



THE HONG KONG
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

香港理工大學

Pao Yue-kong Library

包玉剛圖書館

Copyright Undertaking

This thesis is protected by copyright, with all rights reserved.

By reading and using the thesis, the reader understands and agrees to the following terms:

1. The reader will abide by the rules and legal ordinances governing copyright regarding the use of the thesis.
2. The reader will use the thesis for the purpose of research or private study only and not for distribution or further reproduction or any other purpose.
3. The reader agrees to indemnify and hold the University harmless from and against any loss, damage, cost, liability or expenses arising from copyright infringement or unauthorized usage.

IMPORTANT

If you have reasons to believe that any materials in this thesis are deemed not suitable to be distributed in this form, or a copyright owner having difficulty with the material being included in our database, please contact lbsys@polyu.edu.hk providing details. The Library will look into your claim and consider taking remedial action upon receipt of the written requests.

This thesis in electronic version is provided to the Library by the author. In the case where its contents is different from the printed version, the printed version shall prevail.

EXPERIENCES OF ADULT CHILDREN WITH
INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE
IN A CHINESE SOCIETY: SOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

SO WA NGAI

Ph.D

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

2014



The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Department of Applied Social Sciences

Experiences of Adult Children with Intergenerational Ambivalence
in a Chinese Society: Sources and Management

So Wa NGAI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2014

Certificate of Originality

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

So Wa NGAI

Signed
Name of Student

EXPERIENCES OF ADULT CHILDREN WITH INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE IN A CHINESE SOCIETY: SOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

ABSTRACT

This research explores the experiences of adult children in developing and managing their ambivalent thoughts and feelings toward their parents within the context of Hong Kong society. Adopting the intergenerational ambivalence model, this research focuses on the participants' perceptions of their relationships with their parents throughout the course of their lives. The life history approach that emphasizes the interplay of life stories and contexts, and treats context as a necessary reference point for the interpretive process, has guided the exploration process. Twenty participants (10 male and 10 female) and the researcher co-created the meaning-making process through forty face-to-face guided conversations based on the principles of the social constructionist collaborative approach. The findings support the ambivalent nature of the parent-adult child relationship. Six types of parent-child dynamics were identified as sources of the participants' negative sentiments in terms of their ambivalent experience: 1) son preference and parental unfairness, 2) parental psychological control, 3) parental marital discordance, 4) moderate to severe corporal punishment, 5) parental dependence, and 6) parental selfishness. Interestingly, these behaviors and attitudes do not generate ambivalence unless adult children identify the connection between these dynamics and their negative living experiences. Respect and appreciation for parents' devotion and sacrifice are identified as sources of the participants' positive sentiments in their ambivalent experience. Factors such as the Confucian concept of filial piety and religious beliefs act to prevent adult children from exiting their relationships with their parents. The contradictions in thoughts and attitudes, as well as feelings of being torn, created

psychological stress and interpersonal tension. Nonetheless, as social actors, adult children continuously manage their felt ambivalence by understanding, negotiating and transforming. Five stages are highlighted in analyzing participants' attempts to manage their intergenerational ambivalence: 1) potential ambivalence and felt ambivalence, 2) confrontation and persuasion, 3) disappointment and anger, 4) compassion and respect, and 5) acceptance and self-agency. This process of resolving intergenerational ambivalence provides an opportunity for adult children to make new meaning about their experiences with their parents, and it also facilitates their personal growth and sense of self-agency.

To my parents 魏永江 and 張秋霞,
for instilling in me a curiosity for the unknown

To my husband Kevin,
for encouraging me to conquer the unknown

To my children Maia and Nate,
for challenging me to embrace the unknown

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Long have I travelled this road, but here I am at the finish, feeling relieved, proud and thankful. There are so many people who have offered me much-needed support on a journey that could have been very lonely. First and foremost is a well-deserved thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Timothy Sim, for his persistence in challenging me to improve the quality of this thesis. He was always able to pinpoint the most crucial gaps in my work during different stages of the research process. Without his guidance and determination, this thesis would not have been anything like it is now. I would also like to thank my other two supervisors, Drs. Pauline Sung and Harlene Anderson for their guidance and encouragement as I moved from an idea to a full study. Pauline has not only provided support to my thesis, but she has also guided me in my career development. Her enthusiasm for social work and family therapy training is infectious. Harlene has been most inspiring. Her teaching and writing have transformed me personally and professionally since I met her seven years ago. It is such an honor to see her teaching students and interviewing clients. Her manner is always respectful, gentle yet powerful.

I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the 20 participants in this study. The interview process we co-created was intimate and meaningful. Our conversations were both thought and emotion provoking. Thanks to Lai Ying, Priscilla, Pai, Wendy, Ms. Cheung, Seung, Forward, Fanny, Ming, Jessica, Tak Shen, Matthew, Shing, Aon, Tom, Mr. Kwok, Fai, Charlie, Mr. Mak and Chi Wai. I will always be indebted for the generosity of their time and the sharing of their most intimate memories of their family lives.

