain the marriage, she would have attended a better school. (M16)

Many participants, particularly those who separated soon after immigration and had residential care responsibility for their young child(ren) after the separation, reported feeling helpless and hopeless. They were overwhelmed by the difficulties they faced. They doubted their ability to make a life for their children in this alien land. Many of these participants also stated that they desperately needed help but they could not seek it because of divorcing overseas. All these thoughts made them feel hopeless and helpless.

> I divorced one year after immigration and was ineligible for social benefits. For survival I had to work long hours. I needed time to learn English, but there was no way I could do it because of my daughter. I have been divorced for 3 years now. I remember in the first year after separation, I always worried whether I would be able to make a life here for my

> daughter. Sometimes I also felt helpless, particularly when I or my daughter was sick. In those times I was really in need of help, but we were overseas in this country, so where could I get help? (M12)

Finally around two thirds of the participants suffered a strong sense of loneliness and isolation. Some stated that divorcing in New Zealand increased their feelings of loneliness because their extended families and friends lived overseas and were unable to give them much support. Others, regardless of whether they were men or women, linked these feelings with their Chinese beliefs. They saw divorce as a shame for themselves and their extended family and tried to hide away from people in their network. All this increased their feelings of loneliness and isolation, as explained by a man below.

> After divorce, there was no one I could talk to. Definitely I felt very lonely. I also felt isolated. In fact, I isolated myself from outside world. Why? As a Chinese, you definitely don't want to tell people about your divorce … Sometimes I went out with my ex-wife for my children's birthday. We just pretended we were still a couple. (M24)

Financial Difficulties

Increased financial difficulties after separation was universal for all the participants. In fact, even before separation, many participants and their ex-spouses had difficulties with securing an income, as described earlier. After separation, the participants faced even more serious problems with finance, regardless of what types of child care arrangement they were involved in. For participants with shared childcare, the loss of income from ex-spouses who worked prior to separation, the increased living costs associated with separate living, the payment of child support, and the disruption of child visitation and/or childcare on their work were the most commonly reported reasons causing this difficulty.

> We managed to survive before separation. In those years, I worked more than 70 hours a week. My ex-wife looked after two children while doing some manual work from home. After separation, we lived separately and living costs became much higher. Because my son lived with me most of the time after separation, I had to reduce my working hours a lot. Despite this, I had to pay child support because my income was higher than my ex-wife's. All these caused a big problem with finance. (M01)

The financial difficulty was much more serious for participants who had residential child(ren). This was particularly the case for two thirds of the women who looked after child(ren) younger than five. Most of these women stated that their ex-husbands left the country permanently after the separation and refused to pay child support, so that they had to manage their finances on their own. Some women said they were 'lucky' because they could at least survive on Sole Parent Support. A third of the women were not eligible for social benefits because at the time of separation they had not obtained their New Zealand residency or had not lived in this country long enough to meet the criteria for social benefits. All these women had to rely on financial support from their overseas extended families for survival.

> The most serious problem following separation was how to survive here. I was ineligible for single mother benefits. I came here to marry her dad and my visa did not allow me to work or apply for social benefits. And also, at that time, my daughter was only 6 months old. I had no way to survive and had to ask my dad to send me money from China. (M02)

Daily Life Difficulties

Managing daily life after separation was also a serious challenge. In fact, even before separation, the participants' life was difficult because they had to manage their own post-immigration adjustment while looking after children. The separation, specifically the loss of daily support from their ex-spouses, made their life much more difficult. Many participants, regardless of their gender, their children's age or types of childcare arrangements, stated that managing daily life after separation was the most difficult challenge they had ever experienced.

The female participants were typically involved in sole residential care of their children. After separation, around half of them continued with work and/or study. Although their children were mostly older than five, managing work/study while looking after children was extremely difficult, as shown in the previous quote from participant M12.

The other half of the women were typically separated not long after immigration and had sole daily care of their young children after separation. They all had problems with English and/or driving. Although they did not work or study, they found that managing childcare as a single mother was also an extreme challenge.

> The life was extremely difficult. At that time, my daughter was 4 and my son was only one. I had to look after everything, eating, drinking, toileting, and sleeping. I was always busy, from getting up in the morning until I got into bed. It was very tiring. Furthermore, I was unable to drive and had problems with English. All these things made life very very difficult. (M13)

Managing daily life after separation was also difficult for the male participants. They were typically involved in shared childcare, either part-time or full-time for a specific period. After separation, half of the male participants lived in a different city from their ex-spouses. They all remained in New Zealand for the well-being of their children, but parental role strains, such as conflicts between work/study schedules and childcare arrangements, and barriers to child visitation, made their daily life difficult.

> We lived in different cities. Initially I drove back to Auckland every weekend. I played with my son in the day and slept in the car overnight, you know, to save money … Later on, my ex-wife travelled between different cities for work, so I moved back to look after him on several occasions, in total for two years. It was a huge disruption to my work and my own life. (M06)

Themes in Relation to Post-Separation Adjustment

The participants talked about how they utilized their personal, interpersonal and social resources to cope with life difficulties and the challenges with co-parenting after separation. Three themes, including Coping with Life after Separation, Managing Parental Relationship and Co-parenting, and Social Support: Barriers and Access, captured their experiences of coping and adjusting after separation.

Coping with Life after Separation

Coping with life after separation appeared to be a complicated and lengthy process as it involved managing multiple life difficulties. This process was further complicated by

the participants' individual differences in family circumstances. Despite this complexity, managing financial difficulties and parental responsibilities, fitting into life as a single parent, and developing a lifestyle that was not related to the previous marriage appeared to be their main experiences of adjustment. At the time of the interview, the participants had been separated for 4.7 years on average. Around half of the participants, particularly those who had separated recently, stated that they were still in the process of adjustment. The theme Coping with Life after Separation includes three sub-themes that captured participants' main experiences of the challenges they faced and how they managed their lives after separation.

Focusing on parental responsibility and financial needs

The participants regarded managing parental responsibilities and financial difficulties as their first step of adjustment after separation. Many participants stated that residential childcare and/or financial emergencies gave them no choice but to carry on with life immediately after separation, regardless of how sad or angry they were.

At the time of separation, two thirds of the participants had children living with them. For these participants, it was their exclusive daily childcare responsibility that forced them to move ahead with life.

> It was a torturing time. I could not sleep every night. Anger, worries, headaches … But no matter how hard it was, the next morning I had to get up to do whatever I was supposed to do: preparing meals and taking them [two sons] to school. They had lost their father [back to his country of origin] and now exclusively depended on me. How could I not be there for them? (M21)

More than a third of the participants reported having to move ahead with life as soon as possible for financial reasons. Many of these participants stated that they separated soon after immigration and were not eligible for social benefits, so they had to secure an income for survival immediately after separation.

> We separated a few months after I came here. I had difficulties in every aspect of my life. It was so difficult that I had no time to feel sad or angry. Although I did not need to look after my daughter at that time, I had to find a job for my own survival. So I had to be active and keep my life going. (M25)

Despite the difficulty of managing parental responsibilities and financial emergencies, this life focus appeared to be very helpful for the participants' adjustment. While some participants said that it served as a distraction to negative emotions, many others stated clearly that focusing on parental responsibilities and/or financial emergencies helped them accept what had happened and move ahead with their lives.

> It was impossible for me to forget what he had done … But then, when I looked at my circumstances: a single mother with no income, and a three year old daughter who depended on me, I had to think how I could survive from now on. This definitely helped me accept divorce and freed me up from all the introspection I had suffered from before. (M16)

Managing to become a self-reliant parent overseas

The participants regarded managing their lives so they could be a self-reliant single parent in New Zealand as the most difficult part of adjustment after separation. This adjustment included balancing parental responsibility with their own adjustment needs, filling in the family roles that were previously taken by ex-spouses, and learning how to parent children as a separated parent.

Balancing parental responsibility with their own adjustment needs was the most persistent challenge participants experienced after separation. Many participants, regardless of what types of childcare arrangement they were involved in, reported that they had to put their children's needs first and adjust their individual plan for study or work accordingly. This, in many cases, involved rescheduling work and/or study and re-budgeting family finances. This adjustment process was particularly difficult for half of the women who looked after young children after separation, because their ex-spouses left the country permanently and did not give them any child support payments. Many of these women stated that they had to put their own study or plans for a job on hold completely and learn how to manage their daily life and family finances all by themselves.

> Their dad went back to China after separation. I was the only person here to look after two children: one was four and another only one. At that time I had just completed my postgraduate study. It was the ideal time to start a job. But I had to put this and other plans on hold. The money I got from the government was not enough for rent and food, so I had to find a flatmate to share the rent. We all three lived in one room. I also asked my parents to send me money for emergencies. I had to budget ahead before I was able to work. (M13)

To become a self-reliant parent also involved learning 'new' daily life skills. Many participants stated they and their ex-spouses had a rather clear division of family roles before separation. After separation, they had to take those roles that were previously assumed by their ex-spouses. For male participants, it often involved learning cooking and childcare skills, and managing their daily communication difficulties with English themselves. For women, this typically involved learning to drive, fixing household maintenance problems, and making decisions for children. The following quote is just one typical example for women.

> Before separation I was very dependent on him on family roles traditionally taken by a husband, such as fixing electronic problems and making a decision for my son. Initially I was very scared of doing these, but as a single mother, I had to do these myself. It took time to learn. I am more comfortable with these now, even though I make mistakes sometimes. (M09)

Finally many participants reported that they had to learn how to parent children as a separated parent. For separated women, this mostly involved learning how to discipline children authoritatively. For separated men, this often involved learning non-resident parenting skills to maintain a good father-child relationship and resume their authoritative role in disciplining their children, as the father below said.

> After divorce, parenting became a big challenge. Because he mainly lived with his mum, I would not have a strong influence on him, so the first thing I did was to rebuild a good relationship by being his friend. After that, I started to let him know what he could or could not do by convincing him rather than forcing him. Definitely parenting a child as a divorced father required different skills. (M05)

Developing new dreams

The participants in general reported that they felt more settled about two years after separation. In fact, two thirds of the participants obtained a divorce decree at this

time. By this time, many participants had accepted or even enjoyed single parenthood and planned their life ahead.

A number of studies suggested that developing a new intimate relationship and/or remarriage soon after divorce was quite common among divorced individuals, predominantly those of European descent, in Western countries (e.g., Tschann et al., 1989; Hongyu Wang & Amato, 2000). This was clearly not the case for the separated Chinese involved in this study. At the time of the interview, among the 25 Chinese immigrants interviewed, 23 remained single, and only two women were either remarried or had started developing an intimate relationship. Most participants claimed to have never considered remarriage seriously. While some stated that they suffered too much from the previous marriage and did not want to be hurt again, many others explained that even though they were open to this option, there was not much chance for them to develop a relationship with a person who held Chinese values. Many reasons, such as a small local Chinese community, being too old or a single mother, and poor family income, were reported. Among all these reasons, worries about the negative effect of remarriage on children were most commonly stressed.

> In the past seven years, I never considered remarriage. Why? I might be a little bit scared of getting hurt again, but even though I was open to it there was not much chance there. Apart from this, I had to consider what impact this relationship would have on my daughter. As a Chinese, you hear many stories about step-parents, right? Many of them are scary. So… (M16)

Despite not considering remarriage, most participants stated that they had developed new dreams gradually after separation. Although they developed their dreams differently, mostly related to their level of English skills, a common and central part of their dreams was to make sure their children grow up healthy.

Some participants, typically those who had serious difficulty with English, focused almost exclusively on the wellbeing of their children after separation. They believed that

they could not achieve much in this country because of their English and cultural barriers so they focused exclusively on their children after separation. Many of these participants, regardless of what types of childcare arrangement they were involved in, claimed that they had done whatever they could for children since separating. This, in many cases, included picking up whatever job was available to earn money to support their children.

> I was an associate CEO for a big company in China. Could I achieve this here? No way. English is a big barrier, let alone other factors. So after divorce, I focused only on my daughter. In the past 8 years, I worked during the day and used this money to buy an investment house for her. I also did a cleaning job at nights and saved the money for her piano lessons and traveling. I devoted all my weekends to my daughter … Why? This is because I can sacrifice myself but could not compromise my daughter's wellbeing. (M11)

Other participants, particularly those who were more confident about speaking English, decided to upgrade their job skills. For these participants, this choice had more to do with securing a sustainable income rather than pursuing their career goals. Many stressed that their dream after divorce was living a peaceful life with their children. With a reliable income, they could provide them a better growing-up environment. In fact, in many cases, this involved lowering their job expectations for the sake of the children's wellbeing. The success in pursuing their post-separation dream, as described by a woman below, was one of the best examples in this regard.

> Previously, I was arrogant and looked down at being a midwife. In China, I was a surgeon at a top hospital. After immigration, we did business in England, China and New Zealand. After separation, I could not do this anymore, because of my two daughters: two and three at separation. I lived on my savings for one year and then decided to be a midwife. I have experienced a lot. Now what I really want is just a good growing-up environment for children. This job gives me less money but more time for the children, so I chose to be a midwife. It was so hard to complete the study, but I did it. I have found a job and will start working soon. (M17)

Still, some participants, typically those whose children were about to grow up and leave the family, reported that they had planned or started to plan a life for themselves. All these participants reported that they had focused on their children for many years since separation, and that now it was a time to plan a life ahead for themselves. Their plans typically involved developing and pursuing their personal interests, such as saving money

for travelling or getting involved in voluntary work in Chinese church communities. Although none of them seemed to particularly avoid another intimate relationship, they all planned to live independently for the rest of their lives. The plan developed by a woman below was typical in this regard.

> After living with my son for all these years, now I feel marriage is not necessary for me. Of course it is better to have a husband, but if I don't, it doesn't mean I could not have a happy life. I know my son will go to university. He will get married and live his own life. So now it is the time for me to plan my own life. I am currently doing a lot of jobs in my church. You know, many people there helped me during my difficult time, so now I want to help others. I have planned to learn theology next year. After that I might do more jobs in the church. (M09)

Managing the Parental Relationship and Co-Parenting

The participants regarded managing the parental relationship and co-parenting after separation as one of the most important challenges. The analysis of the data related to this revealed three main patterns or types of relationships that evolved after separation.

First, about a quarter of the participants, three men and three women, reported a low level of spousal conflicts over child living arrangements and a high level of parental co-operation over co-parenting since the separation. All these participants and their ex-spouses remained in New Zealand after separating. Among these participants, daily life conflicts after immigration and particularly one spouse's involvement in an extramarital affair were commonly reported reasons for separation; no participants nor ex-spouses had ever engaged in physical violence. All the participants in these cases stated that at the time of separation they and their ex-spouses focused only on children's wellbeing and therefore did not have any disagreement over asset division and child living arrangements.

> She came to NZ with my daughter two years earlier. When I came here and discovered her affair, I just thought 'Ok, we divorce' … We did not have any problem with money and the child. Of course, my daughter would live with her as I had just arrived here, but I would do whatever I could for her. My ex-wife knew that. In fact at that time both of us worried about my daughter rather than anything else. (M25)

All these participants reported co-operative parenting after separation. This included adjusting the child living arrangements from time to time to meet each spouse's needs for study or work, voluntary payments to support the children, and good communication over issues related to parenting. Many of these participants stated that they and their ex-spouses had become good friends over time.

> We have been very co-operative since separating. We adjusted the child custody arrangements to meet each other's needs. We never had a problem with spending money for our child as both of us did not mind paying. Of course we had problems with parenting but we had no problem with communication. We had dinner together and discussed frequently how we could parent better. In fact, we have become 'good friends' after separation. (M25)

Second, another quarter of the participants, five women and one man, reported a high level of spousal conflicts over child living arrangements and constant conflicts over co-parenting after separation. Although these participants did not report serious pre-separation marital conflicts, such as physical violence, they all reported a high level of spousal conflicts over the children's living arrangements and the division of assets during the period of separation settlement, with the majority of cases involving lengthy legal battles in both home and host countries, in a few cases involving physical violence, typically by men towards women, in this period. After separation, all the ex-spouses left New Zealand permanently, with one man taking his child with him without the consent of his wife, and one women taking one child with her and leaving another with her husband in New Zealand. After the completion of the separation settlement, all the parental links including child support payments were stopped completely by either the participants and/or the ex-spouses. The experience of a woman below was typical in this regard.

> We constantly fought over the children, the house and then the child support payments. Because it involved things in two countries, it took 7 to 8 years to get the legal procedures done. The court gave me our two sons. He was obligated to pay child support, but he never contacted the children or paid money. Because he never came back to NZ, no one could do anything to him. … On my side, I was also firm that I did not want to have any link with that man at all. (M21)

Third, nearly half of the participants, five men and six women, reported a moderate to high level of conflicts over co-parenting at the initial stage after separation but later their relationship with their ex-spouses and co-parenting improved over time. However, although most of these participants arranged assets and child living arrangements with their ex-spouses themselves, they all reported ongoing conflicts over child accommodation, contact, and support payments, particularly in the first one to two years after separation. During this period, parental communication was particularly difficult. Most participants commented that they did not contact each other at all over basic parenting tasks. Anger and revenge were the most commonly reported reasons for these difficulties.

> Initially she asked for money for the children's living costs, so I gave her 90% of my savings. After she got the money, she dropped my daughter at my place … It was better for me to have my son because my daughter had reached puberty, but it was hard to negotiate this with her. In fact, in the first two years, we did not talk to each other unless we had to sort out accommodation for the children. Why did we have so many conflicts? The main reason was that we really hated each other after separation, as many divorced Chinese did. They would like to see another spouse suffering. For her, she might have used these 'tricks' to make my life difficult and hold me down. (M01)

All the participants in this group reported that ongoing parental conflicts had a huge impact on the children. They all stated that it was their worries over the children's well-being that prompted them to compromise and even sacrifice their own interests to improve the relationship. Many participants, particularly those who attended post-separation parenting programmes, also reported that they learned their co-parenting practices and skills from local people and applied them to re-build their own co-parenting relationship. In many of these cases, the participants stressed that forgiving each other was essential for the improvement of their co-parenting relationship. At the time of the interview, around half of the participants who experienced initial difficulties in co-parenting followed by some improvement reported having rebuilt a co-operative relationship. The following was one of the best examples.

> Initially we had trouble with all the parenting tasks. My son really suffered. He was not a mean person, so why was he so mean to his son and so critical of me? This convinced me that we had to cure our mutual hurt first. I forgave him first and wrote him an apology letter. He responded positively. After this, we started to discuss what we expected each other to do for our son and how we could communicate better. The co-parenting skills I learned from church workshops were very helpful in this regard … In the past three years, we dealt with co-parenting issues well. We also respect each other more now. (M09)

Social Support: Barriers and Access

This theme emerged when analysing the data in relation to the participants' experiences of how they utilized interpersonal and social resources to cope with their life difficulties after separation. In this regard, the participants reported a number of cultural and immigration-related barriers that prevented them from accessing social support. Some participants appeared to be held back by these barriers and they could not obtain much support. Others, however, reported that they managed to obtain critical support from different sources and regarded the support as very helpful to their adjustment. The theme Social Support: Barriers and Access includes two sub-themes that captured the participants' experiences of barriers to and accessing support from extended families and personal networks, along with support from local communities and social services.

Support from extended families and personal networks

The participants regarded immigration-related problems and Chinese beliefs about divorce as the most common barriers to accessing support from their extended families, friends and other people in their personal network.

At the time of separation, the participants' extended families and people in their network mostly lived in their home country. Most participants thought that the physical distance between the home and host country and the immigration policy requirements for Chinese people to visit New Zealand were the main barriers for them when trying to obtain support, particularly daily life support from their extended families, relatives and friends.

> All my extended family and friends lived in China. Although they could send me money for emergencies, it was hard for them to give me daily life support, such as help with childcare, which I also needed desperately. The long distance between the two countries and associated travelling costs are obviously an obstacle. The difficulty in obtaining a visitors' visa is another. Immigration NZ had many requirements for Chinese people wanting to visit NZ. In those years, it only allowed them to visit NZ for a short time but it took a long time to process the application. This was why I did not ask them to come and help me. (M02)

Many participants also stressed that their Chinese beliefs concerning divorce and associated worries, such as negative views of divorce, feelings of shame, concerns about the impact of divorce on their families, and worries about the stigma attached to divorce, prevented them from seeking support from extended family, friends, and other people in both their home country and local Chinese communities. A third of the participants, mostly men, did not receive any support from these sources because of these cultural beliefs and associated concerns, as a man reported below.

> What really held me back was that I felt divorce was bad. I did not tell my parents until I was settled two years later. They were the older generation and would feel divorce was a shame for the whole family. I also worried what other people particularly those in local Chinese communities would say about me and particularly my son. Because I did not tell them, there was no way they could support me. (M05)

Despite these barriers, more than half of the participants, mostly women, managed to obtain support from their extended families and people in their personal network. Compared with those who did not, these participants felt more desperately in need of help. Some participants, such as the woman below, clearly stated that it was their desperate need that pushed them to break through all these barriers.

> At the time of separation, my daughter was less than two year old. I had no income. Although I had lived in this country for several years, I did not have any friends here … looking at these circumstances, I felt I had to talk to my parents, brother and friends in China, and ask for support from them. (M03)

Around half of the participants obtained emotional and/or financial support from their parents and siblings. For example, the woman above received both emotional and financial support from her parents and brother. More than half of the women who had residential care responsibility for young children also sought childcare support from their

parents. They either asked their parents to come over and/or sent their children back to China. All these women claimed that childcare support was crucial not only for their psychological recovery but also for their post-immigration adjustment.

> I was very down and could not look after my daughter who was only one year old, so my mum came over for six months which was the maximum of time she could stay as a visiting parent. After that, she took my daughter back to China. It was a great help for my recovery. It also gave me more time to learn driving and English. In fact, not long after they went back to China, I found my first job here. (M22)

Around a third of participants obtained emotional support from friends in China. In some cases, the participants also received support from friends they made in this country. Many of these participants reported that their friends understood them the best and therefore the support from them was crucial for their psychological adjustment, as a man below describes.

> At that time, I was constantly thinking about how I could have ended up with divorce constantly. I was confused and lost, and was unable to focus on anything. My friends, one from China and one from here, understood my circumstances. They talked to me all the time over the telephone or in person. Without their support, I would have lost my life. (M14)

Support from local communities and social services

The participants also identified a number of barriers that prevented them from obtaining support from local communities and social services. Some participants, particularly those who separated shortly after immigration, regarded their isolation from local communities, difficulties with English, and unfamiliarity with social services as the main barriers preventing them accessing support from local communities and social services.

> I separated in my first year in this country. Apart from my ex-husband, I did not know anyone in either the Chinese or English communities. At that time, I was not familiar with social services at all as these were not common in China. Even though I knew about these services, I was unable to call and asked for support from them, as my English was really not good. So I did not have any support from local communities and the government until I got to know a Chinese social worker by chance. (M02)

Other participants, typically those who had lived in this country for a number of years at the time of separation, stressed that their problems with communication in English and particularly the cultural differences between Chinese and local people were the main barriers against support from local communities, as reported by a man below.

> I had lived in this country for a number of years [8 years] at the time of separation. Definitely I knew some people around me, neighbours, colleagues and classmates, but it was impossible to ask for support from them. Language was a problem, particularly with regard to communicating those complicated circumstances and subtle feelings in relation to divorce. More importantly, we had a very different understanding of marriage and divorce. They [local people] could not understand what we had experienced as Chinese immigrants, so how could they support us? (M23)

Many participants stated that they became familiar with social services over time during their divorce process. Some participants reported that they had tried to seek psychological support from professional services but stopped this after their initial contacts. Some believed that they could not get any benefit from these services because the mainstream professionals could not understand their life experiences and sufferings as a divorced Chinese immigrant.

> In fact, I tried to contact these services. After talking with them [a professional on a counselling hotline and a counsellor in an individual session], I firmly believed they could not help. Why? Basically, Pakeha people could not understand Chinese culture and our background. Even though they were good hearted, they could not understand what we had suffered from divorce. (M10)

Despite all these barriers, most of the participants, typically the women, managed to obtain support from local communities not long after separation. Once again, the severity of their life challenges after separation and the inaccessibility to personal networks in China appeared to have forced some participants to become active in making friends in local communities and seeking support from them, as the woman below explained.

> I was new to this country and a single mum with a 6 months old daughter. Although my dad sent me money for emergencies, I still had a lot of difficulties with daily life. I could not speak English and did not have a car. That was why I had to try my best to talk to people, particularly Chinese people living close to me, and ask for support from them. (M02)

Around two thirds of the participants, mostly women, developed a network within their local communities and obtained emotional and daily life support from them. Some participants, such as the women above, developed their networks in their neighbourhood. Others, however, developed their networks within local Chinese church communities. Some characteristics of a church community, such as caring, being trustworthy and involving people of different ages, marital status and socioeconomic backgrounds, appeared to make the community be attractive to separated Chinese, and it motivated them to develop a network within the community. Many of the participants who developed a network in their church community reported that they had obtained many types of ongoing support from this community. These included emotional support, mediation of parental conflicts, support with emergency childcare, suggestions on single parenting, and assistance in job-searching. The woman below had engaged with her church community for three years. She explained why she was keen to develop a network in this community.

> In my church, I met a variety of people, such as IT workers, doctors, cleaners, grandparents, parents, single parents, and young couples, etc. They were at different ages with different backgrounds. Although they were different, they all treated each other as brothers and sisters. They were very supportive and would not gossip about others behind their backs. So I had no concerns about telling them about my divorce and seeking different types of support from them. (M04)

Finally, over a third of the participants sought support from professional services. They got known these services typically from separation settlement services, church communities or women's refuges they had stayed in before. While a few participants sought individual counselling, most of these participants attended post-separation adjustment workshops. These services were typically provided by Chinese professionals. All these participants stressed that Chinese professionals understood their experience of divorce. They also stated that support from these Chinese professionals was very helpful to their psychological adjustment and co-parenting.

> My church invited a Taiwanese to run a workshop. He is specialized in divorce and had run this workshop in Chinese churches all over the world. He helped me to understand how to

> cope with divorce, improve parental communication and co-parenting. Definitely, this workshop helped me a lot. (M20)

Themes in Relation to Long-term Consequences

This section presents results in relation to the participants' experiences of the long-term consequences of separation and/or divorce, rather than the short-term impact on emotions and daily life. Many participants stated that they had reviewed the costs and gains of separation and/or divorce from time to time since their separation. The two themes below captured their perceptions of how separation and/or divorce impacted them both negatively and positively in the long-term.

Negative Consequences

Constant difficulty with family finance was viewed consistently by the participants as the most obvious consequence of their separation and/or divorce. In fact, many participants described their post-separation financial condition as absolute poverty. Although individual difficulty in post-immigration adjustment was commonly acknowledged, almost all the participants stressed their divorce, particularly the loss of another income and increased parental responsibility after separation, as the most important factor contributing to their persistent poverty.

> I have been divorced for 7 years now. Both my son and I still feel we are the poorest in this country … Without a doubt, completing a degree and finding a professional job is a big challenge for every immigrant, but if I had not looked after my son on my own for these years, I might have already achieved this. Even if I was still unable to find a job, if I was in the marriage, at least I would have another income and would not have ended up with poverty like this. (M06)

Apart from the financial consequence, the participants also reported that separation and/or divorce had a long-term impact on themselves as a person. In this regard, about two thirds of the men and around a third of the women reported having suffered a sense of failure after separation. Almost all these participants stated that they had been in the marriage for more than a decade and had never expected their marriages would breakdown

before. While some participants claimed having developed a sense of failure in maintaining interpersonal relationship, particularly marriage, many others stated a strong sense of failure as a person as the result of divorce. For the male participants, lower self-confidence and self-esteem were also commonly reported.

> Divorce has had a huge impact on my self-confidence and self-esteem, absolutely … Since the divorce, I have always felt that as a person I am becoming weaker and weaker. It is hard to put in words. Overall I just feel I am a loser in every aspect of life. (M01)

Positive Consequences

Despite the negative impact on family finances and psychological wellbeing described above, marital separation and/or divorce could also bring Chinese immigrants some positive outcomes. In this regard, the most commonly reported outcome was self-growth. Around a third of the men and around two thirds of the women reported self-growth as a result of divorce. These participants reported that separation was a painful process and managing life after separation was even more challenging. Despite these difficulties, they had managed to cope and develop a new dream for themselves and particularly for their children. For these participants, particularly those women who had residential responsibility for young children and/or serious difficulties with English, managing their life as a single parent in a 'foreign land' successfully had increased their self-confidence and made them feel stronger.

> I was used to be a very timid girl. I liked to rely on my husband. After divorce, I had to rely on myself. This created a chance for me to realize my potential. In the two years, I managed childcare successfully, I improved my English and found a full-time caregiver job. I become stronger. Now I believe I can survive in this country. In fact, I am looking for a better future for me and my daughter. (M22)

Some participants, mostly women, claimed that they had suffered constant marital conflicts and a never ending process of divorcing. In a few cases, several women even suffered the physical violence by their ex-husbands. For these participants, divorce not only gave them a chance for a different life, but also improved their sense of autonomy and self-esteem, as one woman said.

> An unhappy marriage is like a “black hole”. It sucks all my energy … Now, without constant fighting, I have more time for the children. Although I have difficulties with rearing children on my own, I am happy and confident, because now I am able to live a life of my own choice. It give me a feeling of autonomy and self-esteem. (M17)

Finally, some participants acknowledged that divorce was a turning point for them to reflect on what was wrong with them as a person and what went wrong with their previous marriage. This reflection had increased their self-awareness, improved their interpersonal skills and let them become mature as a person, as a male participant reported below.

> Looking back now, I think both of us did not know much about marriage before. We both loved children and family but did not know how to set up a priorities. We saw earning and children as most important and left the couple relationship as the last thing. We also neglected spousal communication … Now I have improved all these skills and have more ability to love my child. (M23)

Summary of Findings

The second part of the immigrants project investigated the immigrant participants’ post-separation life experiences in three main areas: the impact of separation, managing life challenges associated with separation and adjusting to single parent life, and the long-term consequences of separation and/or divorce. A number of themes and sub-themes under each of the three areas were identified.

Overall these results suggest that marital separation had a marked psychological impact on the participants and brought them serious challenges with daily life, family finance, single parenting, and co-parenting with their ex-spouses. In order to cope with these challenges and adjust to a single parent life, the participants employed a number of strategies. Many of these strategies appeared to be centred on their children and could be called ‘a child-centred adjustment approach’. These included focusing on parental responsibilities and financial difficulties immediately after separation, learning daily life and single parenting skills and securing an income to become a self-reliant parent,

managing post-separation parental relationships and co-parenting by focusing on the children's well-being, and overcoming cultural and immigration-related barriers to access to social support. In terms of the long-term consequences, although separation brought most participants constant financial difficulty and in some cases a sense of failure, the child-centred adjustment approach seemed to have helped many participants to successfully develop a single lifestyle and new dreams, and in some cases helped them to achieve self-growth.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES OF DIVORCE

Introduction to the Professionals Project

This project investigates the professionals' perceptions of Chinese immigrants' experiences of divorce in New Zealand. It examines the professionals' understanding of how immigration and post-immigration challenges contribute to the divorce of Chinese immigrants. It also examines their perceptions of the difficulties that Chinese immigrants experience after separation and what supports their adjustment. The professionals' views of the influence of cultural and immigration-related factors on the marital relationship, the separation, and the post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrants are also explored. Given that family immigration is a typical mode of recent Chinese emigration to New Zealand, as described in Chapter One, this project focuses on the professionals' understanding of the separation and post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrants who were married before immigration.

Method

Participants

Twelve Chinese professionals who are experienced in working with separating and separated Chinese immigrant individuals, couples, and families participated in this study. They are all first-generation Chinese immigrants, with half from China, three from Taiwan, two from Hong Kong, and one from Macao. Eleven professionals immigrated to New Zealand as adults and one as a high school student. They are all women and have worked for a variety of government agencies and social service organizations including

mental health services, women's refuges, family support organizations, Chinese immigrant settlement services, family counselling services, and family court support services. On average, they had worked for these agencies and organizations for 7.1 years (SD=4.8) at the time of interview. Their professional backgrounds included mental health, family counselling, immigrant services, social work, legal service, and Chinese-English interpretation. All these professionals mainly serviced Chinese immigrants at work, with the majority focusing on immigrant settlement, mental health, family relationships, and separation support services.

Procedure

Ethics approval was given by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. The participants were recruited in Auckland. Five professionals known as having extensive experience of working with separating and separated Chinese were approached individually and invited to participate. They all agreed. Two main Asian and Chinese service organizations were approached and two teams made up of a total of seven professional workers agreed to participate. The Information Sheet (see Appendix H) was provided to the professionals on the first contact and the Consent Form for group or individual interviews (see Appendices I and J) was signed on the day of interview.

The interviews were initially planned as focus group interviews. However, only two small group interviews were conducted in the two organizations, with one group interview with two professionals and another with three professionals. Seven individual interviews were conducted with the remaining professionals because of their practical difficulties in arranging a group interview. All the interviews were conducted in the professionals' work settings. The two group interviews and four individual interviews were conducted in Mandarin. Three individual interviews were conducted in English, based on the choice of the professionals involved. Confidentiality and anonymity were

guaranteed to protect the identity of the professionals and their clients and to facilitate open discussion.

The two group interviews lasted for 1.5 and 2.5 hours respectively and the individual interviews for 1 to 1.5 hours. Given that little is known about the marital separation of Chinese immigrants, a brief semi-structured interview protocol was developed to guide both the individual and group interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This protocol included an opening question and a list of potential topics. The main topics included the professionals' understanding of the influence of post-immigration adjustment and coping on marital relationships, the impacts of separation, adjustment after separation, cultural influences on separation and post-separation adjustment, co-parenting and parental relationships after separation, family and social support, and the long-term consequences of separation and divorce (see Appendix K for the interview guide). These general topics were intended to focus the professionals' thoughts but allow them to talk freely. Similar to the process described in Chapter Three, the interview protocol was also updated across the interviews.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and translated into English. Data were entered into an NVivo 10 database. During the transcription, translation and initial examination of the data, it became clear that the professionals' perceptions of the separation of Chinese immigrants could be divided into two main areas: the impact of immigration and post-immigration adjustment on marital relationships, and the impact of separation and post-separation adjustment. Hence, the data was divided into two sets – one set for each area. The two sets of data were then analysed separately by following the principals of the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Similar to the data analysis process described in Chapter Three for the immigrants project, the data analysis in this project also included: coding the data; grouping codes into categories, subthemes and themes; exploring the relationship between categories, subthemes and themes; and establishing the final themes and sub-themes. These findings were then compared with those from the immigrants projects. Based on the results from both projects, a proposed model that represents the experience of divorce of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand was developed, as described earlier in Chapter Three. This data analysis, including the developed of the proposed model, was regularly discussed with my supervisor and adjustments were made before the final themes and proposed model were established. As described in Chapter Three, at the beginning and towards the end of the data analysis, two cultural experts in the field were also consulted for their opinion in regard to the validity of the proposed themes. Their suggestions and feedback were considered in the process of data analysis including the development of the themes and the proposed model.

Results

A number of themes emerged from the analysis of the data in each set, see Table 3. Four themes, including adjusting to a single parent life, from my children or your children to our children, barriers and access to social support, and long-term consequences, have two sub-themes. These themes and subthemes are presented with quotes from the participants for illustration.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes in Relation to Professionals' Perceptions of Chinese Immigrants' Experiences of Divorce

Immigration, post-immigration adjustment and separation	Impacts of separation and post-separation adjustment
Post-immigration challenges and separation	Separation overseas makes life harder
Spousal and gender differences in post-immigration adjustment and separation	Adjusting to a single parent life
	No choice but to carry on with life in New Zealand
Changes in family living arrangements and separation	As long as the children have a good future
Social and cultural influences on views of divorce and decision-making	From my children or your children to our children
	My children or your children
	Our children
	Barriers and access to social support
	Barriers to social support
	Access to social support
	Long-term consequences
	Negative consequences
	Positive consequences

Themes in Relation to Immigration, Post-Immigration Adjustment and Separation

Professionals talked extensively about their experiences of working with separated or divorced Chinese couples and their observations of how immigration and the associated challenges impacted the marital relationship and contributed to the deterioration of the relationship and their eventual separation. They acknowledged that immigration and post-immigration adjustment had a complicated relationship with the marital relationship and separation. Depending on how Chinese couples coped with life challenges after immigration, some couples might have strengthened their relationship. However, for those couples who eventually divorced, the professionals believed that their post-immigration challenges did contribute to their separation. The following four themes captured the

professionals' understandings of how immigration contributed to the separation of Chinese immigrant couples.

Post-immigration challenges and separation

Post-immigration challenges, including adjustment stress, financial difficulties, and the loss of social status, were the most commonly reported experiences contributing to the pressures on Chinese couples' relationships.

The professionals stressed that Chinese immigrants experienced many barriers, including the language barrier, cultural differences, institutional barriers such as statutory registration for professional jobs, and discrimination, when adjusting to their lives, particularly in regard to the job market in New Zealand. All these barriers not only affected their daily communications and other social functioning, but more importantly also interfered their normal career path and diminished their ability to earn money. All these experiences brought huge stress to many Chinese couples' daily lives.

> Without doubt, the different culture and language in New Zealand made life very difficult for Chinese immigrants. Other things that also had a serious impact on them, particularly financial wise, were the registration requirements and discrimination when looking for a skilled job. For example, if they were a doctor before, they were unable to find a doctor's job here, as their previous registration was not recognized. Because of all these barriers, you could imagine how difficult it was for them to manage their daily life and finances here. This was a reality many Chinese couples had to face. (P02)

The loss of social status was also common among Chinese couples. Chinese immigrants were typically professionals or business people before immigration, as described in Chapter One. After immigration, many of them were either unemployed or worked at a low-skilled job for survival. This, as observed by a social worker at a Chinese immigrant service organization, brought them a strong feeling of loss in social status.

> In fact, the loss in social status is a serious problem for Chinese immigrants. Before migration, most of them were professionals with a high income. Look at these people now, many of them are doing cleaning, painting or other labouring jobs. Some of them simply stay at home doing nothing. (P10)

Some professionals, particularly those who specialized in family relationships, reported that Chinese couples neglected spousal communication and mutual support after immigration because they were so stressed with their daily challenges. This had an impact on their marital relationships.