I am very fortunate to work in a department full of supportive and generous colleagues. I have received encouragement and guidance from a great number of colleagues over the past seven years. They are Prof. James Lee, Dr. David Ip, Prof. Daniel Shek, Prof. Ming Sum Tsui, Dr. Juan Chen, Dr. Ben Ku, Dr. Denny Ho, and Dr. Ka Ming Wu. I am also thankful to Dr. Ben Wat and Dr. Phyllis Yan for their understanding and support while we worked together in a teaching team. Thanks to Dr. Raymond Tam and Dr. Zeno Leung for their sharing of their own research journey with me, and Dr. Stella Wong and Ms. Cecilia Tsang for their friendship and encouragement along the way. In addition, I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Ho Sik Ying for an enjoyable co-constructed consultation meeting before I started the writing process. Lastly, I would like to thank Ms. Joann Li for her excellent work in transcribing most of the interviews.

Finally, I want to express my deepest appreciation to my parents, Wing Kwong Ngai and Chau Ha Cheung, my brother, Cheung Hoi and my sister, So Lee. Without their love and belief in me, I would not have come this far. My kids, Maia and Nate, their innocent smiles that express pure love and joy, never failed to drive my stress away. To my husband, Kevin for his unwavering support in this endeavor. Not only was he there for me in so many ways including proofreading every word I have written, he continuously encouraged me when I doubted my ability to ever complete this project. I am very fortunate to have a life companion who treats me as a truly equal partner.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Chapter		Page
1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	14
	Definition of Generation	14
	Major Parent-Adult Child Intergenerational Relationship Theories	16
	Intergenerational Solidarity	16
	The Concept of Ambivalence and Intergenerational Ambivalence	20
	Ambivalence in Psychoanalytic Theories	20
	Sociological Ambivalence	23
	Intergenerational Ambivalence - Luescher and Pillemer (1998)	26
	Structural Ambivalence - Connidis and McMullin (2002)	28
	Intergenerational Ambivalence in Attachment Theory	32
	Intergenerational Ambivalence in Bowen Family Systems Theory	34
	Research on Intergenerational Ambivalence	38
	Measurement and Evidence	38
	Gender and Intergenerational Ambivalence	42
	Age and Intergenerational Ambivalence	44
	Sources of Intergenerational Ambivalence	45
	Managing Intergenerational Ambivalence	51
	Summary	57

3	THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR CONTEXT	61
	From Early 1960s to Late 1970s: The Backdrop of the Participants’ Childhood	63
	Traditional Chinese Family Relationships	64
	The Emergence of Industrialization	68
	Industrialization and Family Bonds	72
	From Early 1980s to Mid-1990s: The Backdrop of the Participants’ Young Adulthood	75
	The Blooming Economy and the Emergence of the “New Middle Class”	75
	From Mid-1990s to the Present Day: The Backdrop of the Formation and Raising of the Participants’ Own Families	78
	The Establishment of the World’s Financial Center and the Fluctuating Economic Environment	78
	The Political Unrest	81
	Contemporary Hong Kong Chinese Families	84
	Lack of Government Support for Families	87
	The Practice of Filial Piety and its Potential for Intergenerational Ambivalence	90
	Summary	93
4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	96
	The Choice of the Qualitative Research Method	96
	Epistemological Assumptions	100
	Methodology: Life History Research	103
	The Assumptions of Life History Research	104
	The Interplay of Life Stories and Contexts	104

The Nature of Interpretation	106
The Connections of Life Events	107
Method	109
Rigor and Trustworthiness	109
Research as a Reflexive Activity	110
The Story Behind my Choice of Research Topic	110
My Own Intergenerational Relationships	112
The Professional Skills I brought to the Research Process	115
Inviting Participants	117
Data Collection	120
Data Analysis	126
Phase 1: Familiarity with Data	128
Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes	129
Phase 3: Searching for Themes	131
Phase 4: Reviewing Themes	133
Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes	134
Phase 6: Producing the Report	135
Ethical Considerations	136
Autonomy in the Research Relationship	136
Non-maleficence in the Research Relationship	138
Beneficence in the Research Relationship	139
Justice in the Research Relationship	141
Summary	142

5	THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE	145
	Conceptualization of Intergenerational Ambivalence	146
	Sample Descriptions of Intergenerational Ambivalence	147
	Sources of Intergenerational Ambivalence: The Negatives	155
	1. Son Preference and Parental Unfairness	157
	Son Preference Perceived as Parental Rejection by Daughters	158
	Son Preference Leading to Unfairness in Resource Allocation	163
	2. Parental Psychological Control	170
	3. Parental Marital Discordance	176
	Volatile and Prolonged Discordance	177
	Trangling into Parental Conflicts	179
	Mistreatment of One Parent by the Other	181
	Gender	183
	4. Moderate to Severe Corporal Punishment	186
	5. Parental Dependence	188
	6. Parental Selfishness	194
	Sources of Intergenerational Ambivalence: The Positives and the Barriers against Exit	198
	Respect and Appreciation for Parents' Devotion and Sacrifice	198
	Filial Piety	200
	Religious Beliefs	204
	Summary	207