> Many of my clients told me that after migration they did not have much time or energy to talk to each other. Why? It was because both spouses were so busy with learning English or working extremely long hours for survival. This, I think, had the most fundamental effect on the marital relationship. (P04)

Others emphasized that the constant stress over daily life and family finances could lead to some Chinese couples having ongoing conflicts over managing household work, childcare, or family finances. If a couple could not resolve these conflicts effectively, divorce was likely to occur, as explained by a professional below.

> When both spouses were very tired, who looked after the children and who should do the cooking might become a serious problem. Financially they were also extremely stressed. As such, spending might become a source of conflict. Because they were used to being financially very comfortable, how to manage financial difficulties after migration might be particularly challenging. … Based on my observation, all these conflicts could become chronic and eventually cause their separation. (P09)

Again, some of the others talked about how life difficulties and elevated levels of stress affected some Chinese spouses' mental health and created the possibility of serious marital conflicts, and in some extreme cases even domestic violence, typically towards women. As reported by a Chinese counsellor below, domestic violence, mainly directed towards women, sometimes become a direct reason for the separation of some Chinese couples.

> Because I have worked at women's refuges for a number of years, I have more chance to see some extreme cases. Among these cases, it was common that one spouse, more likely a husband, could not cope with the adjustment stress and feelings of loss. They became immersed in internet surfing, drinking and even gambling. This caused serious marital conflicts. In some cases, domestic violence was involved. These serious conflicts often led to divorce straight away. (P02)

Spousal and gender differences in post-immigration adjustment and separation

Spousal and gender differences in adjustment, including acculturation and economic adjustment, were commonly considered by the professionals to contribute to the deterioration in the relationships and eventual separation.

Many professionals reported that Chinese couples experienced different levels of acculturation and economic adjustment. It was observed that in many cases women appeared to adapt better to the host culture and the local job market than their husbands. A number of reasons for these spousal and gender differences were discussed in the interviews. First, Chinese couples were reported to have different levels of English prior to immigration. In most cases, women appeared to have better English than their husbands. Second, Chinese women were in general perceived by the professionals to have more positive attitudes towards the New Zealand culture and feel more comfortable with their life in this country than their husbands, as the host culture emphasises women's equal rights and power in family and social life. As such, they were reported to be more active in English learning after immigration and to have a higher level of tolerance of loss in social status than their husbands. Third, many professionals reported that prior to immigration Chinese men had in general a higher level of job profile than women. Some professionals commented further that in Chinese culture, while men place more importance on career and income than women, women place more importance on family responsibilities and social relations. While these differences made Chinese men less likely than their wives to accept a low skilled job, they gave women more flexibility in accepting a low skill job.

During the interviews, some professionals focused more on spousal and gender differences in term of economic adjustment. The quote below shows how a professional discussed her understanding of what contributed to Chinese couples' different levels of economic adjustment in one focus group.

> I am not blaming Chinese men. Although in some cases husbands did better in the job market than their ex-wives, overall they did much worse. English might be a reason, but the most important reason, I think, was that they could not put their self-esteem aside. They used to have a high-profile job and had great difficulty in accepting a low-skilled job after migration. (P09)

Other professionals focused more on the spousal and gender difference in acculturation. The quote below shows what reasons for the gender differences in acculturation emerged from the discussion in another focus group.

> If we summarize our points regarding why Chinese women usually had better acculturation than men, three reasons could be identified. First, woman, compared with their husbands, typically had better English before migration and were more actively engaged with English learning afterwards. Second, women were more flexible than men in accepting new things, including New Zealand cultural values. Finally, New Zealand culture stresses women's equal rights and power in a family, which is more attractive to women than men. (P11)

Most professionals reported that Chinese couples' different levels of acculturation and economic adjustment increased their differences in how to manage their daily life and family finances, such as sharing household work, parenting, spending, and saving. This was seen as the most common reason for increasing daily conflicts, deterioration in marital relationships, and eventual separation, as explained by a family counsellor below.

> Because of spousal differences in post-immigration adjustment, the Chinese couples started to have more and more problems over daily life matters. This could be different opinions over housework, spending or parenting. For example, a husband might discipline the children in the Chinese way and this might include smacking, but his wife might adopt more Kiwi values and dislike this parenting behaviour. They would start to argue but were never able to solve the problem. Their conflicts might escalate into a fight, and then they considered divorce. This was a common scenario among the divorced Chinese couples I have worked with. (P04)

Many professionals also stressed that Chinese couples' different levels of acculturation, particularly economic adjustment, could lead them to develop different strategies in individual and family coping. While in many cases, spousal differences in coping, such as different ideas regarding whether they should focus on any available job for survival or getting a local degree for a better job, could become a source of marital conflict, which in some extreme cases resulted in different decisions over reverse

migration. If a couple could not resolve their problems with reverse migration, as reported by a social worker below, this difference was likely to become a direct reason for divorce.

> I worked with a number of divorced couples. Because of their differences in adjustment, they made different decisions regarding whether they should stay in New Zealand. Specifically, one spouse, typically a husband, felt they didn't have a good future in this country, so they decided to move back permanently, but their spouses wanted to stay in New Zealand. Because they could not resolve this problem, the only thing they could do was to separate. (P11)

Furthermore, some professionals reported that Chinese couples' different levels of adjustment changed their family roles and power relations, typically resulting in Chinese men's loss of their family role and power as a head of the family. Many of these professionals commented that this change had potential to affect Chinese men's mentality and stimulate some responses towards their wives with the purpose of regaining the power. These responses to the loss of power were often seen by professionals as one of main reasons contributing to serious marital conflicts. In some cases, these serious conflicts, particularly some men's abusive behaviour, were reported as a direct reason for separation. A counsellor from a women's refuge explained below how this could happen.

> Before migration, Chinese husbands used to be dominant in the family, because of their higher income and the nature of Chinese culture. After migration, all this changed suddenly. They lost their income. They stayed at home looking after the children and their wives worked and supported the family. This changed their power in family matters. Many Chinese men felt that their self-confidence and self-esteem were hurt. To regain their power, they might belittle and even abuse their wives. If this happened, they were very likely to end up with divorce. (P09)

Changes in family living arrangements and separation

Immigration can cause a number of changes in family living arrangements. As reported by the professionals and as described in Chapter One, three types of change were common among Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. These included living overseas and away from extended families and friends, sharing accommodation with extended families who lived in this country, and living as an astronaut family. All these changes, as observed

by the professionals, could have both positive and negative influences on the marital relationship.

The professionals regarded living overseas and away from their extended families and friends as being the main change in family living arrangements among Chinese immigrants. This family living arrangement, as reported consistently by professionals, could have some potential benefits for the marital relationship. These included giving couples more time with each other, increasing their mutual dependence and support, and avoiding interference in family matters by their extended families.

Despite these benefits, living away from extended families and personal networks could also have some negative influences on the marital relationship. In this regard, losing daily life support, particularly childcare support, from their extended families and personal network was stressed. Some professionals commented that in China many young couples, particularly dual-earner couples with young children, were likely to live with or be close to their extended families because their extended families would help them with household work and childcare. After immigration, Chinese couples, particularly those with young children, had to do the household work and look after the children themselves while working and/or studying. This, as observed by a number of professionals, was likely to put more stress on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrant couples.

Other professionals commented that marriage was highly valued in Chinese culture. If a couple has marital problems, people from their extended families and personal network will support and mediate between them. This support and mediation has a strong buffering effect on the marital relationships of conflicted Chinese couples. It was from this observation that some professionals believed that living away from extended families and friends might also contribute to the divorce of Chinese immigrant couples by taking away

these potential supporters and mediators who might otherwise have helped these couples to resolve their conflicts at the first instance of conflict.

> In China, people always persuade a couple to stay together even though they have a serious problem. If a couple considers divorce, all the people from their network, particularly their extended families, would come to mediate between them. This not only pushes conflicted couples to make more effort to improve their relationship but might also help them to resolve the problem. If they had this cushion in the first instance, their conflicts might not have escalated so quickly and their marriages might not have ended in divorce. (P01)

The professionals observed that sharing accommodation with extended families who lived in New Zealand was common among Chinese immigrants in this country, particularly in the initial years after immigration. Although this living arrangement helped Chinese couples with daily life and family finances, it had negative impacts on their relationship. In this regard, the generational differences between Chinese couples and their parents and/or parents-in-law and the regional differences in people's views and customs in relation to everyday life between the two extended families were commonly reported by the professionals as factors that impacted the marital relationship of Chinese couples.

> I worked with a number of Chinese couples who used to live with their extended families in one house. Some complained that their parents-in-law interfered with their life; some reported getting caught between parents and spouses; others reported that the two extended families were in conflict with each other because they were from two different provinces in China and had very different opinions about daily life. In all these cases, the generational and/or provincial differences in views of daily living were seen as one of the main factors causing marital conflicts. In a few extreme cases, they were reported as one of main reasons for divorce. (P04)

The professionals also talked about the influences of living as an astronaut family. Although this living arrangement once again helped Chinese couples with family finances, it had a number of negative influences on their marriage. These included creating physical and emotional distance between the two spouses, increasing differences in acculturation and adjustment, and prompting extra-marital affairs. Compared with other types of change in family living arrangements, living as an astronaut family appeared to have a more serious influence on marital relationships to the extent that it could become a direct reason for the separation, as discussed in a focus group, quoted below.

> I agree with P12, living apart in two countries would create a mental distance between spouses, as they need continuous interaction to maintain emotional bonds. I also agree with P10 that living apart could increase spousal differences in their views of life. For a spouse who lived in China, he/she might stick to Chinese values and lifestyle, but his/her spouse might get used to a Kiwi lifestyle. This would affect their relationship. Apart from this, the worst influence, I think, is that it creates a possibility for extramarital affairs. If this occurs, the natural result would be divorce because low tolerance of the 'green hat' in Chinese culture. (P11)

Social and cultural influences on views of divorce and decision-making

Professionals also talked about the influence of social and cultural factors on marital relationships. In general, while professionals had different opinions regarding whether Chinese views of marriage and divorce encouraged conflicted Chinese couples to go back to their marriage, they reported consistently that the host social and cultural factors, particularly local people's views of marriage and divorce, and the availability of government financial support for single parents, led to Chinese couples finding it easier to make a decision to divorce in New Zealand.

The majority of the professionals believed that Chinese immigrant couples, particularly those who grew up before the Open Door Policy, held strongly to traditional Chinese family values. Based on their observation, many Chinese couples viewed marriage as a life-time commitment. They saw divorce as shameful and worried about its impact on themselves and particularly their children. All these beliefs and their anxiety in this regard appeared to have drawn them back to marriage even though they experienced serious marital problems.

Some professionals, however, viewed the influence of Chinese culture on Chinese immigrant couples differently. They believed that Chinese people, particularly those who grew up after the Open Door Policy, held less strongly to traditional Chinese family values. In terms of divorce, these professionals maintained that even though Chinese immigrants still saw divorce as a shame to their family, it might not be particularly

difficult for them to make a decision to divorce if they experienced serious marital problems.

> Nowadays Chinese people's values in terms of marriage and divorce have changed a lot because of the Open Door Policy and globalization. It is true that they might not see divorce as one of the natural escapes from a marriage, like what white people do, but if they do have serious marital conflicts, ending a marriage is not particularly difficult. The rapid increase of divorce rates in China is evidence of this. It suggests that traditional Chinese values might have less influence on the divorce of Chinese nationals than what we thought, let alone its influence on Chinese people who live in New Zealand. (P09)

The professionals' views on the influence of New Zealand culture on Chinese couples' marital relationships were more consistent. Based on their observations, separated Chinese immigrants were quite familiar with local people's views of marriage and divorce. They were also aware of local people's parental communication and co-parenting after separation. Many professionals stressed that this might not significantly change Chinese couples' beliefs about marriage and divorce, but it let them worry less about the impact of divorce on themselves and their children. This allowed them feel better about making the decision to divorce in New Zealand.

> Many divorced Chinese told me that they knew divorce was very common here. They knew Kiwi people saw divorce more naturally and would not gossip about divorced people behind their backs. They also knew how divorced Kiwis interacted with their exes and co-parented children. This made them worry less about the stigma attached to divorce and gave them some confidence in making a decision to divorce here. (P07)

Furthermore almost all the professionals stressed that separated Chinese immigrants could have much more social and financial support from the government than their counterparts in China or Taiwan. The availability of social support in this country allowed separating Chinese, particularly those with dependent children, worry less about their life after separation. This, once again, let them feel relatively more comfortable about making the decision to divorce in this country.

> In China and Taiwan, survival is often a problem for a single parent with young children, because the government over there doesn't give them a single parent benefit. The situation here is different. When a couple considers divorce, the family court will give them information about all the potential support they might need. This includes free counselling,

> legal aid, and financial support. These kinds of support give separating Chinese, particularly those with young children, some sense of security about their life after divorce. I believe the difference in social support between the two countries lets Chinese couples here have less hesitation about ending an unhappy marriage. (P03)

Themes in Relation to Impacts of Separation and Post-Separation Adjustment

Five themes emerged from the data in relation to the impacts of separation and post-separation adjustment. While the first theme captured the professionals' views of the impacts of separation on Chinese immigrants, the other four concerned the professionals' perceptions of how separated Chinese adjusted to their single parent life, how they managed co-parenting and parental relationships, how they coped with cultural and immigration-related barriers to accessing family and social support, and what long-term consequences they experienced after separation and/or divorce.

Separation overseas makes life harder

Almost all the professionals reported that separation had serious impacts on Chinese immigrants. Many professionals linked these impacts with immigration and commented that because of immigration and its associated challenges, separation made life harder for Chinese immigrants than their counterparts in China or Taiwan, regardless of whether these immigrants were men or women.

The professionals stated that Chinese women typically had residential childcare responsibility after separation. Based on the professionals' observations, most Chinese women separated in their thirties or forties. At the time of separation, many had relatively young children. As first-generation immigrants, most separated Chinese women experienced difficulties with English, driving and earning money. Given these immigration-related challenges, the further life changes caused by separation, particularly residential childcare, made the life extremely hard for Chinese women. This led many of them to worry about whether they were able to make a life for their children on their own

in this ‘alien’ country. Many professionals regarded this as the most serious challenge that many Chinese women had to face after separation.

> “Divorce is hard. Divorcing overseas is even harder”. This was a typical comment made by many Chinese women in the session. Because of increased responsibility of childcare after separation and the lack of daily life support from overseas families, many women had to prioritize childcare and put aside and even give up their own post-migration adjustment such as studying English. This made them wonder if they were capable living life as a single mother overseas. They worried about the future of their children. This was the biggest stress that many Chinese women experienced after separation. (P01)

Separation overseas also created serious life challenges for Chinese men. Some professionals stated that the life after separation was even harder for Chinese men than women. As described earlier, Chinese men, compared with their ex-wives, usually had a higher job profile prior to immigration but experienced more difficulties with English and loss of earning after immigration. As such, they were likely to suffer a stronger feeling of loss than their ex-wives. As noted by many professionals, had these Chinese men divorced in China they would have obtained the custody of their children. Because of the different family laws in New Zealand, Chinese men in this country were unlikely to have their children living with them after separation. Given that children were traditionally seen as the most valuable asset by the husbands’ family in Chinese culture, the further loss of children as a result of separation overseas led many Chinese men to feel they had lost everything in their lives. These difficulties led many Chinese men to feel that it was very hard to restart life as a single person in New Zealand and some felt they had to move back to their home country permanently after separation, as explained by a counsellor below.

> Life after divorce was not easier for Chinese men than woman. For women, they could at least have their children. This gave them some hope. For men, most of them would not be able to have their children. Given the difficulties they had faced as Chinese immigrants and the feelings of loss they had suffered after immigration, the further loss of their children, as a result of their divorce, made many divorced Chinese men feel there was nothing left for them in this world. Under these circumstances, you could imagine how difficult it was for Chinese men to carry on with their life in this country. This was one reason why some Chinese men went back to China immediately after separation. (P02)

Adjusting to a single parent life

This theme captured the professionals' understanding of why most Chinese immigrants remained in New Zealand after separation and how they managed life challenges in the immediate post-separation period and developed a single life style in the years after separation.

No choice but to carry on with life in New Zealand

The professionals reported that many separated Chinese had no choice but to carry on with their lives in New Zealand after separation, despite the life difficulties they faced. Based on the professionals' observations, separated Chinese wanted to remain in this country for a number of reasons. Some separated Chinese, regardless of whether they had residential childcare responsibility, remained in this country for the sake of their children. Others, particularly women with young children, were scared to move back to their home country because the social welfare system there did not have single parent benefits. Still others, particularly Chinese men, felt there was no point moving back, because it was hard for them to regain their pre-immigration level of occupation in their home country after living in New Zealand for a number of years.

Although all these reasons were quite common, worrying about losing face was perhaps the most common one that forced many separated Chinese, both men and women, to carry on with their life in New Zealand, as explained below by a professional whose main job was to support Chinese families in difficulties.

> It was all about losing face. "I came to NZ for better life. Before migration, our relationship and family were all good. I had a good job and was financially well off. But now I have no job, and I have ended up with divorce. It is a big shame. How can I face my extended families? How can I face my relatives and friends? Telling them that I have divorced and brought my children back, it is absolutely impossible". The only thing they could do now was to stay here and to manage the huge consequences of divorce themselves. (P06)

Focusing on survival after separation, as observed by the professionals, was typically the first step of adjustment for many separated Chinese. For women, this often

involved managing family finances, children and work demands by themselves. Although some women were able to continue with work or study, most women, particularly those who had arrived recently, and those who had young children, often had to give up study or work and focused exclusively on managing daily childcare difficulties and/or their own overseas living problems. The professionals observed that having to face these difficulties helped Chinese women accept the reality of separation and move ahead with their life in this country.

> Separation caused a number of emergent financial and daily life difficulties for Chinese women. Although some might be able to obtain financial and even daily childcare support from extended families, overall they had to manage these challenges themselves. Regardless of how sad and desperate they felt, they had to attend to these urgent needs immediately after separation. This definitely helped them accept separation and move on with their life. (P02)

The professionals reported that Chinese men also had to survive following separation, despite most of them not having daily childcare responsibility. This often included re-organising their life, managing difficulties with English, and securing an income for their own survival. Focusing on these urgent needs after separation also helped them carry on with their life in New Zealand.

> After separation, most Chinese men had to move out and find another place to live urgently. Before separation, many Chinese men had relied on their wife for daily communication in English and/or income for survival. Because they chose to remain in New Zealand after separation, now they had to manage these difficulties all by themselves. Managing these urgent needs not only distracted Chinese men from feelings of all types of loss, particularly the loss of a family and children, but more importantly helped them to restart their single life in New Zealand. (P10)

As long as the children have a good future

The professionals observed that most separated Chinese adjusted to their single parent life by focusing on their children rather than their own career or another relationship. Some professionals named this adjustment approach as a child-centred post-separation adjustment. The core of this adjustment approach was that separated Chinese,

both men and women, would do whatever they could to make sure their children have a good future.

For separated Chinese women, the child-centred adjustment often involved changing their work and study schedules because of their residential childcare responsibility, learning and improving single parenting and oversea living skills, and engaging with local Chinese and church communities to develop social networks. Although this adjustment involved different aspects of their life, the goal for the adjustment was to provide their children with a better growing-up environment, as explained by a professional below.

> Many Chinese women were very active in adjustment after separation. In general they had two focuses in adjusting their lives. The first one was to meet the children's needs. For single mothers, particularly those with young children, this often involved reducing work or study hours or even stopping them altogether so that they could look after the children better. Filling the family roles that were previously taken by their ex-husbands such as disciplining the children was also a part of this focus. Another focus of adjustment was to improve their overseas living skills and develop a local network so that they could not only survive in New Zealand but more importantly provide a better family and community environment for their children. (P02)

For many Chinese men and some Chinese women who had relatively older children, such as school age children, at separation, their post-separation adjustment also involved upgrading job skills and securing a reliable income. Once again, for many of these Chinese men and women, the goal for this adjustment was to build a reliable financial situation for their children to grow up in rather than to realize their own carer ambitions or dreams for immigration, as explained by a professional below.

> The best example was a man who moved out only with his clothes at separation. He gave their shared assets to his ex-wife as she looked after his son. Because he had a problem with English, he studied English during the day and worked as a cleaner at nights for his own survival. During the weekend, he visited and played with his son. Several years later, when I met him again, he had completed a local job training course and secured a technician job. He also saved some money for his son's future education. He commented that this was not his dream job, as he used to be an IT specialist in China, but with this income, he could better support his child. (P04)

The professionals talked about a number of cultural and immigration-related reasons why the separated Chinese focused on their children after separation and did not pay much attention to their career or another relationship. As summarized by a professional in a group discussion, while the language and cultural barriers prevented these Chinese, particularly Chinese men, from achieving highly in their career, other factors such as a limited personal income, little chance to find a potential spouse in the local Chinese community, the stigma attached to divorce and single parents, and particularly, worries about the impact of remarriage on their children, discouraged them, particularly women, from considering a new relationship. Because they felt restricted in their career and their pursuit of another relationship, they appeared to focus more on their children's wellbeing, which was one of their main dreams for migration.

From my children or your children to our children

This theme includes two sub-themes that captured the professionals' perceptions of how separating and separated Chinese couples became conflicted over child living arrangements and co-parenting, how they managed the co-parenting relationship overtime, and how cultural factors contributed to the patterns of parental relationships and co-parenting that emerged among separating and separated Chinese couples.

<u>My children or your children</u>

Many professionals commented that separating Chinese immigrants did not cope as well as their local counterparts in working out child living arrangements and co-parenting. Based on the professional's observations, constant fighting over their children's living arrangements was very common among separating Chinese couples. In many cases, it involved family court fighting in both host and home countries and could last for years, as described by a Chinese lawyer.

> Definitely, Chinese had more serious fighting over child living arrangements than separating Kiwi couples. Although some of our clients reached an agreement themselves, many fought

> to the death for their children at the Family Court in both New Zealand and China/Taiwan. In most cases, the parents of separating couples joined the fighting. Because it involved two different legal systems, the fighting was kind of endless. In some cases, it lasted for 5 to 6 years. It was like a torch for all the people involved. (P12)

Regardless of whether the separating Chinese couples reached an agreement over child living arrangements themselves or through family courts, many continued fighting over co-parenting matters particularly in the immediate post-separation period.

> After child living was arranged, you can hardly see any communication between separated Chinese couples or the two extended families. If they contacted each other, it was likely to be arguments and fights. The typical scenarios were either that a residential parent did not allow another parent to see the children or that a non-residential parent refused to pay child support. These conflicts were particularly common at the initial stage after separation. (P05)

The professionals talked extensively about what contributed to these serious parental conflicts over child living arrangements and co-parenting between separating and separated Chinese spouses. In this regard, the different traditions and concepts of separation settlements and co-parenting between the home and host countries were commonly stressed. As commented on by many professionals and as described in Chapter One, in traditional Chinese society, if a couple divorced, the father and his extended family would have exclusive parental rights over the children and would cut the child-mother link completely. In recent years although many children lived with their mothers after parental divorce. In many cases, the mothers would also cut the child-father link after they received an alimony settlement, typically a one-off payment. All these traditions and concepts have be described in detail in Chapter One. Many professionals commented that these Chinese traditions and concepts stand in sharp contrast to the New Zealand ones, which allow both parents to share parental rights and responsibilities after separation, regardless of what type of child living arrangement was decided between them.

Some professionals simplified the differences in child-living arrangements and co-parenting between the two cultures as ‘my children or your children’ in Chinese culture compared to ‘our children’ in the host culture. This cultural difference, as explained by a

professional below, was seen as the most important reason for the constant fighting over child living arrangements between separating Chinese spouses.

> Many Chinese men, particularly those who separated soon after migration, followed the Chinese concepts of divorce. They wanted to have their children exclusively. Some simply took the children back to China or Taiwan and then cut all contact with their ex-wives. Chinese women, on the other hand, would definitely protect their rights by taking advantage of family laws in this country. That is why many separating Chinese immigrants had endless fighting over child living arrangements. (P06)

This cultural difference was also seen as one of the main reasons for the continuing parental conflicts over co-parenting after separation, as explained by the professional quoted above.

> After child living was arranged, some Chinese men saw losing child residential care as losing their children completely. They were so disappointed and thought 'ok, you own the children, you pay for their living costs'. Some men even did not want to contact their ex-wife and children at all regardless of whether they returned to China or not. Their ex-wives, on the other hand, might follow the New Zealand customs of co-parenting and demand that their ex-husbands pay child support. This would cause parental conflicts. Other Chinese men might take advantage of the New Zealand customs of co-parenting. They might try to have as much contact with the children as possible. Their ex-wives on the other hand, might see the children as exclusively owned by them and not allow this to happen. Some women even wanted to cut off all child-father relationships. This would also cause serious parental conflicts. (P06)

Our children

Despite parental conflicts during the separation settlement and at the initial stage after separation, however, the professionals noted that eventually many separated couples, particularly when both spouses remained in New Zealand after separation, improved their co-parenting and parental relationships over time, as described by the family counsellor below.

> We have seen many examples of this improvement. For example, one of my clients initially took the house over because his parents bought the house for them. Later on, he gave the house to his ex-wife and children as he saw how difficult the life was for them. His ex-wife, on the other hand, also changed her attitude towards him and let him become involved with the children as much as he wanted. Even though we don't have any formal statistics, we could reasonably say that separated Chinese as a group have improved their co-parenting over time. A rising number of shared daily childcare among this population can be seen as strong evidence of this. (P04)

The professionals reported that many separated Chinese couples had gradually learned and accepted the New Zealand concepts and customs of post-separation co-parenting. This appeared to have helped them change their perception of post-separation parenting from 'my children or your children' to 'our children'. As commented consistently by a number of professionals, this conceptual change, particularly the acceptance of sharing parental rights and responsibilities after separation, was essential for the improvement of post-separation co-parenting among many separated Chinese couples. It not only improved their co-operation over many matters related to their children, such as child visitation and support payments, but also helped them improve their relationship as separated spouses.

Consideration of the children's well-being might also help separated Chinese couples to improve their parental relationship and co-parenting, as explained by a professional below.

> Some of my clients commented that their children really missed the other parent. Others stressed that children suffered most when they fought with each other. I guess for many separated Chinese couples, regardless of whether they were residential or non-residential parents, it was their worries about the influence of continuous parental conflict on their children that forced them to co-operate with each other. (P03)

Finally, some professionals commented that co-parenting, particularly sharing daily childcare, benefited not only the children but also their parents, especially the residential parents. It was a win-win result for both residential and non-residential parents. This, as reported consistently by several professionals, might also be a factor that motivated separated Chinese couples to improve their co-parenting and parental relationships.

Barriers and access to social support

This theme includes two sub-themes. While the first one captured the professionals' understanding of what prevented separated Chinese from accessing support,

the second one captured their views of how separated Chinese managed to access support and what types of social support they successfully obtained.

Barriers to social support

The professionals talked about a number of cultural and immigration-related barriers that separated Chinese faced in accessing social support. Five main barriers could be identified. Depending on the nature of each barrier, some barriers seemed to prevent separating and/or separated Chinese from accessing a specific type of support or support from a specific source, while others appeared to prevent them from seeking support from all the potential sources.

The lack of accessible personal networks in New Zealand was the most commonly reported immigration-related barrier. This barrier prevented separated Chinese from accessing emotional and daily life support from people in their personal network.

> As new immigrants, many separated Chinese, on the one hand, left extended families and friends in China. On the other hand, they had not developed a social network in this country. In fact, at the time of separation, some of my clients did not have any family members, relatives or friends in this country. This was definitely a big barrier for them to obtaining support, particularly daily life support. (P01)

Difficulty with English and unfamiliarity with social services in New Zealand were other commonly reported barriers. Some professionals commented that many separating Chinese had very limited English. Others stressed that the separating Chinese had little knowledge about social, particularly divorce-related, services in New Zealand, because these services were not common in their home country. These language and social barriers were consistently reported as common factors that prevented separating and/or separated Chinese from accessing all types of support from local communities and social services.

Chinese views on divorce were the most commonly reported Chinese culture-related barrier. Many professionals stated that Chinese people viewed divorce and divorced people, particularly single mothers, very negatively. These negative views were

seen as a strong barrier that prevented many separated Chinese from seeking support from all the potential sources.

> Chinese have a tradition of sharing good family news rather than bad news. In Chinese culture, divorce is viewed as the worst thing for a family. As such, they tended not to disclose their divorce to anyone in their network or even their extended families. As stressed by one of my clients, "The Chinese community in this country is very small. If I tell one friend, everyone here will know I am divorced". Because they hid their divorce, there was nowhere they could obtain help, regardless of what type of help it was. (P02)

Chinese beliefs about emotional problems and coping was another often reported cultural barrier. Many professionals reported that emotional distress is traditionally viewed as evidence of weakness of a person's mind in Chinese culture. This cultural belief encourages people, particularly men, to cope with emotional problems themselves by 'being strong and pushing down all their emotions rather than talking to someone and seeking support'. The family counsellor below explained how these cultural beliefs could become a barrier to support for separated Chinese, particularly Chinese men.

> I met a number of Chinese men. They were not shy about talking about financial difficulty, but were very resistant to talking about emotional problems. When being questioned, many of them either denied this problem or stated they could manage it themselves. As Chinese men, they had been taught that they should be strong and cope with emotional problems themselves since they were a boy. Clearly this Chinese belief was a strong barrier for many separated Chinese men to access potential sources of emotional support. (P04)

Finally, some professionals commented that Chinese people have many misconceptions about professional, particularly mental health, services, such as 'mental health services are for mad people', or 'counselling cannot help you to resolve emotional problems, and it is a waste of time and money'. These misconceptions were also reported by a number of professionals as a barrier that prevented separating and/or separated Chinese from seeking emotional support from professional services.

Access to social support

The professionals reported that many separated Chinese immigrants, particularly women, managed to obtained different types of critical support from various sources

despite all the barriers they faced. As described earlier, many professionals commented that separated Chinese, both men and women, experienced more life challenges and faced less accessible social resources for coping than their counterparts in their home countries. They believed that it was these serious difficulties that pushed separated Chinese to break through the barriers to support.

> Given the challenges and the many types of losses they experienced as immigrants, the further loss of spousal support made it really hard for them to manage their emotions and daily life difficulties on their own. This was why many separated Chinese, particularly women with young children, were very active in seeking support. (P10)

The professionals talked about the different types of support that Chinese immigrants sought and successfully obtained at different stages of their life after separation. Financial support was the most commonly reported one that many separated Chinese obtained from both social benefits and/or their extended families. As commented by the professional below, the generosity of social benefits, particularly Sole Parent Benefit, in New Zealand and the collective nature of Chinese culture made this support most accessible to separated Chinese in New Zealand.

> In terms of financial support, separated Chinese immigrants were luckier than their counterparts in China, as they could obtain this support consistently from both the NZ government and extended family members. Because mutual support is a core part of Chinese family values, Chinese people are happy to support their family members even though they live overseas. This support is particularly important for those who are ineligible for social benefits. I know many Chinese who obtained financial support continuously from their overseas families until they secured a reliable income. (P08)

Practical daily life support was also a commonly reported support that many separated Chinese sought and successfully obtained. In this regard, some Chinese women, particularly those with young children, obtained childcare support from their overseas parents and siblings by asking them to come over. Most separated Chinese, however, had gradually developed a social network in local communities, particularly neighbourhood ones, single parent groups or Chinese church communities, and obtained many types of daily life support from these sources. The closeness of people in the neighbourhood, the

common experiences between single parents, and the caring and trustworthy nature of a church community were some of the reported reasons why separated Chinese could obtain daily life support from these sources.

> Many separated Chinese developed their network within the neighbourhood and/or single parent groups, because it was easier to access people in the neighbourhood and because single parents shared common experiences. They obtained many types of support, such as help with transportation and translation, assistance with temporary childcare, and suggestions for single parenting, from these sources. Apart from these sources, another important one was the Chinese church community. … Based on my observations, this community provided separated Chinese with a wide range of support, such as help with co-parenting problems and assistance in job-searching. (P04)

Social and professional support, including support for a separation settlement, co-parenting, and daily life difficulties, were also types of support that some separating and/or separated Chinese sought and accessed. The professionals commented that these Chinese, compared with those who did not seek support, were more likely to be desperately in need of support. Most of them tended to be very recent immigrants, had little personal resources in coping, or experienced serious problems such as physical abuse and financial emergencies. While some of them called social service themselves, many were referred to social and professional services by family court staff, police officers for the ones where violence occurred, or their neighbours. Some professionals commented that although only a limited number of separated Chinese accessed this support, the support they obtained was vital for them to live through the most difficult time they had experienced in New Zealand. One professional described the support that she had observed them receiving.

> I have worked for a variety of organizations, such as Chinese Lifeline and Women's Refuge. Wherever I worked, those who were referred to or called us for help were likely to be very recent immigrants or suffering from serious problems such as physical abuse. In terms of support, we first gave them information about the social support they were entitled to. For those who did not know how to get divorced in NZ, we also told them about divorcing procedures and helped them apply for legal aid. For those who had problem with English or driving, we provided them with transportation and translation. For those who suffered physical abuse or financial emergencies, we also provided them with temporary shelter and food. All in all, for many of them, without our support, there was no way they could live their lives through separation in this country. (P02)

Long-term consequences

This theme includes two subthemes that captured the professionals' perceptions of the long-term negative and positive consequences that Chinese immigrants experienced after separation and/or divorce.

Negative consequences

Constant financial difficulty was one of the most consistently observed consequences that many Chinese suffered after separation. Some professionals used 'persistent poverty' to describe this long-term consequence. Although as first generation immigrants, their difficulties with post-immigration adjustment affected their earning ability, their marital separation, as explained by a professional below, was definitely a factor that contributed to this poverty.

> It is true that many Chinese immigrants were poorer than average New Zealanders because of their cultural and language barriers. In this community, separated Chinese appeared to be the poorest. We have seen many of them. Years after separation, they were still dependent on government benefits for survival. The loss of spousal income was a common reason for this persistent poverty. For those who looked after young children after separation, their increased parental responsibility was also a reason. (P04)

The long-term impact on their psychological well-being was another negative consequence. In this regard, the impact on their self-concept was commonly observed. The professionals reported that questioning themselves about the reasons for the divorce was very common among Chinese immigrants. While some blamed their ex-spouses, many others attributed the marriage breakdown to their own problems. This self-attribution affected their self-confidence and led them to having a sense of failure.

> Reflection is an inevitable part of the post-separation experience. It is particularly true for my clients, as many had lived in a marriage for a long time. After separation, they could not stop asking these questions: "How could I end up with divorce?" "Our relationship was good before, how could it stop working after migration?"… Many clients were troubled with these thoughts for many years. Some believed they had failed with interpersonal relationship; others felt they had failed as a person. (P01)

A sense of guilt was also a reported psychological consequence that many Chinese suffered persistently after separation. Based on the professionals' observation, while some Chinese might feel guilty towards their ex-spouses, many suffered a sense of guilt towards their children because they were unable to provide an intact family and an ideal financial base for them to grow up in.

> It is very clear to me that many Chinese immigrants suffered a strong sense of guilt towards their children. They told me that they came to this country for their children. They hoped their children could have a good future, but now they were divorced. They lived under the poverty line and could not provide a good family environment for their children. This led them to have a strong sense of guilt, and in some cases it had nothing to do with who was responsible for the separation. (P04)

Traditional Chinese cultural values, particularly those in relation to marriage, family and children, were reported by many professionals as contributing to these long-term psychological impacts of separation and divorce. As commented by a number of the professionals, many separated Chinese immigrants still held strongly to Chinese family values. Regardless of how many years they had lived in New Zealand, they still saw marriage as a life time commitment, viewed children as the most important part of their life, and believed that an intact family was the best family environment for children. Because of these beliefs, they continued to believe that they had failed as a spouse and felt guilty towards their children when their marriages ended up with divorce.

Positive consequences

Despite the negative consequences described above, marital separation could also bring Chinese immigrants positive outcomes. One of the observed positive outcomes was a chance for a 'new' life. This was particularly the case for Chinese who suffered persistent marital conflict prior to separation and especially women whose former spouses had been violent towards them.

> We have seen a number of cases where Chinese couples experienced serious conflict. … For these couples, divorce brought them a chance for a new relationship. Even though they did not consider this option, at least it brought them a conflict-free life. This not only

> benefited themselves but also their children, particularly if marital violence was involved. (P01)

Self-growth as a person was another observed positive outcome among some separated Chinese. Many professionals commented that separation gave Chinese immigrants a good chance to review their past marriage. Although this reflection was a painful process, it appeared to have helped some to improve their self-awareness and let them become more mature with interpersonal relationships.

> It is clear to me that many separated Chinese learned from their experiences. Some commented on this directly. They said after divorce they knew more about themselves, their ex-spouses and what went wrong with the relationship. They said they had since improved their interpersonal skills and believed this had benefited their relationship with extended family members, friends and even colleagues. (P04)

Living overseas appeared to help separated Chinese achieve this self-growth because the host culture gave them a new perspective on marriage, family and interpersonal relationships. Continuing from the quote above, the professional explained how this could happen.

> Many of my clients stressed that Kiwis had different ideas about marriage and divorce. This new perspective helped them understand what a marriage and family really meant to them. It also help them to understand how they should now manage their relationship with ex-spouses, children and even other people in their life. (P04)

Finally, many professionals stressed separation, particularly post-separation adjustment, helped some Chinese immigrants improve their self-confidence. As described earlier, many professionals stated that managing daily life after separation was particularly difficult for Chinese immigrants. Despite all the difficulties they faced as an immigrant and as a separated parent, most separated Chinese, regardless of whether they were men or women, appeared to have adjusted well. In the few years after separation, many had developed a support network, improved their overseas living skills, and even developed a new life dream. This adjustment process and outcome appeared to have boosted their self-confidence and let them become stronger.

> I have seen some men who relied on their ex-wives for English communication and survival. After the divorce, they improved their English and found a job. I have also seen many women who really worried about whether they could survive as a single mother. But after separation, they coped well with their daily life difficulties and parental responsibilities. Some completed a local degree, some found a part-time job, and some even developed a new dream for themselves. Of course, this adjustment was a long and stressful process, but it was also a confidence-boosting process, as whenever they improved their life they became stronger. (P09)

Summary of Findings

This research project investigates the professionals' understanding of the marital separation of Chinese immigrants. Five main findings have been identified.