6	PROCESS AND STRATEGIES OF INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE MANAGEMENT	209
	1. Potential Ambivalence and Felt Ambivalence	211
	2. Confrontation and Persuasion	217
	3. Disappointment and Avoidance	223
	4. Respect and Compassion	230
	5. Acceptance and Self-agency	237
	Summary	244
7	DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	247
	Summary and Integration of Research Findings	248
	The Experience of Intergenerational Ambivalence	249
	Sources of Intergenerational Ambivalence: The Negatives	249
	Sources of Intergenerational Ambivalence: The Positives and the Barriers against Exit	258
	Process and Strategies of Intergenerational Ambivalence Management	260
	The Contextual Factors of Intergenerational Ambivalence	268
	Ambivalence Generated by the Inherent Nature of the Parent-child Relationship: Autonomy vs. Dependence	269
	Ambivalence Fostered by Structural Conditions: Gender and Cultural Practices in Times of Poverty	274
	The Perceived Connection between Own Living Conditions and Parental Behaviors in Intergenerational Ambivalence	279
	Clinical Implications	280
	The Interplay of the Interpersonal Dialogue and Intrapersonal Effort in Ambivalence Management	280

Culturally Sensitive Practice	282
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies	284
Concluding Remarks	286
References	288
List of Appendices	
Appendix 1	312
Appendix 2	313
Appendix 3	314
Appendix 4	315

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Parent-child relationships are typically lifelong and they persist after children leave their parents' houses to live on their own or to establish their own families. With an average life expectancy today exceeding 75, most individuals live over 40 of their adult years with at least one living parent (Vaupel, 2010; Watkins, Manken, & Bongaarts, 1987). Parent-adult child relationships go through several phases over the course of life. With each phase of this relationship, there are specific developmental tasks and challenges for both parties. For example, new parents are required to adapt to a lifestyle that best suits their new roles after their babies are born, whereas their infants have to acquire the sensory-motor skills and social knowledge needed to grow healthily. Throughout children's childhood and adolescence, parents accompany their children going through transitions and challenges relating to school life, friendships, interests and skills development, learning about romantic love, physical changes in puberty, and leaving school. In later years, parents and children find themselves in another transition phase when aging parents experience the ill-health of being old. Adult children face the demands of how to provide and look after their frail parents. Generally, it is beneficial both to parents and children individually and to the family as a whole if they sail through every phase with success (Lang, 2004).

At the last stage of the parent and child relationship, middle-aged children are occupied by many demanding tasks and responsibilities (Moen & Wethington, 1999).

Many of these developmental tasks interfere with each other, and some are even contradictory. For example, both working males and females often experience conflict of demand between family life and career development (Lang, 2004). Being confronted with the tasks of taking responsibility for their aging parents may cause adult children to feel torn between this and other demands that evolve from their own family and career commitments. Such contradictions of midlife have been characterized as the sandwich position of middle-aged adults (Halpern, 1994). A recent report titled “Feeling the squeeze: Asia’s Sandwich Generation” showed that one in five working-age Asians belongs to the sandwich generation, which refers to those middle-aged married individuals who are financially responsible for both their children and parents. All the 700 middle-aged middle-class male and female respondents were working very hard to cope with the competing demands of their parents and offspring. The respondents from Hong Kong were the most exhausted, with 53% indicated that they were “struggling”. However, despite the pressure, most of them expressed a strong commitment to provide the best education for their children and to fulfill their filial responsibilities (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010).

Much of the theorizing and research about normative parent-child relations focuses on the early stage of this dyad. Researchers then “seem to drop the relationship and not pick it up again until parents are old and the children are middle-aged” (Hagestad, 1981, p. 33). In addition, the primary research focus of this stage is on the relationship during non-normative demands such as when frail parents need intensive caregiving. Researchers seem to have ignored the normative part of the relationship between adult children and their parents (Barnett, Kibria, Baruch, & Pleck, 1991; Hagestad, 1987; Zarit

& Eggebeen, 2002). Moreover, most of the studies on caregiving are not based on any theories, but only on understanding and descriptions of the situation and recommendations for policies for the aging population (Hagestad, 1987; Zarit & Eggebeen, 2002). Nevertheless, while the vast amount of studies contribute to caregiving to frail parents, some other specific characteristics of parent-adult child relationship quality have also been investigated. These areas of studies include parent-adult child emotional closeness (Lawrence, Bennett, & Markides, 1992; Pruchno, Peters, Kleban, & Burant, 1994), value consensus (Roberts & Bengtson, 1990), frequency of contact (Frankel & Dewit, 1989), and supportive exchanges (Ikkink, Tilburg, & Knipscheer, 1999). The focus of other studies is on the potential negative aspects of the parent-adult child relationship that are related to violence, cutoff, conflict, stress and overprotection (Birditt, Fingerman, & Zarit, 2010; Fingerman & Hay, 2004; Pillemer & Suito, 1992; Suito, Pillemer, Keeton, & Robison, 1995; Suito, Sechrist, Gilligan, & Pillemer, 2011).

Two frameworks of conceptualizing parent-adult child relationship have emerged over the past five decades. The solidarity perspective was formulated in the 1970s and it explores intimate and positive relationship dynamics between adult children and their aging parents (Bengtson & Mangen, 1988; Rossi & Rossi, 1991; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). In the late 1990s, another direction was advocated with a view to fill the theoretical gaps of the solidarity perspective. This was named an intergenerational ambivalence perspective, which sheds new light into the dynamics of the intergenerational relationship by stressing the dual focus of the relationship, that is, the coexistence of both positive and negative emotions and attitudes between parents and child due to the inherited nature and structural contribution of this specific type of

relations (Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Luescher, 2004, 2012b; Luescher & Hoff, 2013; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998; Pillemer et al., 2007).

The solidarity model of intergenerational relationships builds on a tradition of empirical analysis, arguing that the parent-child relationship has not been disrupted by modernization as predicted in the beginning of the century. To the contrary, adult children do not only keep close contact with their parents, they also seek and provide emotional support from and for each other (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). In addition, they exchange tangible support and resources with each other (Eggebeen, 1995; Rossi & Rossi, 1991). Solidarity theory proposes that solidarity between older and younger generations within the family is a desirable and an adaptive strategy of coping with age-related challenges (Lang, 2004). A major criticism of the solidarity concepts is that they are overly normative and fail to see the reality of relational difficulties in the parent-adult child tie. In addition, the concept does not address the tension that may arise between parents and children when children are facing their inevitable developmental tasks of maintaining solidarity while at the same time seeking autonomy (Curran, 2002; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). Curran (2002) further suggested that intergenerational solidarity is not the process but the result of managing intergenerational ambivalence successfully.

The ambivalence perspective of the parent-child relationship was first introduced by Luescher and Pillemer in 1998, and it emphasizes both a psychological and a sociological level of ambivalence. Psychological ambivalence, originating in psychoanalytic theory, refers to one's contradictory and conflicting feelings toward the same person as the result of internal conflict in emotions and/or attitudes (Weigert, 1991). Sociological ambivalence was conceptualized as one's internal struggle as the result of

the demands imposed by contradictory norms and expectations in a particular social structure. These simultaneous experiences of incompatible values and expectations may create a sense of obligation, resulting in ambivalent attitudes and feelings (Merton & Barber, 1963). Willson (2006) conceptualized sociological ambivalence as “contradictory emotions and cognitions held toward people, social relations, and structures, with roots in structured social relations” (p. 236). Luescher and Pillemer (1998) offered a working definition of intergenerational ambivalence that includes both contradictions on a psychological level reflected in cognitions, emotions, and motivations and on a social level reflected in institutions and incompatible roles and norms, and contradictions. They defined intergenerational ambivalence as “contradictions in relationships between parents and adult offspring that cannot be reconciled” (p. 416).

Connidis and McMullin (2002) further developed the concept of sociological ambivalence by elaborating the power imbalance in interpersonal relationships, which is embedded in social structures. Additionally, they addressed that by emphasizing sociological ambivalence, individuals are seen as social actors who are more than their psychological feelings and states. Their framework encouraged “an exploration of how ambivalence is negotiated and why negotiations result in either relatively harmonious or relatively conflicted relationships in some cases at some times” (p. 559). They redefined interpersonal ambivalence in family as “structurally created contradictions that are experienced by individuals in their interaction with others” (p. 559). This definition situates the assessment of ambivalence at the level of the relationship. It also suggests that interpersonal ambivalence varies across relationships and, over time within the same relationship across social contexts (Curran, 2002). To make the definition easier to apply

when considering empirical support, Curran (2002) provided a working definition of ambivalence as “the simultaneous presence of both caring and uncaring feelings and behaviors in a relationship between two people at a moment in time, created by structural conditions in the sets of social relationships within which each member is situated” (p. 579). Furthermore, “the strategies that evolve for resolving ambivalence when family members interact with one another may result in relationships characterized by solidarity, conflict, or ongoing ambivalence” (Connidis & McMullin, 2002, p. 561).

Luescher and Lettke (2000) argued that the closeness and intimacy between parents and children is partly the result of the similarity of biological inheritance. However, as children grow older, they try to establish their own personal identity by distancing themselves from their parents to dilute the similarity between them and their parents. This individual developmental task inevitably creates ambivalence in both parents’ and children’s psychological dimension. This description, however, does not distinguish variations of relational quality among different parent-child relationships. This interpersonal dimension of ambivalence can be expanded using attachment theory and the concept of self-differentiation in Bowen family systems theory in the field of family therapy.

Bowlby (1969) defined attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (p. 194). Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues identified three major classifications of infant attachment behaviors based on mothers’ responsiveness to the emotional needs of their infants and the infants’ adaptive behaviors in their relations to their mothers (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, Waters, & Wall, 1978). While attachment behavior is most significant in early childhood, it is “held to characterize human beings

from the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 129). Merz et al. (2007) asserted that attachment theory regards intergenerational ambivalence as a “problematic pattern of interaction within a certain attachment relationship” (p.180). Attachment theory “integrates the ambivalence concept as it can be explained by complex emotional and affectional reactions according to negative experiences manifested on a level of internal representation” (Merz et al., 2007, p. 181). Ambivalence therefore is the result of an adaptation to a pattern of interaction which has made the individual view himself/herself as weak and needy, and attachment figures as inconsistent and unresponsive, and therefore, he or she needs to constantly remind the attachment figure of his/her need of attention and care (Kobak, Cole, Ferenz-Gillies, Fleming, & Gamble, 1993).