First, immigration and post-immigration adjustment, particularly their life stress and losses, the changes in how they lived as a family, and spousal differences in adjustment and coping appeared to affect the relationships of Chinese couples and contribute to their separation. Both the home and host cultural values and other social factors also appeared to affect their relationships. In this regard, while the professionals had different opinions about whether Chinese family values held these conflicted Chinese couples to marriage, they reported consistently that the acceptance of divorce in New Zealand and the availability of government financial support for single parents made Chinese couples feel more comfortable about making the decision to divorce in New Zealand.

Second, marital separation created a number of life difficulties for these Chinese couples. These difficulties were magnified by the challenges they experienced as immigrants and their diminished coping resources as a result of immigration. Despite this, many of the separated Chinese tended to remain in New Zealand rather than move back to their home country. The professionals reported that they coped with the life difficulties, in part, by focusing on the well-being of their children, which helped many of them to develop a single lifestyle successfully.

Third, separated Chinese couples appeared to have experienced serious conflict over child living arrangements and co-parenting, particularly during separation settlement period and in the immediate post-separation period. Despite the strong influence of Chinese traditions of divorce settlement and post-divorce co-parenting, many separated Chinese couples appeared to have gradually accepted the New Zealand concepts of co-parenting. This appeared to have helped them improve their co-parenting and parental relationships overtime.

Fourth, although separated Chinese could get access relatively easily to some degree of financial support, they experienced a number of cultural and immigration-related barriers in accessing emotional and daily life support. The severity of their post-separation life difficulties appeared to have motivated many separated Chinese to overcome these barriers and helped some of them to obtain important practical support from their local communities.

Fifth, regarding the long-term consequences, while separation overseas brought Chinese immigrants persistent financial difficulties and in some cases a sense of failure, their child-centred adjustment and their success in developing a single parent lifestyle appeared to have helped many achieve a sense of self-growth.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the results of this thesis study. First, the methodology of the study is briefly reviewed. This is followed by the introduction of a proposed model to represent the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. The results of the study are discussed by comparing the results from both the immigrants and professionals projects with the findings from existing studies on the post-immigration adjustment, particularly marital and family adjustments, of Chinese immigrants and on divorce in the general population in both Western countries and China. Finally, the chapter concludes with the theoretical and practical implications, the limitations of the study, and the potential areas for future research.

The Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate the experience of divorce among Chinese immigrants from the perspectives of the immigrant and professional participants. This research methodology, particularly the use of semi-structured interviews and the triangulation of data collection, appears to have facilitated the investigation and helped the study to achieve an in-depth and trustworthy understanding of the divorce of Chinese immigrants living in New Zealand.

First, the semi-structured interviews seemed to be helpful in facilitating the interview process. There was considerable evidence that indicated that both groups were actively engaged in the study. During the interviews, the immigrants talked openly about what they suffered and enjoyed in their lives prior to and after separation. The professionals were also actively involved in talking about and discussing their understandings of the divorce of Chinese immigrants. They talked compassionately and sometimes with frustration about what they had observed.

Second, the semi-structured interview format gave the participants flexibility to talk about what they thought was relevant or important in relation to the divorce of Chinese immigrants. During the interviews, both groups of participants talked about many aspects or areas of Chinese immigrants' lives, from immigration and post-immigration adjustment to separation and post-separation adjustment. The breadth and depth of discussion in the interviews appeared to help the study, not only to develop an overall picture of the divorce of Chinese immigrants but also to achieve an in-depth understanding of this investigated phenomenon.

Third, the triangulation of data collection also appeared to help the study achieve in-depth and trustworthy understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this regard, the immigrant participants talked about what they perceived, felt, thought, believed and acted from their lived experiences of divorce. The professional participants were removed from these directly lived experiences, but they brought their own experiences of immigration as first-generation Chinese immigrants and their personal and professional knowledge of both the host and home cultures to their analysis of how immigration and post-immigration adjustment can affect the marital relationship, separation, and post-separation adjustment of Chinese immigrant couples. While the two groups talked about the divorce of Chinese immigrants differently, what was remarkable was the level of similarity between the themes that emerged in the two sets of interviews, which will be discussed in the following sections. As such, the triangulation not only increased the scope and depth of the findings, but also added to the consistency and trustworthiness of the findings (Flick, 2009).

Proposed Model of Divorce of Chinese Immigrants in New Zealand

The results from both research projects demonstrate that the experiences of immigration, the challenges to post-immigration adjustment, and the effect of the home

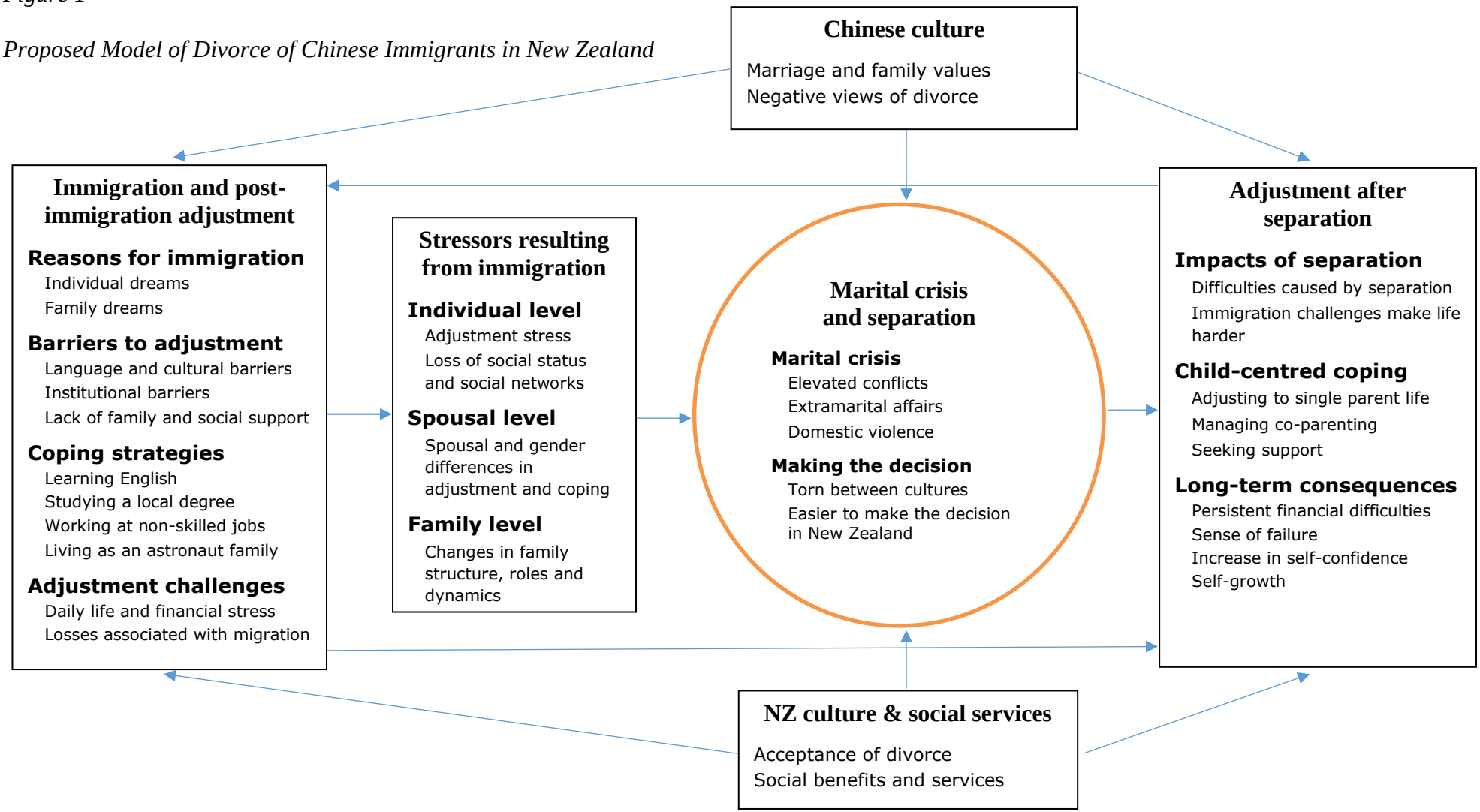
and host cultures affected the marital relationships, marital separation, and post-separation adjustment, potentially resulting in a unique pattern of divorce for Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. Based on these results, a proposed model that represents Chinese immigrants' experiences of divorce in New Zealand has been developed and is presented in Figure 1.

As represented in the model, Chinese immigrants come to New Zealand with a number of individual and family dreams. Despite being grateful for being able to live in New Zealand, they faced numerous barriers and challenges, including the language barrier, the loss of their previous work or profession, financial difficulties, and a lack of family support after arrival. This made it hard for them to adjust to life in this country. Many had experienced a strong sense of loss, including loss of social status and social networks. To cope with these difficulties, Chinese immigrants employed a number of strategies, such as attempting to learn English, upgrading their job skills by completing a degree, working long hours at non-skilled jobs for survival, and resorting to living as an astronaut family. These strategies, while sometimes being helpful, also resulted in some increased demands and challenges for Chinese immigrant couples.

These adjustment challenges and coping strategies appeared to not only have direct impacts on their marital relationships but also create numerous conditions and family circumstances that triggered marital conflicts. As represented in the model, these life stresses and coping strategies could create a number of stressors at different family levels for the Chinese immigrant couples. For example, Chinese immigrant couples had to cope with their own adjustment difficulties at the individual level as well as the changes in the couples' relationships including differences in adjustment within couples. They also had to deal with changes in their family structure, roles and dynamics. These challenges and stressors could not only intensify their pre-immigration conflicts but also lead to new conflicts and, in a small number of cases, domestic violence.

Figure 1

Proposed Model of Divorce of Chinese Immigrants in New Zealand



Despite facing a marital crisis, making the decision to divorce was sometimes difficult for the couples, as they were influenced by both the home and host cultural approaches to marriage and divorce. While some couples made a rather straightforward decision, most appeared to be torn between the two cultures. On the one hand, they held onto Chinese family values, seeing divorce as a source of shame for the family; therefore, they felt they should save their marriage for the sake of their children and families. On the other hand, they were aware of a greater acceptance of divorce in the host culture and this led them to feel less worried about the stigma attached to divorce. As represented in the proposed model, the availability of social benefits, particularly Sole Present Support, also appeared to let them worry less about life after separation. These considerations then made divorce an option to end a conflicted and unhappy marriage. Many immigrant participants described feeling torn between staying in the marriage and making the decision to divorce. During this period, their conflicts continued to elevate and in some cases turned into a "cold" or "hot war". These elevated conflicts could then prompt the individuals or couples to make the decision to divorce.

As represented in the model, separation caused a number of life difficulties. Given the life challenges and diminished resources associated with or as a result of immigration, the further loss of the daily support from the other spouse made it more difficult for separated Chinese parents to manage their lives and finances. These serious life difficulties and Chinese values around the priority of children appeared to lead many to feel that they had little choice but to focus on their own overseas living skills and particularly focus on the well-being of their children. A focus on creating a better situation for their children appeared to give them direction and helped them to persist with the process of adjustment. It also helped them to overcome the cultural and immigration-related barriers to accessing family and social support, and this assisted their adjustment. Furthermore, their commitment to their children's well-being and future also helped some

of them to cope with parental conflicts and to improve their co-parenting. Regarding the long-term impacts of separation, separated Chinese were likely to face persistent financial difficulties and in many cases they reported ongoing feelings of failure over the end of the marriage. However, their success in meeting their children's needs, improving their overseas living skills and particularly in developing an identity as a self-reliant single parent overseas appeared to boost their self-confidence and help many achieve self-growth.

In the following four sections, the results from this study are compared with the findings from other studies on immigration, marital relationships, and divorce in both Western countries and China.

Immigration and Post-Immigration Adjustment

Chinese immigrants involved in this study came to New Zealand for a number of individual and family reasons. The common reasons included a better future for their children, the quality of the social and natural environments, and a favourable lifestyle. These reasons are highly consistent with those found by many other studies on Chinese immigrants in this country (A. Henderson, 2003; M. Ip, 2003b; Johnston et al., 2005).

After their arrival, the immigrant participants encountered many barriers, such as the language barrier and the institutional barriers to finding skilled jobs, and this prevented them adjusting to their life in New Zealand. Consistent with findings from many studies on skilled Chinese immigrants in this country (Boyd, 2003; A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005; SND, 2002), these barriers not only interfered with the immigrant participants' daily life, but also prevented them from entering the local job market, particularly the professional job market. As described in the Chapter Three, at the time of separation, only three participants had secured a skilled job; the rest were either studying,

working at non-skilled jobs, or looking after children full-time. All these challenges resulted in a severe stress over daily life and family finances and led many to also suffer a strong sense of loss in social status. This has been consistently reported by both groups of participants and is consistent with other findings from studies on the settlement and adjustment of general Chinese immigrants in New Zealand (e.g., A. Henderson, 2003; Dixon et al., 2010; Lueck & Wilson, 2010).

Consistent with findings from other studies in New Zealand (e.g., A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005; SND, 2002), the immigrants involved in this study reported that they and their former spouses employed a number of strategies to cope with their daily life, particularly their financial difficulties. These included learning English, studying a local degree to upgrade their job skills, and working long hours at low-skilled jobs for survival. Although these coping strategies appeared helpful in assisting their adjustment, they added more pressure to their daily life, particularly for those who had to look after young children while studying and/or working without much support from their overseas families.

Consistent with the results from a number of other studies (A. Henderson, 2003; Ho, 2002; M. Ip, 2003b), many Chinese immigrants involved in this study also employed a number of family coping strategies, such as living as an astronaut family, and sharing accommodation with extended families and friends if these people in their family and personal network had immigrated to New Zealand. Although these coping strategies appeared to be helpful in assisting them to cope with financial difficulties, it made life very stressful, especially for those astronaut spouses with young children (A. Henderson, 2003; Ho, 2002; M. Ip, 2003b).

Overall, although Chinese immigrants came to New Zealand with a number of individual and family dreams, many cultural and immigration-related barriers made their

life very stressful and led many to suffer a strong sense of loss of both social status and social networks. This was consistently reported by both the immigrants and professionals.

Impacts of Immigration on Marital Relationships

Impacts of Adjustment Stress and Losses on Marital Relationships

A number of studies in the USA have investigated post-immigration adjustment stress and its influence on the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants. As described in Chapter One, there are conflicting results as to whether the adjustment stress impacts the marital relationship. Some USA studies (A. Liu, 2009; Lueck & Wilson, 2010) suggest that Chinese immigrants experienced adjustment, particularly acculturative, stress and this stress appeared to affect their spousal communication and conflict resolution styles. However many other studies in the USA (Burns, 2005; Iu, 1982; Y. Ma, 1995; Ying, 1991) found that the Chinese immigrants' level of post-migration adjustment, including acculturation and economic adjustment, did not affect their marital relationship.

The results from the immigrants project strongly suggest that life stresses after immigration and the loss of social status, financial security, and social networks contributed to the marital conflicts and separation of the participating immigrants. This was also observed and supported by the participating professionals. In both of the projects, there were many reported cases where the stress associated with settlement and economic adjustment contributed to the Chinese couples' marital conflicts over daily life and family finances. The present study also provided some evidence that the adjustment stress, particularly the strong feelings of loss in social status, social networks, and in some cases social identity, affected the psychological functioning of the Chinese immigrant couples. It increased their marital conflicts, and in a few cases even contributed to spousal abuse and separation directly. These findings are in general consistent with those from a study on divorced Korean women in America (J. Chang, 2003). In this study, Korean women

reported many specific reasons for their divorce, with the six most frequently reported reasons being their ex-husbands' financial irresponsibility or incapability, spousal incompatibility in personality or views of life, physical abuse by the ex-husbands, the ex-husbands' involvement in extra-marital affairs, emotional abuse by the ex-husbands, and the ex-husbands' psychological dysfunction (J. Chang, 2003).

With regard to the different findings between this study and those USA studies, one of the potential reasons could be that Chinese immigrants in the two countries went through different post-immigration adjustment trajectories and therefore experienced different levels of economic adjustment. Because of different immigration policies, Chinese immigrants in the two countries experienced different pathways to obtain their residency. In the USA, Chinese immigrants usually have to complete a tertiary degree, typically a post-graduate one, and secure a job, mostly a professional job, before they are able to apply for residency (Huiyao Wang et al., 2015). This adjustment trajectory is likely to have led to better economic adjustment of Chinese immigrants in the USA (USCB, 2000), as described in Chapter One. Chinese immigrants in New Zealand, particularly those who came to this country between the late 1980s to the early 2000s, typically obtained their residency first and then many chose to upgrade their job skills by completing a tertiary degree (BIS, 2011; A. Henderson, 2003; Ho, 2006). This adjustment trajectory is likely to have contributed to the serious challenges to the economic adjustment that Chinese immigrants experienced in this country. The different levels of economic adjustment between Chinese immigrants in New Zealand and the USA might have led to their different levels of adjustment stress and feelings of loss of social status, and contributed to the different influence of adjustment stress and feeling of loss on their marital relationships.

In fact, some studies on Chinese international post-graduate student couples in the USA have found that the stress associated with studying and living in the host country and

the feelings of emptiness and loneliness could affect the marital relationship, particularly spousal communication and styles of conflict resolution, among these Chinese couples (H. F. Chang, 2004; Goff, 2004). To some extent, these Chines student couples in the USA and Chinese immigrant couples in New Zealand faced somewhat similar level of stress with managing their daily life, family finance, and particularly language and cultural barriers. They were both relatively 'new' to the host country and had a long way to go before they could secure a reliable income in the host country. This could explain why the influence of the life stress and feelings of emptiness and loneliness on the marital relationship reported by these student couples was somewhat similar to that found in this study.

Impact of Spousal Differences in Adjustment and Coping on Marital Relationships

Since the introduction of the concept of post-immigration marital adjustment (Ataca & Berry, 2002; James et al., 2004), a number of studies have examined the influence of spousal relational factors on the marital relationships of Chinese immigrants. In this regard, some studies involving Chinese immigrant or international student couples in the USA suggested that spousal differences in levels of acculturation (H. F. Chang, 2004), spousal differences in styles of conflict resolution (Goff, 2004; A. Liu, 2009), and spousal agreements on life aims and moral behaviours (Ying, 1991) could affect the marital relationships. One of these studies also found that among Chinese immigrant men, their disagreement with their wives on relating to in-laws and friends could also affect their marital relationship (Ying, 1991).

Furthermore, several studies on Chinese immigrants in the USA and New Zealand have investigated the influence of spousal differences in post-immigration adjustment, particularly economic adjustment on their power relations (Dixon et al., 2010; Jin & Keat, 2010; Y. Zhou, 2000). These studies found that spousal differences in the levels of post-immigration adjustment could change the power relationship in the family. In general, this

change appeared to favour Chinese wives, who therefore challenged their husbands' role as the head of the family (Dixon et al., 2010; Jin & Keat, 2010; Y. Zhou, 2000). One of these studies also found that when this occurred, some Chinese husbands tended to use physical violence towards their wives to regain their position of power in the family (Jin & Keat, 2010).