Differentiation of self, according to Bowen, is one’s ability to separate emotions from thinking, and the capability to separate self from others (Nichols & Schwartz, 2001). Bowen described differentiation of self as a continuum, from emotional fusion at one end to differentiation at the other. People who are closer to the emotional fusion side of the spectrum are more vulnerable to stress and anxiety and they often encounter interpersonal conflicts in their intimate relationships. People who are more differentiated, on the other hand, are able to maintain the position of self while simultaneously connecting with others (Gray, 2004). Bowen believed that complete differentiation is impossible for human beings (Bowen, 1978). Nonetheless, a relationship that encourages dialogue can enhance each other’s ability to continue the individual growing in the differentiation process (Karpel, 1976). Bowen did not use “ambivalence” as a formal construct in his theory formation, but some theorists and researchers have used “ambivalence” in their interpretation of his work. For example, Klugman (1977) stated that “the capacity to

recognize and tolerate, or own, ambivalence is an essential for the inner ownership of the self, for self-object differentiation” (p. 354). According to Bowen and the followers of his ideas, in order to achieve a dialogic or a more differentiated relationship with less ambivalence, adult children need to develop a sense of personal authority (Harvey & Bray, 1991). Personal authority refers to a more “peer-like intimacy in interactions with all persons, including parents, while maintaining an individuated stance” (Harvey & Bray, 1991, p. 300). People who have stronger personal authority are more able to maintain differentiation while feeling emotional intimacy in their relationships with others. Williamson (1981) argued that personal authority is achieved when adult children learn to renegotiate with parents based on mutual respect, personal choice and collaboration. Consequently, personal authority enhances one’s ability to better manage his/her ambivalence, which results in a more genuine and satisfying parent-child relationship.

I combined and synthesized the essence of both Luescher and Pillemer’s (1998) and Connidis and McMullin’s (2002) models, and used the attachment theory and Bowen theory to expand the interpersonal level of the parent-adult child tie to understand intergenerational ambivalence. The emphasis on historical and developmental patterns of parent-child relationships in the attachment theory and the concept of differentiation of self shaped the direction of this study. Ambivalence is an “ongoing feature of social relations that is negotiated over the life course; it varies not only across relationships but also within relationships over time and in varying circumstances” (Willson et al., 2006, p. 236). Finally, the wordings of Curran’s (2002) working definition were used in the formation of the ambivalence definition in this study. The intergenerational ambivalence, therefore, refers to the simultaneous presence of contradictory feelings and thoughts in a

relationship between parents and adult children at a moment in time, created both by the inherent nature of and the unique interaction patterns in the parent-child relationship and by structural conditions in the sets of social relationships within which parents and children are situated across the course of life (Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Curran, 2002; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). Based on this perspective, children may experience ambivalence when their intimate needs or autonomy desires are not fulfilled and honored in their early and ongoing relationships with their parents. In addition, ambivalence also occurs when children's attempts to exercise agency conflict with guidelines in the structure that discourage choices and specify normative behavior. Generation and gender are main structural determinants of ambivalence in the parent and adult-child relationship. In addition, cultural norms such as filial piety in the case of Chinese culture may also be significant structural determinants that guide parent-child relationship.

Research Questions

To contribute to the understanding of parent-adult child relationship, this research aims to build upon the current work done from the ambivalence framework with a view to filling some of the gaps of this theoretical perspective. I intended to explore the experiences of middle-aged individuals in developing and managing their intergenerational relationships, in particular their ambivalent feelings and thoughts toward their parents. I examined their perceptions regarding the development of their relationship history with their parents from birth to the present within the context of Hong Kong. The main research questions I worked with are:

- 1) Do middle-aged individuals experience ambivalence in their relationships

with their aging parents? If so, what is their description of the ambivalence in their relationships with their parents?

- 2) What are the pertinent sources of intergenerational ambivalence from the perspectives of middle-aged adults throughout their course of life?
- 3) What strategies do adult children use in processing their ambivalence toward their parents?

The participants in this research are middle-aged married Hong Kong Chinese men and women who are aged forty to fifty-five with at least one or two living parent(s) and one child in secondary school (age 12 to 18). I chose this age group in part because only at middle age do individuals achieve a maturity level that allows them to renegotiate relationships with their parents based on mutual respect and collaboration (Williamson, 1981). More importantly, adults of this age group and their parents belong to two different demographic, economic and historical cohorts. The participants, who were mostly in their 40s, grew up in a period when Hong Kong was going through an economic boom with rapid and vast import of Western entertainment, lifestyles and ideology. The participants' parents were in their late 60s and 70s and were born around the time of WWII in rural China when their hometowns struggled greatly economically and the main focus of ideology was predominately traditional Chinese values. The life experiences of these two generations, considering different economic, social and political contexts in Hong Kong at different moments in time, were drastically different. The cultural norms and beliefs have changed from a more traditional Confucian ideology to a combination of traditional and modern values and practices during this historical era. It is interesting to look into how these two generations negotiate both internally (their own

thoughts and emotions) and externally (with other involved parties in the family) with the intention of maintaining relational harmony. Other than the requirements of being born and growing up in Hong Kong in order to achieve certain amount of contextual unity, I had no other demographic requirements such as socio-economic class and religious groups. Potential participants without young children were excluded because existing research findings reported that child rearing is often a tension between middle-aged children and their parents (Clarke, Preston, Raksin, & Bengtson, 1999; Lou & Chi, 2008).

The research helps to generate new insights into our understanding on an understudied research area – intergenerational relationship between adult-children and their aging parents during normative period with attention given to the relationship history over the course of life. All of the studies, mostly quantitative, have identified co-existence of simultaneous positive and negative emotions and attitudes within adult children in their everyday experiences and during crisis moments such as provision of intensive caregiving to their aging parents. Little is known about how they deal with these ambivalent struggles (Lorenz-Meyer, 2004; Luescher, 2011, 2012a). Therefore, the first and foremost focus of the current research is to expand the consistent existing research findings that support the ambivalent nature of parent-child ties by looking into the sources of ambivalence and how adult children manage their ambivalence in their relationships with their parents. Secondly, because ambivalence implies an ongoing feature of parent-child relationship that is negotiated in varying circumstances over one's life course (Willson et al., 2006), this study adapts a life course approach that captures changes in the character of intergenerational ties over time, not only focusing on the characteristics of one relationship at a particular time.

Thirdly, existing studies do not adequately address the role of gender and the larger cultural context in the adult-children's coping with the ambivalence. Gender and the related cultural context were included in the analysis in this study (Luescher & Lettke, 2000; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). According to Lorenz-Meyer (2004), the analysis of personal and structural ambivalence is needed to consider the specific historical and cultural context – or what feminist scholars have defined as the “politics of location” (Rich, 1986).

Fourthly, in view of the paucity of qualitative studies in this domain (Rich, 1986), this research chooses a qualitative methodology to accomplish the research goals. To capture the complexity and the evolutionary nature of relationships, the life history approach, which is based on social constructionism, is employed. Managing ambivalence is a complicated process and it is unique to every individual. A good understanding of participants' experiences requires an appreciation and an in-depth understanding of the cultural context. To contrast the quantitative research design, a qualitative analysis offers ideographic explanations that would better understand the particular family forms resulting from complex negotiations (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002).

Lastly, most of the studies of intergenerational ambivalence have been done in Europe and the United States. This model of conceptualizing and studying parent-adult child relationship has been adapted by two research students studying parent-adult children relationship in Chinese societies (Guo, 2011; Yan, 2005). Nonetheless, both of these studies investigated the experiences of elderly parents. Therefore, this study is the first attempt to understand the ambivalence of middle-aged children in their interactions

with their parents in a Chinese society. This contributes to the understanding of sociological ambivalence, which looks into the culture aspect of the ambivalence.

Structure of the Thesis

The main focus of this thesis is on the experience of middle-aged individuals in developing and managing their ambivalent feelings and thoughts in their relationships with their parents. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the various bodies of literature as they apply to the study. Chapter 2 is the literature review chapter which presents the major parent-adult child intergenerational relationship theories including the origin and development of intergenerational ambivalence theory. Additionally, this chapter also covers existing research on various aspects of intergenerational ambivalence. Chapter 3 provides contextual information as a reference point in understanding the participants' and their family experiences. The focus is on describing how the city of Hong Kong has evolved since the 1960s-the decade in which the participants were born. Chapter 4 is the research methodology chapter which details the perspective of the study as well as the process. Issues of ethics are also stressed. Chapter 5 and 6 present the findings of the study. Chapter 5 illustrates the conceptualization and major sources of intergenerational ambivalence from the perspectives of adult children. Chapter 6 captures a process of five stages and various strategies adult children adopted in managing their ambivalence toward their parents. The concluding chapter (chapter 7) offers discussion and implication of this study. Other than major findings along with discussions, several significant findings are highlighted.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter first provides a definition for the term “generation” used in this study. It is then followed by a review of the major theories that lead to an understudied phenomenon – the ambivalence in parent-adult child relationship. The theory review describes the intergenerational solidarity theory and its criticisms. After that, the introduction of the intergenerational ambivalence framework and how ambivalence is described in different domains, such as in psychoanalysis, sociology, psychology (attachment theory) and family therapy (Bowen theory) is presented. Subsequently, a critical examination on the research studies done about intergenerational ambivalence including measurement and evidence, gender, age, sources and management is delineated.

Definition of Generation

The notion of generation has been defined in at least four ways depending on the conceptualization needs of the study. Firstly, demographers define generation as a cohort that is “a unit of developmental analysis founded on birth year or years” (Scabini & Marta, 2006, p. 82). The time range of a cohort can be from one to over thirty years depending on how the term as a variable is defined (Elder & Caspi, 1990). Secondly, economists refer to generation as a group of individuals who have similar styles or preferences of consumption due to similar experiences living in a historical period. In this case, “youth”, “adults” and “the elderly” are often captured as the three generations.