The current study provides more evidence in this area.

First, both the immigrants and professionals projects found that spousal differences in adjustment were common among the Chinese immigrant couples involved in this study, with some immigrants, mostly women, adjusting to the host culture and the local job market better than their spouses. A number of factors, such as the Chinese couples' different levels of English prior to immigration, different engagement with English learning after immigration, different attitudes towards the host culture, and different levels of tolerance of a non-skilled job, as described in Chapters Three and Five, appeared to have contributed to these spousal differences in adjustment.

Second, both groups of participants stressed that the Chinese couples' differences in acculturation and economic adjustment increased their differences in how they viewed life and coped with life difficulties, and this resulted in their marital conflicts and eventual separation. In this regard, both groups of participants reported many cases where spousal differences in cultural adjustment led to different childcare and parenting and resulted in conflicts over childrearing. Spousal differences in economic adjustment led to them having different views of daily spending and resulted in conflict over how to manage family finances. Also, spousal differences in levels of economic and psychological adjustment led to different levels of tolerance of loss in social status and eventually resulted in them making different decisions about astronaut arrangements or reverse migration.

Third, the present study also illustrates how Chinese immigrant couples' differences in level of acculturation and economic adjustment can change their power in the family and contribute further to their marital conflicts and in a small number of cases marital violence. In line with findings from previously described studies with Chinese immigrants in the USA and New Zealand (Dixon et al., 2010; Jin & Keat, 2010; Y. Zhou, 2000), the present study found that some Chinese husbands suffered a sense of a loss of power because they adjusted to life in New Zealand less well than their wives. Both groups of participants reported a minority of instances where their loss of power led to these Chinese men's violence towards their wives with the purpose of regaining their power in the family. This finding is consistent with that from Jin and Keat's study (2010), as described earlier. In line with findings from a previously described study with divorced Korean women (J. Chang, 2003), three Chinese women in the immigrants project reported that their ex-husband's physical violence towards them was the most direct reason for the divorce.

Impacts of the Changes in Family Structure, Roles and Dynamics on Marital Relationships

Family adjustment after immigration has gained increasing attention in the field of Chinese immigration, particularly in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, in the past two decades (e.g., Boyer, 1996; Chan & Leong, 1994; Chiang, 2006; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Teng, 1994). Many scholars in the field have observed that immigration can lead to a number of changes in how Chinese immigrants live as a family, either as a result of immigration, such as living overseas and away from extended families and friends (Dixon et al., 2010; A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005), or as a result of family coping, such as living as an astronaut family (Ho, 2010; Pe-Pua et al., 1996). While the change in family living arrangements is in itself associated with changes in family structure and roles, the latter appeared to be further

magnified by differences in the family members' level of acculturation and economic adjustment, resulting in further changes in family functioning and dynamics. A number of scholars, as described in Chapter One, have speculated that changes in family roles and dynamics, particularly those that occur in astronaut families, can lead to more marital conflicts and divorce among some Chinese immigrant couples (e.g., Aye & Guerin, 2001; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Wong, 2007). The results from the current study support these conclusions.

The present study has identified three types of change in family living arrangements among the Chinse immigrants involved in this study.

First, both groups of participants regarded living away from their extended families and friends as the main change in family living arrangements after immigration. This is consistent with other studies on Chinese families in New Zealand (Dixon et al., 2010; A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005). Although living away from extended families and relatives could have some benefits for the marital relationship, such as giving couples more time with each other and increasing their mutual support, it could also contribute to marital conflicts. In this regard, the immigrant participants stressed that living away from extended families and personal networks increased their stress and feelings of loss and created more opportunity for marital conflicts. This finding is consistent with those from two studies with married Chinese or Taiwanese graduate student couples living in the USA (H. F. Chang, 2004; Goff, 2004). The professionals emphasized that in Chinese culture the support and mediation from extended families and friends has a strong buffering effect on the marital relationship of conflicted Chinese couples. They stressed that living overseas might contribute to the separation of these Chinese couples by taking away the potential supporters and mediators who might otherwise have helped these couples to resolve their conflicts at the first instance of conflict and therefore saved their marriages.

Second, in line with many studies on Chinese immigrant families in New Zealand and other countries (e.g., Boyer, 1996; Chiang, 2006; Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Teng, 1994), both research projects found that living as an astronaut family was a common strategy that many Chinese immigrants employed to cope with their difficulties in adjusting to the local job market. Although this assisted family finances, it markedly changed the spouses' family roles and functioning and made life difficult for both spouses, especially the astronaut mothers who had responsibility for the children. Furthermore, being an astronaut family could also create physical and emotional distance between the spouses and in some instances contribute to extramarital affairs which were likely to become a direct reason for divorce. Overall these findings confirmed many scholars' findings and speculations that the astronaut arrangement could affect Chinese immigrant couples' marital relationships and contribute to extramarital affairs and separation (Aye & Guerin, 2001; Boyer, 1996; Chiang, 2006; Man Wai & Yvonne, 2008; Pe-Pua et al., 1996; Wong, 2007).

Third, in line with other studies on Chinese immigrants in New Zealand, the professionals project also found that among those Chinese immigrants who had extended family members who immigrated to this country, living with them, or even other Chinese, in one house was very common (Abbott et al., 2003; Abbott et al., 1999; A. Henderson, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005). As observed by the professionals, although this living arrangement assisted Chinese couples with daily life and family finances, it could contribute to their marital conflicts because of generational differences between these couples and their parents, and regional differences in people's views and customs in relation to everyday life between the two extended families, as described in Chapter Five. This finding is in general consistent with that from a study on married Chinese women who lived with their in-laws in the USA (Louisa Lam, 2003).

Marital Crisis and Separation

Marital Crisis

Both groups of participants, as discussed in Chapters Three and Five, talked briefly about what marital problems they faced before separation. Among the problems experienced by the immigrant participants, the majority of problems concerned daily life activities, such as the sharing of household chores and childcare, or managing family finance, as described in Chapter Three. Despite the fact that many of these daily life conflicts might initially only involve spousal disagreements or arguments, they all became prolonged and escalated into serious conflicts. This was due to many previously described reasons, such as their stress with life challenges, increased spousal differences in how to manage daily life after immigration, and the lack of support and mediation from their extended families. Overall the pre-separation marital problems experienced by the immigrant participants were also observed by the professional participants, and were in general similar to the self-reported reasons for divorce by divorced individuals in Western Countries (e.g., Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985), particularly divorced Chinese in China (e.g., Youzhi Wang & Peng, 2003) and divorced Korean women in the USA (J. Chang, 2003).

Making the Decision to Divorce

Despite experiencing serious difficulties and conflicts, many immigrant participants reported that they still found it hard to make a decision to divorce because of their Chinese family values and the influence of the host culture on their views of divorce. Some commented that they were torn between the two cultures. These complex cultural influences were also observed by the professionals.

A number of studies in the USA and Canada have investigated the influence of both the host and home cultures on Chinese immigrants' family values, gender ideology

and attitudes towards divorce (e.g., Burns, 2005; Gao, 1997; Goff, 2004; Iu, 1982; Marshall, 2010). Although these studies revealed a complicated pattern of cultural influences with some findings contradicting each other, overall, as described in Chapter One, they suggested that Chinese immigrants appeared to hold strongly onto Chinese family values (Goff, 2004; Iu, 1982) and that this identification with Chinese culture appeared to be associated with their conservative attitudes towards divorce (Iu, 1982).

The results from the present study suggest that Chinese culture had a strong influence on the immigrant participants' views on divorce. Despite some evidence that living in New Zealand might have changed the Chinese immigrants' perceptions of gender roles and power relationships, and that some participating professionals viewed the influence of Chinese culture on Chinese immigrants differently from others, overall the Chinese immigrants involved in this study appeared to hold strongly onto traditional Chinese family values and viewed divorce as shameful. As a result, some of the immigrant participants did not disclose their divorce to friends and even natal families for several years because they felt divorce was shameful for their whole family. The strong Chinese family values, as revealed in both research projects, appeared to lead many immigrant participants to try whatever they could to save their marriages, except for those men whose ex-wives were involved in extramarital affairs. As described in Chapter One, in Chinese culture, a wife's extramarital affair has traditionally been viewed as one of the strong reasons for divorce (Freedman, 1979; Shek, 2006). As such, some Chinese men involved in this study made a straightforward decision to divorce their ex-wives. This is in fact further evidence of how strongly Chinese family values could affect the process of the decision-making.

The host culture also appeared to affect the Chinese immigrants' view of divorce and the process of decision-making. Based on the results from both research projects, the immigrant participants appeared to be aware of the acceptance of divorce in the host

culture. Although it might not be able to change their family values fundamentally, it allowed them to worry less about the impact of divorce on themselves and particularly their children. This appeared to lead them to accept divorce as an option for ending a seriously conflicted marriage. Furthermore, because they lived New Zealand, they felt less pressure and interference from their extended families, social networks and the public in relation to their divorce, and they were able to obtain more financial support, such as Sole Parent Support, from the New Zealand government. This led some participating immigrants, particularly women, to feel it was easier to make a decision to divorce in this country. It was particularly the case for those immigrants who had considered divorce before immigration but were unable to make the decision because of cultural influences and their concerns about the impact of divorce on themselves and their children.

Adjustment after Separation

The Impacts of Separation

The results from both projects show consistently that separated Chinese immigrants experienced many difficulties, including psychological, financial and daily life difficulties, following the separation, particularly in the immediate post-separation period. While research into divorce in many Western countries, such as the USA, Germany, Netherlands, Australia and Japan (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Hetherington, 1999; Lorenz et al., 2006; Mastekaasa, 1994; McManus & DiPrete, 2001; Smock et al., 1999; Stack & Eshleman, 1998) and in China (Du et al; 2002; Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2006; Yun & Pan, 1992), found that divorced individuals, compared with the consistently married, suffered a number of psychological, financial and daily life difficulties particularly in the initial years following marital breakdown. These difficulties appeared to be exacerbated for the separated Chinese immigrants who were already struggling with their life due to their immigration-related challenges.

Based on the lived experiences from the immigrants and the observations from the professionals, most separated Chinese women, particularly those with residential care of young children, were overwhelmed by their own difficulties with living in New Zealand and the parental responsibility. Many of these women worried about whether they would be able to make a life for their children in New Zealand. This led them to suffer strong feelings of loss, hopelessness and helplessness. Compared with the separated women, the separated men had in general more difficulties with English and suffered a stronger sense of loss in social status. This was reported by many immigrant participants and observed by the professionals. Given these immigration-related challenges, the further loss of residential care of the children, as a result of separation in New Zealand, appeared to lead some male participants to feel that there was nothing left for them. This was reported as a direct reason that forced some of them to move back to their home country permanently.

Chinese peoples' beliefs about marriage and divorce, particularly their views on marriage as a life-time commitment and divorce as a shame for the family, as reported by both groups of participants, might also have contributed to their psychological difficulties after separation. This finding is once again consistent with that from studies on divorced individuals in western countries (e.g., Simon & Marcussen, 1999; Hongyu Wang & Amato, 2000) and China (Li & Feng, 1991; Yun & Pan, 1992).

Child-Centred Adjustment

In line with previous studies on divorced individuals in China (E.g., Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2006) and Western countries (Hamilton, 1999; Hetherington, 1999; Umberson & Williams, 1993; Whitaker et al., 2014), separated Chinese used a number of strategies to cope with post-separation life challenges. These included adjusting job expectations to meet children's needs, matching work and/or study schedules with parental responsibilities, learning daily life and parenting skills, managing parental role

strains, parental relationship and co-parenting, and seeking family and community support. This was reported consistently by both groups of participants.

Despite the variety of coping strategies described above, the central focus of adjustment among the separated Chinese involved in this study appeared to be the well-being of their children. Within this adjustment approach, separated Chinese regarded meeting children's needs as their primary life principle, and they applied this to manage their daily life difficulties. This 'child-centred adjustment approach', as named by some professionals in the interview, was evidenced at all stages of the Chinese immigrants' adjustment after separation, regardless of whether they were men or women and which types of childcare arrangements they had. As reported by both groups of participants, at the immediate post-separation stage, it made the separated parents focus on their parental responsibilities and financial difficulties. This helped them to accept divorce and carry on with life in New Zealand. At the ongoing adjustment stage, it guided them to plan their life by giving priority to children and reducing their expectations for their work or study. Towards the later stages of adjustment, it helped them to develop a dream for their children's future and made them work hard to achieve whatever they could realistically do as a separated Chinese immigrant parent. Overall, this adjustment approach appeared to give the separated parents a clear direction on what they had to do and how they should cope with life challenges after separation.

Some studies in Western countries report that divorced mothers experienced improvements in career opportunities following divorce (e.g., Acock & Demo, 1994). Other studies found that developing an intimate relationship or remarriage after divorce was common and that this relationship was helpful for post-separation adjustment (Tschann et al., 1989; Hongyu Wang & Amato, 2000). In this study, some participating immigrants had improved their careers and two immigrant participants had found new partners after separation. However, a number of cultural and immigration related factors,

as reported by both groups of participants, appeared to have prevented the majority of Chinese immigrants from focusing on their career or developing another relationship after separation. In this regard, while the language, cultural and institutional barriers, as described in Chapters Four and Five, appeared to prevent them from moving higher in their career, many cultural and immigration-related factors, such as the stigma attached to divorce in Chinese culture and a small Chinese community in New Zealand, as described in the same chapters, seemed not only to discourage them from considering another relationship but also to limit their chance of finding a new partner.

In Chinese culture, children have always been a focus for a family (Wolf, 1972). This was particularly the case for the immigrants involved in this study, as almost all of them regarded the future of their children as one of their main dreams for immigration. This life focus on children and the post-separation challenges they faced as Chinese immigrant parents, such as increased parental responsibility and the lack of family support, appeared to have forced these Chinese parents to focus on the emergent needs of childcare in the immediate post-separation period and to reduce their expectation of a personal career thereafter. These factors could also explain why they developed new dreams for their children on the basis of their own level of post-immigration adjustment particularly their English skills.

Managing Co-Parenting after Separation

Managing child living arrangements during the separation settlement and co-parenting after the separation appeared to be a common challenge for divorcing and divorced parents in almost all the countries. In Western countries, while some parents had a low level of conflict over children during the separation settlement and a high level of parental co-operation after separation (Drapeau et al., 2009), more than half of the parents appeared to experience a moderate to high level of conflict over arranging child living and co-parenting (Bacon & McKenzie, 2004; Drapeau et al., 2009; Maccoby et al., 1990;

Whiteside, 1998). Among these conflicted parents, many appeared to improve their co-parenting not long after separation; however, up to a third either maintained a high level of conflict for years or increased their level of conflict over time (Bacon & McKenzie, 2004; Drapeau et al., 2009; Fischer et al., 2005; Maccoby et al., 1990). Divorced parents in China, compared with their counterparts in Western countries, appeared to experience more parental conflicts over child living arrangements, childcare payments, and child visitation, with many simply cutting all parental links after divorce (e.g., Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003).

The present study identified three patterns of parental relationships in relation to child living arrangements during separation settlement and co-parenting after separation among the Chinese immigrants involved in this study. While these patterns of separating settlement and co-parenting appeared to be somewhat similar to those found among divorced parents in China and in Western countries in particular, the immigration and acculturation factors that contributed to these patterns of co-parenting made them somewhat unique for the separated Chinese involved in this study.

First, a high level of conflict over child living arrangements during the separation settlement, as reported by both group of participants, was very common among the separating Chinese parents involved in this study, with some experiencing lengthy battles in the family court in both the home and host countries. Regardless of whether they reached a child living agreement themselves or through the family court, around a quarter of the immigrant participants' ex-spouses, typically fathers, moved back to their home country after separation. When this happened, most of these ex-spouses refused to pay child support and cut off contact with his/her ex-spouse and children completely. This pattern of co-parenting was also observed by the professionals.

Studies in both China and Western countries suggest that low family income, high conflict prior to separation, and anger after separation contribute to this extreme pattern of co-parenting (Drapeau et al., 2009; Maccoby et al., 1990; Yun & Pan, 1992). However, this did not appear to be the case for a quarter of the immigrant participants who experienced this pattern of co-parenting, as their level of family income and pre-separation conflict did not appear to be markedly different from those experienced by other immigrant participants. Instead, the different traditions and concepts of separation settlement and co-parenting between the home and host country and the lack of clarity about post-separation parental relationships in Chinese culture, as described in Chapters One and Five, appeared to be the main contributing factors. As stressed by the professionals, many of these separating Chinese parents, particularly the fathers, tried to own their children exclusively after separation by following Chinese concepts and customs of divorce settlement and co-parenting. This appeared to be the main reason for the constant battles between these separating parents and it led to a pattern of separation settlement and co-parenting that was very similar to that experienced by divorced couples in China (e.g., Li & Feng, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003).

Second, among those separated Chinese parents who experienced serious parental conflicts during the separation settlement and remained in New Zealand after separation, although many were likely to be in continuous conflict with each other over child visitation and child support payments, particularly in the immediate post-separation period, eventually they managed to improve their parental relationship. This pattern of co-parenting was reported by many of the immigrant participants and was observed by the professionals. It is also consistent with what was experienced by many divorced parents in Western countries (Drapeau et al., 2009; Fischer et al., 2005). Some Western studies suggested that a low level of hostility during separating, satisfaction with child support, and forgiveness contributed to this improvement (Bonach, 2005). Some of these

contributing factors, such as forgiveness and voluntary child support payments, were also reported by the immigrant participants involved. However, the main contributing factors among these separated parents appeared to be their acceptance of New Zealand concepts and customs of co-parenting as well as their commitment to the children's well-being. As stressed by these immigrants as well as some professionals, while living in New Zealand helped separated Chinese parents to gradually accept the concept of sharing parental rights and responsibilities, their concerns for the children's wellbeing motivated them to re-build a co-operative parental relationship.

Third, the present study found that around a quarter of the immigrant participants experienced a low level of spousal conflict over child living arrangements during the separation settlement and a high level of cooperative parenting after separation. This pattern of co-parenting is consistent with that experienced by some divorced parents in Western countries (Drapeau et al., 2009). Consistent with some contributing factors suggested by Western studies (Drapeau et al., 2009), a low level of conflict before separation and a high degree of agreement on asset division and childcare arrangements were reported by the immigrants who experienced this pattern of co-parenting. Apart from this, they also reported that Chinese values concerning children and particularly their commitment to the well-being of children contributed to their co-operation with their ex-spouses.

Despite these, this pattern of co-parenting was in sharp contrast to that experienced by divorced parents in China (Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003). It was also inconsistent with the professionals' overall perception of the co-parenting of separated Chinese immigrants in New Zealand, as many professional participants made clear comment that Chinese immigrants had more problems than New Zealanders in co-parenting after separation. The reason for the inconsistency between the immigrant and professional participants is not clear. One potential reason could be that professionals, due to the nature of their services,

were more likely to work with conflicted Chinese couples who experienced co-parenting difficulties and therefore did not see those Chinese couples who were working out the problems themselves. In terms of the difference in the pattern of co-parenting between this group of immigrants and divorced parents in China, one possible reason could be the acceptance of New Zealand concepts of co-parenting among these immigrant parents. To confirm this hypothesis, particularly to find out what contributed to cooperative co-parenting among the separated Chinese immigrants, which would greatly benefit their children as document by many studies in Western countries (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington, 1999; Kelly, 1998; Leon, 2003), further research is warranted.