Thirdly, historians define a generation as including a collection of individuals who have been through some same significant historical and social events. Consequently, an individual fits into a single generation for his or her whole life. Lastly, genealogists define generation as a stage in a sequence of natural descent, such as grandparents, parents, and grandchildren, who comprise three generations (Scabini & Marta, 2006).

Bengtson, Mangen, and Landry (1984) suggested that “generation” and “cohort” should not be used interchangeably. The term generation should only be used to represent role status within a family structure as it is defined by genealogists. The term cohort may only refer to people born within a range of years who grow together through the same time periods. Based on this differentiation, they proposed a new relational-intergeneration perspective for understanding how relations between the generations evolve, which combines the concepts of generation and cohort (Bengtson et al., 1984). In this conceptualization, generation is defined as: “the social relationship that binds those who share the same location in the family lineage with respect to the manner in which this location is treated by society through the social spheres that mediate these relationships inside the family” (Scabini & Marta, 2006, p. 83). According to this perspective, “the definition of generation emerges as the synthesis between the familial sphere and the social sphere and allows us to locate generations in the complex dynamics. Analyzing intergenerational relationships from this perspective means taking into account the bonds between family and society” (Scabini & Marta, 2006, p. 83). This relational-intergeneration perspective for the definition of “generation” is used in this study.

Major Parent-Adult Child Intergenerational Relationship Theories

Intergenerational Solidarity

Research regarding intergenerational relations has had an ongoing debate about the decline of family unification versus the strong intergenerational solidarity in North America and Europe for the past seventy years (Hammarstrom, 2005). The family studies in sociology for the most part focused on the possible disaggregation of families due to industrialization and the impact of “generation gap” between parents and children in the 1940s and 1950s (Bengtson, Rosenthal, & Burton, 1996; Lynott & Roberts, 1997). During the 1960s and early 1970s, the debate became heated between two groups of sociologists. One group supported the “generation gap” explanation by focusing discussions on the disintegration of cohorts within society, while another group studied family lineage and proposed that the “generation gap” was only an illusion (Lynott & Roberts, 1997). The study conducted by Bengtson and Kuypers (1971) supported the second view by identifying that multigenerational family members perceived the lineage gap to be much smaller than the cohort gap. In addition, social gerontologists also rejected the general assumption of the decline of the family functions and integration (Bengtson et al., 1996; Shanas, 1979; Shanas et al., 1968).

In the midst of all these debates, Bengtson and colleagues initiated the University of Southern California Longitudinal Study of Three-Generation Families. They created a construct of solidarity for the purpose of understanding the relationships between generations within families (Bengtson & Black, 1973). This intergenerational solidarity theory is based on the solidarity theory formulated by the 19th century French sociologist, Emile Durkheim (Bengtson, Cutler, Mangen, & Marshall, 1985). Solidarity, according to

Durkheim, “is a union of interests or purposes or sympathies among members of a group” (Merz, Schuengel, & Schulze, 2007, p. 176). Solidarity, when it was first proposed, was mainly on a societal macro level, and it was considered a moral standard that encourages the solidity and integration of society (Wagner, 2001). Durkheim's focus on the macro level has led to discussion associated with the meso- and micro- (family/ individual) level for the past several decades in the discipline of sociology (Merz et al., 2007). As a result, conceptualizations of the concept have become multidimensional and complex (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997).

The term solidarity emphasizes harmony rather than conflict and ambivalence (Marshall, Matthews, & Rosenthal, 1993). Intergenerational solidarity, therefore, refers to the positive dimensions of and the absence of conflict between generations (Bengtson et al., 1996). It is a “classification scheme that systematically identifies the building blocks of intergenerational relations as the core elements of sentiment, structure, and behavior” (Bengtson et al., 2002, p.572). It also characterizes “the behavioral and emotional dimensions of interaction, cohesion, sentiment, and support” (Bengtson, 2001, p.8) between generations over the course of life.

Intergenerational solidarity in its matured state is a multidimensional construct that is defined into six conceptual dimensions that are related to different relational aspects: 1) Affectional solidarity (feelings of emotional closeness and intimacy between intergenerational family members); 2) Association solidarity (the nature and frequency of contact and joint activities between intergenerational family members); 3) Consensual solidarity (agreement in values, ideas and lifestyle orientations between generations); 4) Functional solidarity (exchanges of tangible and emotional support across generations);

5) Normative solidarity (beliefs of parental and filial obligations of family members from each generation); and 6) Structural solidarity (geographic proximity that either limits or increases interaction between intergenerational family members) (Bengtson, 2001; Bengtson & Mangen, 1988; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997).

The solidarity survey includes questions answered by measurement of a Likert scale with the higher scores indicating higher intergenerational solidarity. Bengtson and colleagues provided the theoretical rationale for these six dimensions and the satisfactoriness of their measurement in quantitative research (Roberts & Bengtson, 1990; Roberts, Richards, & Bengtson, 1991; Silverstein, Parrott, & Bengtson, 1995). The solidarity model has also been supported by various research groups internationally (Amato & Booth, 1997; M.P. Atkinson, Kivett, & Campbell, 1986; Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1994; Markides & Krause, 1985; Rossi & Rossi, 1991; Starrels, Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, & Yamada, 1995; Szydlik, 2008). Conversely, there were also studies that showed little or no support for the model (M.P. Atkinson et al., 1986; Hammarstrom, 2005; Sechrist, 2008).