Barriers and Access to Social Support

Consistent with underutilization of support among Chinese immigrants with medically unexplained fatigue, emotional distress, and other emotional problems in the USA and Canada (e.g., Kung, 2003; R. Lee et al., 2001; Loo et al., 1989; Ying & Miller, 1992), both projects found that underutilization of family and social support was quite common among the separated Chinese immigrants involved in this study, with up to a third of the immigrant participants, particularly men, not seeking any support from any source.

A number of immigration and culture-related barriers to family and social support, as reported consistently by both groups of participants, have been identified. Many of these barriers appeared to relate to Chinese immigration. These include limited English skills, the lack of a personal network in the host country, lack of awareness of social and professional services, and concerns about the service providers' ability to understand the Chinese immigrants' life experience. Some of these barriers seemed to relate to Chinese people's cultural beliefs of personal (including emotional) problems and coping, such as viewing emotional problems as evidence of weakness of mind and managing this by being strong and pushing down all the emotions rather than talking to someone and seeking

support, as described in Chapters One and Five. All these barriers, in general consistent with those found among Chinese immigrants with emotional problems in the USA and Canada (e.g., Kung, 2003; R. Lee et al., 2001; Loo et al., 1989; Ying & Miller, 1992), appeared to prevent Chinese immigrants from seeking support for their daily life or emotional difficulties, regardless of whether these difficulties were caused by immigration-related challenges or divorce.

Other barriers, such as viewing divorce as a source of shame for the whole family, worries about stigma attached to divorce, and concerns about the service providers' ability to understand Chinese people's experiences of divorce, appeared to be divorce-specific. While the last one appeared to prevent separating and separated Chinese immigrants from seeking support from divorce-related social services, the former two, as reported by both groups of participants, seemed to encourage them, especially at the initial stage of separating, to hide the divorce from other people, including professionals, therefore preventing them from seeking support from many potential sources. To confirm these speculations, further research is warranted.

Despite these barriers, up to two-thirds of the separated Chinese involved in this study appeared to have sought and eventually obtained important support after separation. Among all the types of support that they obtained, financial support from extended families and social benefits, as reported by both groups of participants, appeared to be the most common. Regarding other types of support, while separated Chinese appeared to obtain emotional support mainly from extended families and friends in Chain, particularly in the immediate post-separation period, they seemed to obtain most practical support, particularly in the ongoing adjustment period, from their neighbourhood, single mother groups, Chinese church communities, and social services in the minority of cases where physical abuse was involved. These findings are in general consistent with those from Western studies, which found that divorced individuals obtained financial, emotional and

daily life support from extended families and personal networks, followed by emotional and daily life support from self-support groups, church communities, and social service agencies (Chiriboga et al., 1979; Duran-Aydintug, 1998; M. Henderson & Argyle, 1985). They are also consistent with those from studies in China. In general studies in China found that extended families and personal networks were the most important sources for financial, emotional and daily life support for divorced couples (Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2005), despite the separated Chinese in this study not being able to obtain much daily life support from these sources due to the immigration related barriers described earlier.

Some studies conducted in Western countries suggest that divorced individuals with more life stressors, such as rearing young children or experiencing other life stressors in addition to divorce, were more likely to obtain support (Duran-Aydintug, 1998; Kitson et al., 1982). The present study suggests further that the severity of life difficulties after separation could be a very powerful fact that motivated separated individuals to seek support from potential sources. As described before, Chinese immigrants involved in this study experienced serious life difficulties after separation. These severe life difficulties, as stressed by both groups of participants, appeared to have motivated many immigrant participants to break through barriers in accessing support from all the potential sources, such as financial and emotional support from extended families and practical daily life support from neighbourhood and church communities, as described in Chapters Four and Five. Apart from this, the collective nature of Chinse culture, particularly the Chinese value of family support, as stressed by both groups of participants and as suggested by studies in China (e.g., Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2005), also appeared to contribute to the family support that the immigrant participants obtained from their families.

Regarding the differential effects of social support on post-separation adjustment, while support from extended families and friends appeared to be helpful in protecting the immigrant participants from emotional and financial distress, support from communities

and social services appeared to be important in promoting their post-separation functioning including managing daily life, co-parenting and even job-searching. This finding is also consistent with those from previous studies (Krumrei et al., 2007).

Finally, it is important to note that the Chinese church community appeared to be an important source of support for some Chinese immigrants involved in this study. As described in Chapters Four and Five, this community provided separated Chinese with many types of ongoing support as well as information to access other sources of support. Given that separated Chinese experienced many types of barriers to accessing support, particularly daily life support, this finding might have important implications for social services and be worth further investigation.

Long-term Consequences of Separation and/or Divorce

The Chinese immigrants involved in this study experienced both negative and positive consequences as a result of their separation and/or divorce in the long-term.

On the negative side, the financial consequences are very prominent. Although this consequence has been well-documented by studies in both Western countries (Forste & Heaton, 2004; Stirling, 1989) and China (Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2005), the separated Chinese immigrants appear to have suffered more in this regard. In fact, many immigrant and professional participants described this negative consequence as 'persistent poverty'. Without doubt, as recent immigrants, separated Chinese couples' difficulties with economic adjustment in New Zealand were likely to have a fundamental contribution to this poverty. Despite this, many factors associated with separation, particularly increased parental responsibility, incompatibility of residential childcare with work and study, and the loss of another income, as stressed by both groups of participants and as suggested by both Western and Chinese studies (e.g., Holden & Smock, 1991; Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003),

were likely to contribute to this consequence. Apart from this, some separated Chinese parents, as reported by both groups of participants, were either unable to or refused to receive child support payments from ex-spouses due to their anger, desire for revenge, and lack of understanding of post-separation parental responsibility. For these parents, the failure to receive child support payments also appeared to contribute to their poverty. This finding is highly consistent with that experienced by divorced residential parents in China (Z. Ma & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2006).

The results from both projects suggest that Chinese immigrants who separated and/or divorced in New Zealand experienced both positive and negative influences on their psychological well-being. On the negative side, a sense of failure was consistently reported by the immigrants and professionals, with up to half of the immigrant participants, mainly men, having experienced this consequence. This finding is in general consistent with that from Western and Chinese studies (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Du et al., 2002; Lorenz et al., 2006; Yi, 2006). Apart from a sense of failure, the professionals also regarded a sense of guilt as a common long-term negative consequence among separated Chinese immigrants, while the immigrant participants only viewed this as a short-term psychological difficulty. The reasons for this difference is unknown. One of the possible reasons could be that the immigrants who experienced guilt may have improved their overseas living skills and situation for their children over the years after separation and therefore felt less guilt towards their children. However the professionals were less likely to see this improvement because they were more likely to work with Chinese couples during their separation and/or in the immediate post-separation period.

Despite a sense of failure and possibly a sense of guilt, separation could also have some positive influences on the psychological well-being of Chinese immigrants. Studies in both Western countries (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Wheaton, 1990) and China (Y. P. Chen, 2005; Yun & Pan, 1992) suggest that individuals

who suffered a higher level of pre-separation conflicts, particularly marital abuse, reported better psychological well-being, including an increase in happiness and a decrease in depression, a higher level of autonomy, and a stronger sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Consistent with these findings, this positive consequence was also reported by both the professional and immigrant participants. In fact, some of the immigrant participants who suffered serious marital conflicts prior to separation reported that divorce gave them a 'new' life.

Both groups of participants also observed that becoming mature as a person and developing a higher level of self-confidence were very positive outcomes for some Chinese immigrants involved in this study. Some immigrant and professional participants viewed separation and divorce in New Zealand as a turning point for Chinese immigrants as it allowed them to reflect on their marriages and gave them an opportunity examine their perceptions and values of marriage and family from a different cultural perspective. This reflection process and a new perspective could lead them to have a greater understanding about themselves and their family and lead them to become more mature as a person. Many others, however, linked the consequence of separation with the Chinese immigrants' adjustment after separation. In this regard, although separation created many life difficulties on top of their post-immigration adjustment challenges, many separated Chinese parents involved in this study, regardless of whether they were fathers or mothers, managed their daily life, parental responsibilities and co-parenting well. A number of the separated parents had developed a single parent life style and new dreams for their children's future. The strong commitment to their children and the child-focused adjustment approach appeared not only to have helped them to accept and manage their post-separation challenges, but also to have facilitated some parents to develop a single parent lifestyle and new dreams for their children and themselves. This adjustment process and the positive benefits appeared to be very rewarding for those who experienced it. It

gave them more confidence in themselves and made them feel stronger. This finding is in general consistent with a Hong Kong study, which found that divorced Chinese mothers' success in managing multiple life difficulties and particularly in developing a positive single mother identity appeared to have boosted their self-confidence and self-respect (Hung et al., 2004)

At the time of the interview, the immigrant participants had on average been separated for 4.7 years. Many of them were still in the process of adjustment. Despite this, more than half of the immigrant participants reported that they had coped well with their life difficulties and experienced self-growth. At this time, although many of them still faced economic difficulties, they believed they could survive as a self-reliant parent in New Zealand and some had developed new dreams. Giving more time, it seems possible that more participants would achieve self-growth and improve their lives.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This PhD thesis study has explored many aspects and areas of Chinese immigrants' experiences of divorce in New Zealand. Based on the results from both the immigrants and professionals projects, a proposed model of the divorce of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand was developed. The findings have filled in many gaps in the field of research in relation to the divorce of Chinese immigrants, particularly in regard to how immigration and post-immigration adjustment can affect the marital relationship and how separated Chinese immigrants could cope with their life challenges and adjust to a single life after separation. For example, regarding the influences of post-immigration adjustment on the marital relationship, some studies in the field have suggested that post-immigration life challenges, spousal differences in levels of acculturation and economic adjustment, and changes in family structure, roles and functioning could influence the marital relationship of Chinese immigrants. This study has demonstrated how this stress

and coping process could in fact contribute to the divorce of Chinese immigrants. In regard to the impact of separation and post-separation adjustment, this study has demonstrated for the first time what impacts marital separation could have on Chinese immigrants, how they managed their daily life and co-parenting challenges after separation and adjusted to a single parent life, and how this adjustment process could contribute to the long-term consequences that they had experienced. These findings are likely to have implications for the future studies on the divorce of Chinese immigrants.

The results from this study also have implications for divorce theories in general. As described in Chapter One, Amato (2000) combined a number of general stress and coping theories or models of divorce into a generic divorce-stress-adjustment perspective. This perspective views divorce and post-divorce adjustment as a process and "explicitly focuses on the contingencies that lead to negative, positive, or mixed outcomes for individuals" (Amato, 2000, p. 1273). Specifically, Amato's perspective focuses on what life difficulties divorce can create and how these stressors can affect the long-term outcomes of divorce. This perspective also focuses on protective factors that help divorced individuals to cope and moderate the long-term outcomes. This thesis study has, on the one hand, confirmed the many stressors, such as financial difficulties and sole parenting responsibilities, and the protective factors, such as social and family support, that are highlighted in Amato's model. On the other hand, the study has found that many of these stressors and protective factors are strongly influenced by the Chinese immigrants' cultural values and the life challenges associated with immigration. Overall these results suggest that Amato's perspective, as a generic model, could be applied to studies on the divorce of Chinese immigrants and to other cultural groups of immigrants. However, when this generic perspective is applied to the divorce of a specific immigrant group, such as Chinese immigrants, a specific focus needs to be placed on these immigrants' cultural values and the unique life challenges that they are facing as immigrants. This is because

all of these factors may shape the process of post-separation adjustment and lead to different long-term outcomes.

The results from this study also have implications for future studies that focus on some specific aspects of post-divorce adjustment among individuals in both Western countries and China. For example, in Western countries, there has been a call for researchers to pay more attention to the positive outcomes of divorce and to explore the factors that could assist individuals to achieve these positive outcomes (Amato, 2000; 2010). In line with a study of divorced mothers in Hong Kong (Hung et al., 2004), the present study strongly suggests that focusing on the well-being of children after separation helps separated Chinese immigrant parents to manage their post-separation life challenges and to develop an identity that is not attached to the previous marriage. Given that many studies have shown that the children's well-being is also a common concern among divorced parents in Western countries (e.g., Bailey, 2003; Hamilton, 1999; Hetherington, 1999), how this concern shapes their post-divorce adjustment and leads to further positive outcomes might be worth more investigation in the future. In China, conflicts over child living arrangements and co-parenting between the divorced parents and their extended families have been well-documented, but few studies have investigated how divorced parents could manage and improve their co-parenting. Similar to divorced Chinese parents in China, separated Chinese immigrants also experienced marked conflicts over child living arrangements and co-parenting, particularly in the immediate post-separation period. However, many separated Chinese involved in this study had gradually improved their co-parenting. This finding, particularly in relation to the factors contributing to this improvement, such as the acceptance of shared parental rights and responsibilities, might have some implications for studies on divorced parents in China.

The results from this thesis study could also have a number of practical implications for social policies, social services, and divorcing or divorced Chinese

immigrants. First, as described in Chapter One, although a number of studies in New Zealand have investigated the settlement and adjustment of Chinese immigrants and their families, little research has been conducted on divorce among this population. As such, the results from this study are likely to provide much needed information for government agencies and social service providers to plan and develop social policies and social services in relation to Chinese families, particularly single parent families, for professionals who work with Chinese immigrant families particularly separating and separated Chinese families, and for Chinese immigrants who are experiencing or have experienced separation. Second, the study also has a number of findings in relation to how the home and host culture, particularly Chinese and local people's values relating to marriage and family as well as their views on divorce, could affect Chinese immigrants' marital relationships, their decision to divorce, and their adjustment after separation. These findings might also be helpful in assisting professionals, particularly mainstream professionals, to understand separating and separated Chinese immigrants' experiences from a Chinese cultural perspective, to identify cultural barriers that are likely to prevent separated Chinese from a positive adjustment, and the cultural strengths, such as the parental commitment to children, that are likely to promote a positive adjustment. Third, the study also has a number of findings in relation to Chinese immigrants' experiences of settlement and adjustment after immigration. In this regard, the study has identified a number of barriers, such as the language, cultural and institutional barriers, that made it difficult for Chinese immigrants to adjust to life in New Zealand. These findings might have some implications for government agencies and social service providers in planning social policies in relation to the settlement and adjustment of Chinese immigrants in general.

Limitations of the Research

The present study has a number of limitations. Some of these related to the study samples.

First, the post-immigration adjustment of Chinese immigrants, as discussed earlier, is shaped by a host country's immigration and settlement policies which are different in each immigration destination country and are being changed from time to time. In this study, most immigrant participants obtained their residency as skilled or business immigrants and came to New Zealand as a family between the mid 1990s and the early 2000s. As such, their experience of post-immigration adjustment and the influences of this adjustment on the marital relationship are likely to be different from Chinese immigrants who divorced in other immigration destination countries or Chinese immigrants who divorced in New Zealand but came to this country in different years or under different immigration categories. This is particularly the case for those who came to this country initially as international students and then got married and divorced. Furthermore, all the immigrant participants in this study came from Mainland China and Taiwan. Their experience of post-immigration adjustment and the influences of the post-immigration adjustment on their marital relationships might be different from Chinese people who came to New Zealand from other countries or regions such as Malaysia or Hong Kong, because Chinese people from these countries are likely to have different pre-immigration levels of English and different experiences with Western culture, as discussed in Chapter One.

Second, Chinese immigrants who had separated within the previous 10 years were also included in the study and their accounts may have differed if the experience was more recent. Furthermore, some immigrant participants were recruited through the assistance of Chinese or Asian immigrant service organizations, such as women's refuges. Because of

the nature of the service of these organizations, the study might include proportionally more immigrants who experienced serious marital conflicts, compared to the general population of divorced Chinese in New Zealand.

Third, in New Zealand, marital counselling and divorce-related professional services are not very common among Chinese immigrants. Some divorcing or divorced Chinese immigrants might not have been aware of these services or did not seek support from these services due to the cultural and immigration-related barriers described earlier. As such, the professionals' account of divorce of Chinese immigrants might only represent the experience of divorce of a part of the Chinese immigrants in this country. In addition, all the professionals who participated in this study are first-generation Chinese immigrants. Although this background is likely to facilitate their understanding of divorce of Chinese immigrants, their views and perceptions of divorce of Chinese immigrants are likely to be different from professionals with different immigration and cultural backgrounds.

Finally, and importantly, in terms of the influence of immigration and post-immigration adjustment on marital relationships, this study focused on the experiences of those Chinese who had separated and/or divorced in New Zealand. It did not include the experiences and perspectives of Chinese immigrants whose marriages remained intact post-immigration. Research into the experiences of the latter group would be informative in terms of what leads some marriages to be more resilient, what coping strategies or supports are relevant for this group, and perhaps the different influences of cultural beliefs on the post-immigration adjustment and marital relationships among this group of Chinese immigrants.

Future Research Directions

The findings and limitations of the present study also demonstrate the need for researchers to further investigate the divorce of Chinse immigrants.

First, the present study suggests that post-immigration adjustment could affect the marital relationship of Chinese couples and contributes to their eventual separation and divorce. Given that Chinese immigrants' adjustment after immigration is likely to be influenced by the immigration and settlement policies which are country and time-specific, it would be of benefit to understand the experiences of divorce of Chinese immigrants who live in different host countries, and in the case of New Zealand, who have immigrated to this country in different years and particularly under different immigration categories, such as those Chinese who came to this country initially as international students.

Second, this study examined the influence of immigration and post-immigration adjustment on marital relationships from the perspective of separated and divorced Chinese immigrants. It is equally important to examine this influence from the perspective of Chinese couples who do not divorce or who have improved their relationship in order to find out what contributes to marital resilience. In fact, one study (Dixon et al., 2010) in New Zealand, has investigated how well functioning Asian (including Chinese) immigrant families cope with the settlement challenges. It demonstrates that that these life challenges can pull together Chinese couples to cope with life challenges and this family coping has a potential to improve their relationship, as described in Chapter One.

Third, this study demonstrates that the separated and/or divorced Chinese immigrants involved in this study focused on the well-being of their children at almost all stages of their life prior to or after the separation. It would be of benefit to investigate in future studies what impacts parental separation might have on children and how these

children adjust to their life after parental separation. It would also be beneficial to understand children's adjustment after immigration, how this might change children's roles and parent-child dynamics in the family, and how these changes might further affect the relationship of Chinese immigrant couples.

Fourth, this study has investigated Chinese immigrant's life experiences prior to and after separation and developed an explanatory model to demonstrate how immigration and post-immigration adjustment could affect their marital relationship and contributed to their eventual separation, how they made the decision to divorce, what life challenges they experienced after separation, how they coped with these challenges and adjusted to a single parent life, and finally what consequences they experienced as a result of separation and/or divorce in the long-term. It would be highly beneficial to examine these findings from a quantitative approach.

Conclusion

This present study found that the Chinese immigrants involved in this study experienced significant difficulties in adjusting to life in New Zealand. They had to work in low-paid and often unskilled jobs to survive and suffered a loss of social status, social networks and even social identity. Many used the astronaut arrangement to meet their financial needs. These challenges, along with differences in individual adjustment and coping, appeared to contribute to increasing marital conflict and decreasing satisfaction which eventually led to the decision to divorce. Both the Chinese and New Zealand cultures impacted this decision. Chinese family values and negative views of divorce seemed to act as a force to push them back towards marriage while the greater acceptance of divorce and the financial support for single parents in New Zealand appeared to give them more freedom to divorce.

The present study also found that marital separation brought separated Chinese a number of life difficulties. These, along with their individual difficulties in post-immigration adjustment, appeared to provoke separated Chinese parents to give priority to the well-being of their children in their life after separation. This child-centred adjustment approach seemed to have helped separated Chinese parents to manage their life challenges after separation and assisted them to develop an identity as a self-reliant parent. The focus of children's well-being also appeared to have motivated separated parents to overcome cultural and immigration-related barriers in accessing family and social support and helped many to improve their co-parenting with their ex-spouses. In general, although separation and divorce brought Chinese parents persistent financial difficulties and in some cases a sense of failure, the child-centred adjustment approach seemed to have helped them to successfully develop a single lifestyle and new dreams and in some cases a sense of self-growth.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Advertisement (Mandarin Version)

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Tamaki Campus

The University of Auckland

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

诚邀中国移民离婚研究参与者

我是奥克兰大学心理学专业的在读博士生，名叫赵云飞。我当前正在从事一项关于中国第一代移民离婚经历的研究。这项研究是我博士论文的一部分，其目的在于促进人们对于中国移民离婚经历和离婚后调整的理解，以便更好地为他们提供社会服务。

如果您是一位中国移民，在最近十年内经历过分居或离婚，我热忱地邀请您参与此项研究。参与此项研究涉及 1-2 小时的个别访谈。您可以选择与本项目的研究者交谈，也可以选择与另一位女性访谈者交谈。我们两人都是新近的中国移民，我们将对通过访谈获得的所有信息保密。

为感谢您的参与和贡献，我们将赠送您一份价值 25 纽币的小礼物。

如果您对这项研究感兴趣，或者希望更多地了解这项研究，请致电或 Email 赵云飞。电话：3737599 转 84479；Email：yzha395@aucklanduni.ac.nz

此项研究得到奥克兰大学人类研究参与者伦理委员会的批准。批准日期：10/10/2007；有效期：10/10/2007 至 9/10/2012；文档号：2007/311。

Appendix B: Advertisement (English Version)

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Chinese Participants Required for Divorce Research

Participants are required to take part in a study of the marital separation and adjustment of first-generation Chinese immigrants who have separated in New Zealand in the past ten years. The research is conducted by Yunfei Zhao as part of his doctoral thesis study. Yunfei Zhao is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychology, the University of Auckland.

Participant in the research will be interviewed by me or a female interviewer for up to two hours. The information received from the interview will be kept confidential. The research will contribute to an understanding of the marital separation and adjustment of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand.

The participants will be given a small gift worth $25 in acknowledgement of the time and commitment involved.

If you are interested in participating in the research, or would like more information, please contact Yunfei Zhao on: Phone: 3737599 ext 84479 or email: yzha395@ec.auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact:
The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone: 09 373-7599 ext 87830.

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet for Immigrants

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Participant Information Sheet (Immigrants)

Research Title: Marital Separation and Transition of Chinese Immigrants

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao, Doctoral student, University of Auckland

To: Potential Participants

My name is Yunfei Zhao and I am student at the University of Auckland enrolled in the Doctor of Clinical Psychology Programme in the Department of Psychology. I am conducting my doctoral thesis research which includes two projects: (A) interviews with 10 – 15 marital separation support professionals in order to understand their clinical experiences of the marital separation of first-generation Chinese immigrants; (B) interviews with first-generation Chinese immigrants to understand their experiences of marital separation and post-separation transition in New Zealand. The purpose of my doctoral thesis research is to fill the knowledge gap about marital separation experiences of Chinese immigrants, and hopefully provide some practical implications from it for separating Chinese immigrants and the professionals who work with them.

The present research is the main part of my doctoral thesis. For this research project, I am looking for a range of 20 – 30 first-generation Chinese immigrants who have experienced separation in New Zealand in the past ten years. I have applied for research funding for this project from the Families Commission of New Zealand.

I am inviting you to take part in this research. If you decide to participate, I will be interested in hearing about your experiences of separation and post-separation transition from the period leading up to the separation and the time since then. I will be interested in whatever aspects of your experience that you feel is meaningful or significant to you. For example, the reasons for separation, the effect of separation on you and your children, post-separation adjustment, the care arrangements for your children, and your perceptions of how cultural and other immigration-related factors affect separation and post-separation transition. I am also interested in your views of marital separation support services accessed and how to improve these services to separating Chinese immigrants.

I would like you to participate in this research, but you are under no obligation to take part. Participating in the research will involve an individual interview either with me or with a female interviewer, depending on your preference. Both of us are first-generation Chinese immigrants, so you can choose English or Chinese for the interview language. The interview will be up to two hours long and will include completion of a brief

Demographic and Family Background Information Form. It will be scheduled at a time which is suitable for you. The interview can take place at your home or at an office in the University of Auckland. To make sure you feel comfortable talking about your experience, I would like to meet you before the interview, so we can discuss the research and the contribution you will make to it. You would be free to withdraw from this process at any time without giving a reason. If you feel upset as the result of talking about your experience, I will be able to refer you to an appropriate counsellor.

For research purposes, the interview will be audio-recorded, although the recorder could be switched off at any time if you wish. Alternatively you can withdraw information in the seven days following the interview. After this period, the interview will be transcribed and a summary of the transcript will be sent to you for credibility checking. If the interview is conducted in Chinese, it will be translated into English after the credibility check. In accordance with relevant university policy, the audio recordings, transcripts and English translations will be stored in a locked cabinet on the University of Auckland premises for six years. After this time the audio recordings will be wiped clear and the transcripts and translations shredded.

All the information given in the interview will be treated as confidential. Apart from the researcher, all the other people (if any) involved in the research, including a female interviewer and a translator, will have to sign the Confidential Agreement to preserve the confidentiality of the data. However there are some exceptions to confidentiality. For example, if there are reasons to believe that you or another person is at risk of harm, an appropriate action will be taken to ensure the safety of those at risk. No information that could be used to identify you and your family will be included in the writing up of this research.

After the completion of the project, a general summary of the results will be available for those participants who are interested. If you would like a copy of the summary you will be given a chance to request one at the time of the interview.

In order to acknowledge your time and commitment and to cover any costs incurred, a small gift worth about $25 will be given to you at the end of the interview. Alternatively you can choose a petrol voucher of the same value.

Thank you very much for your time and for considering taking part in this research project. If you have any questions or wish to know more about the research, please feel free to contact me, my supervisor or the head of the department:

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao
Postal address: Department of Psychology,
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland
Phone: 373 7599 ext 84479
Email: yzha395@ec.auckland.ac.nz

My Supervisor: Claire Cartwright
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Head of the Department: Professor Fred Seymour
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Private Bag 92019, Auckland
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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact:

The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone: 09 373-7599 ext 87830.

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix D: Consent Form for Immigrants

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Consent Form (Immigrants)
(This consent form will be held for a period of six years)

Research Title: Marital Separation and Transition of Chinese Immigrants

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao, Doctoral student, University of Auckland

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for immigrants. I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited for the research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered properly. I have understood that participation in the research is voluntary.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that participation in the research will involve an interview for up to 2 hours.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself from the research at any time without giving a reason. I can also withdraw any information provided by me, without giving a reason, for up to 7 days following the interview.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and translated into English (if it is conducted in Chinese). I understand that I can ask for the voice recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- I understand that the interview may cause some temporary psychological discomfort, as a result of talking about my separation experience.
- I understand that a brief summary of the interview transcript will be sent to me for credibility checking within one month following the interview.
- I understand that the audio recording, transcription and translation (if the interview is conducted in Chinese) will be stored safely for a period of six years and then destroyed, in accordance with the protocols of the University of Auckland.
- I understand that a general summary of the results from this study will be sent to any participants who desire it.
- I wish to receive a summary of the results and have provided the researcher with a current mailing or e-mail address to which it can be sent Yes / No (Delete one)

Signed: Name: Date:
(Please print carefully)

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix E: Demographic and Family Background Information Form

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
The University of Auckland

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THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Demographic and Family Background Information Form

Date: _____

General Instruction: Please answer each question by circling the appropriate response number or by filling in the blank. Select the response that is most suitable for you. If a question does not directly apply to your situation, please briefly explain. The information obtained through this questionnaire will remain confidential. You can fill in this form in Chinese or English or in a mixture of them. Please respond to all the questions.

1. Name: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Age: _____
4. Religion: _____
5. Where were you born? _____
6. When did you immigrate to New Zealand? _____
7. Which country did you live in before immigration? _____
8. How many years have you lived in New Zealand? _____
9. How strongly do you identify yourself as a Chinese?
   A. Very strongly B. Strongly C. Moderately D. Weakly
10. Current English level:
    A. Elementary B. Intermediate C. Advanced D. Proficiency
11. Highest level of education before immigration: _____
12. Highest level of education of ex-spouse before immigration: _____
13. Highest level of education completed in New Zealand: _____
14. Occupation before immigration: _____
15. Occupation of your ex-spouse before immigration: _____
16. Current employment status:
    A. Full-time B. Part-time C. Training for job D. No job (go to Question 18)
17. Current occupation: _____
18. Income per year:
    A. under $10,000 B. $10,001 to $25,000 C. $25, 001 to $40, 000
    D. $40, 001 to $55, 000 E. $55,001 to $70,000 F. $70,001 above
19. Current living arrangement:
    A. Living alone B. With children C. With relatives
    D. Other (please specify _____)

20. Do you have extended family members, including parents and siblings, who live in New Zealand?
A. Yes (How many _____) B. No
21. Do you have relatives who live in New Zealand?
A. Yes (How many _____) B. No
22. Where did you get married?
A. In New Zealand B. In another country (which country: _____)
23. When did you get married? _____
24. When did you separate? _____
25. Who suggested the separation first?
A. myself B. my ex-spouse C. mutually
26. How long has it been since the separation from your spouse until this interview?
___ years ___ months
27. Have you received a divorce decree?
A. Yes B. No. (go to Question 29)
28. How long ago did you receive the divorce decree? _____ years ____ months ago
29. List the names of the children from this marriage and then complete the following table:

Child Name	Gender	Age at the separation	Custody Arrangement
			A. with me B. with ex-spouse
			A. with me B. with ex-spouse
			A. with me B. with ex-spouse
			A. with me B. with ex-spouse
			A. with me B. with ex-spouse

30. Did you receive any professional or community support service in relation to your marital separation?
A. Yes B. No
Please list all the agencies or organizations from which you received separation services:
_____
_____
_____

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix F: Interview Guide for Immigrants

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The University of Auckland

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THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Interview Guide (Immigrants)

Introduction

- Introducing the purpose of the study
- Filling in the Demographic and Family Background Form

Opening question and general instruction

- Could you tell me your experience of separation/divorce? You can take as much time as you need to describe this experience from the period leading up to the separation and the time since then. I am interested in the aspects of your experience that you feel are meaningful or significant to you.

Potential topics/areas to be explored (if they are relevant and have not been answered)

- Post-immigration settlement and adjustment
- Adjustment stress and coping
- The influence of post-migration adjustment and coping on your marital relationship
- Marital conflicts after immigration
- The process of decision-making in relation to separation/divorce
- Impacts of separation
- Childcare arrangements and post-separation parenting
- Co-parenting and the parental relationship with your ex-spouse
- Post-separation adjustment
- Family and social support
- Consequences of separation/divorce
- Cultural factors that may affect separation and post-separation adjustment
- Immigration factors that may affect separation and post-separation adjustment

Closing Question

- Which aspects of separation/divorce and post-separation adjustment are most distressful or beneficial?

Appendix G: Confidentiality Agreement for Research Assistants

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Confidentiality Agreement

Research Title: Marital Separation and Transition of Chinese Immigrants

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao, Doctoral student, University of Auckland

I, _____, have been invited/ hired to (specific job description for an interviewer, transcriber, translator or any other type of research assistant). I have been given an explanation of the confidential nature of the information from the research project. I have understood that all the research information shared with me is confidential.

I agree to:

- Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., voice recordings, disks, transcripts and translations) with anyone other than the researcher.
- Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., voice recordings, disks, transcripts and translations) secure while it is in my possession.
- Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., voice recordings, disks, transcripts and translations) to the researcher when I have completed the research tasks.
- Erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the researcher (e.g., information stored on memory stick or computer hard drive).

_____ _____ _____
(print name) (signature) (date)

Researcher(s)

_____ _____ _____
(print name) (signature) (date)

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix H: Participant Information Sheet for Professionals

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Participant Information Sheet (Professionals)

Research Title: Marital Separation and Transition of Chinese Immigrants

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao, Doctoral student, University of Auckland

To: Potential Participants

My name is Yunfei Zhao and I am student at the University of Auckland enrolled in the Doctor of Clinical Psychology Programme in the Department of Psychology. I am conducting this research project as part of my doctoral thesis research in which I will investigate the experiences of marital separation and post-separation transition of first-generation Chinese immigrants living in New Zealand. I will be conducting individual interviews with 20 to 30 first-generation Chinese immigrants who have separated in New Zealand in the past ten years. The purpose of my doctoral thesis research is to fill the knowledge gap about the marital separation experiences of Chinese immigrants, and hopefully provide some practical implications from it for separating Chinese immigrants and professionals who work with them.

For the present research, I am seeking to understand professionals' clinical experiences of marital separation of first-generation Chinese immigrants. I am inviting you to take part in this research as a professional who has specialist experience in working with separating Chinese immigrants. You could be a social worker, psychologist, family therapist, lawyer or other professionals who have practice with first-generation Chinese immigrants in relation to their separation. If you participate in this research, I will be interested in whatever you think is important in understanding the marital separation of first-generation Chinese immigrants, and in promoting professional and community support practice with them. I will also be interested in your opinions regarding the aspects of the immigrants' separation experiences that you think should be explored in the interviews with them.

I would like you to participate in this research, but you are under no obligation to take part. Participating in the research will involve an interview with me, the researcher. The interview could be conducted individually or in a group of 4 to 6 professionals, depending on which arrangement would be convenient for you. The individual interview will take about one hour and the focus group interview will be for up to two hours. Both of the interviews can be conducted in English or Chinese or in a mixture of them. It can take place at a venue to be chosen by you: either at your office or at an office in the University of Auckland.

The interview will be audio-recorded, although the recorder can be switched off at any time if you wish. Alternatively you can withdraw information in the seven days following the interview. After this period, the interview will be transcribed and a summary of the transcript will be sent to you for credibility checking. In accordance with the relevant university policy, the audio recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet on the University of Auckland premises for six years. After this time the audio recordings will be wiped clear and the transcripts shredded. All the information given in the interview will be treated as confidential. Apart from the researcher, all the other people, if any, involved in the research, such as a transcriber, will have to sign the Confidential Agreement to preserve the confidentiality of the data. No information that could be used to identify you will be included in any writing up of this research.

After completion of the project, a general summary of results will be available for those participants who are interested. If you would like a copy of the summary you will be given a chance to request one at the time of the interview.

Thank you very much for your time and for considering taking part in this research project. If you have any questions or wish to know more about the research, please feel free to contact me, my supervisor or the head of the department:

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao
Postal address: Department of Psychology,
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland
Phone: 373 7599 ext 84479
Email: yzha395@ec.auckland.ac.nz

My Supervisor: Claire Cartwright
Postal address: Department of Psychology,
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland
Phone: 373 7599 ext 82629
Email: c.cartwright@auckland.ac.nz

Head of the Department: Professor Fred Seymour
Postal address: Department of Psychology,
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland
Phone: 373 7599 ext 87830
Email: f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact:

The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone: 09 373-7599 ext 87830.

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix I: Consent Form for Professionals (Group)

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Tamaki Campus

The University of Auckland

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Consent Form (Professional Group)
(This consent form will be held for a period of six years)

Research Title: Marital Separation and Transition of Chinese Immigrants

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao, Doctoral student, University of Auckland

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for professionals. I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to take part in the research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered properly. I have understood that participation in the research is voluntary.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that participation in the research will involve a focus group interview for up to two hours.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and translated into English (if it is conducted in Chinese).
- I understand that I can not withdraw the information supplied from the audio recording, but I can ask the information provided by me to be excluded in the subsequent study up to two weeks following the interview.
- I understand that all the group participants will be asked to keep confidential the information obtained in the group.
- I understand that the confidentiality of the information provided by me, particularly with respect to my identity, can not be guaranteed, due to the nature of group participation.
- I understand that the audio recording, transcript and translation will be stored safely for a period of six years and then destroyed, in accordance with the protocols of the University of Auckland.
- I understand that that a general summary of the findings will be sent to any participants who desire it.

I wish to receive a summary of the findings and have provided the researcher with a current mailing or email address to which it can be sent. ……. YES / NO (Circle one.)

Signed:_____ Name:_____
Date:_____
(Signature) (Please print carefully)

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix J: Consent Form for Professionals (Individual)

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Tamaki Campus

The University of Auckland

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Consent Form (Individual Professionals)

(This consent form will be held for a period of six years)

Research Title: Marital Separation and Transition of Chinese Immigrants

Researcher: Yunfei Zhao, Doctoral student, University of Auckland

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for professionals. I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to take part in the research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered properly. I have understood that participation in the research is voluntary.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that participation in the research will involve an individual interview for about one hour.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and translated (if it is conducted in Chinese).
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. I can also withdraw any information provided by me at any time up to two weeks following the interview.
- I understand that the audio recording, transcript and translation will be stored safely for a period of six years and then destroyed, in accordance with the protocols of the University of Auckland.
- I understand that I can have my audiotape back after it is transcribed, and that a general summary of the findings will be sent to any participants who desire it.

I wish to receive my AUDIO-TAPE and/or a SUMMARY of the findings and have provided the researcher with a current mailing or email address to which it can be sent. ……YES / NO (Circle one. If you circle "YES", please indicate whether you wish to receive your audio-tape or the summary or both.)

Signed:_____ Name:_____
Date:_____
(Signature) (Please print carefully)

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 10/10/2007 for a period of 5 years from 10/10/2007 to 9/10/2012. Reference Number: 2007/311.

Appendix K: Interview Guide for Professionals

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Building 734, Tamaki Campus

200 Morrin Road, Glen Innes

Interview Guide (Professionals)

Introduction

- Professionals' self-introduction which will cover their interests in the marital separation of Chinese immigrants and approaches used in their practice
- Introducing the purpose of the study

Opening and follow-up questions

- Could you tell me your clinical experience or perceptions of the marital separation of Chinese immigrants? Which aspects of the separation of Chinese immigrants are most important or have you observed? Or what is most difficult for couples separating?

Potential topics/areas to be covered (if they are relevant and have not been answered)

- The influence of post-immigration adjustment and coping on marital relationships
- Impacts of separation
- Childcare arrangements and post-separation parenting
- Co-parenting and the parental relationship after separation
- Post-separation adjustment
- Family and social supports
- Consequences of separation/divorce
- Cultural factors that may affect separation and post-separation adjustment
- Immigration-related factors that may affect separation and post-separation adjustment

Closing Question

- Which aspects of Chinese immigrants' separation experiences do you think should be investigated in the interviews with them?

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