Due to the dominance of the solidarity model utilized by intergenerational researchers, investigations and debates regarding its conceptualization and validity were initiated. For example, Pyke (1996) acknowledged that the families studied as samples in their theory formulation were mostly White, and therefore, further analyses were required to understand intergenerational solidarity in the contexts of other ethnic groups. In addition, almost all of the studies investigating intergenerational solidarity are quantitative, employing a survey approach. This approach is criticized for its simplification of the complicated intergenerational dynamics. Furthermore, Marshall

(1993) proposed that family solidarity should not be taken as a given when understanding parent-adult child relationships, as the dimensions of the concept of solidarity do not look at the negative and conflicting aspects of the intergenerational relationship. Along the same lines, Szydlik (2008) urged that one should not idealize intergenerational solidarity because all dimensions of the construct come with potential conflict and trouble for both generations. For instance, too close a relationship between parent and child can hinder the child's autonomy and development. In addition, too close a relationship creates feelings of inadequacy and resentment and/or overt and covert conflicts between parent and child (Bowen & Kerr, 1988). Therefore, intergenerational solidarity only describes an incomplete story when it addresses emotional closeness, tangible support and regular contacts (Szydlik, 2008).

There is also an argument that data collected by questionnaires from aging parents are challenged in its validity because older people tend to downplay the disharmony in their relationships with their adult children (Hagestad, 1987). Consequently, the literature in this area of study generally presents a picture of cohesion, harmony, and mutual support. This description of the non-existence of conflict does not reflect the reality that negative aspects are inevitable even in mutually satisfying relationships (Birditt, Miller, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2009). Connidis and McMullin (2002) suggested that “solidarity is perhaps most accurately seen as a concept that describes a possible outcome of negotiated relationships rather than as a concept that promotes the examination of why and how family relationships are negotiated – the action of family members” (p. 560). Consequently, the solidarity model falls short if we want to understand the complex processes and attributions of family relationships.

The Concept of Ambivalence and Intergenerational Ambivalence

Ambivalence in psychoanalytic theories.

In the 1910s, the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler first introduced ambivalence as the psychiatric diagnosis of “negativism”, and classified it as one of the symptoms of schizophrenia (Lorenz-Meyer, 2001; Luescher, 2004; Merton & Barber, 1963). Bleuler conceptualized three kinds of ambivalence: the emotional (or affective) kind, in which the same person provokes both positive and negative feelings; the voluntary (or conative) kind, in which opposite desires lead to confusing and indecisive behaviors; and the intellectual (or cognitive) kind, in which one struggles with conflicting thoughts and ideas (Merton & Barber, 1963). Bleuler suggested that ambivalent affect, conations, and cognitions are part of everyday normal experiences (Luescher, 2004). He also emphasized that these three types of ambivalence are intertwined, with emotional ambivalence causing the most stress and pathological responses (Sincoff, 1992). In addition, Bleuler believed that the inability to cope with ambivalence, rather than ambivalence itself, is what triggers psychotic symptoms. Later, his son, Manfred Bleuler, re-emphasized that ambivalence is a mental state inherent in the human existence (Luescher, 2004).

Freud adopted the concept of ambivalence soon after Bleuler published his work. Freud was deeply aware of the existence of ambivalence experiences in human relations. However, in contrast to Bleuler, Freud classified ambivalence to mainly feelings, exclusive of thoughts and actions. In addition, he restricted the object of ambivalence to only people, exclusive of experience and ideas (Sincoff, 1992). Throughout his conceptualization of various psychoanalytical theories, Freud drew on the concept of

ambivalence in the theory of transference, the theory of Oedipus complex, the work on mass psychology and ego analysis, the fundamental theory of “drives”, and the juxtaposition of “eros” (love) and “thanatos” (death) (Luescher, 2004). Even though Freud used the term ambivalence in various ideas and contexts, he consistently defined ambivalence as “feelings of love and hate directed toward the same person at the same time” (Sincoff, 1992, p. 48). Along the same lines as Bleuler, Freud believed that the difference between “normal” and “neurotic” ambivalence is the intensity and quantity of the impulses/drives that co-exist within the individual. The prolonged intense conflicting feelings of love and hate are kept hold of by the psychic domain of unconsciousness. When unconsciousness cannot hold excessive ambivalent feelings, neurotic symptoms surface in order to restrain harmful behaviors and emotions that might cause destruction in interpersonal relationships. Therefore, according to Freud, extreme concern and anxiety about the welfare of the other person in a close relationship serves a function to repress feelings of resentment and aggression (Lorenz-Meyer, 2001). It is necessary to point out that ambivalence is not the same as conflict. Rather, ambivalence is a type of conflict that is inflicted by the existence and contrast of both positive and negative poles (Sincoff, 1990).

Freud discussed extensively ambivalent feelings in parent-child relationships. According to him, cultural norms and expectations often intensify ambivalence in intergenerational relationships. For example, societal ideals project a unified image, which implies an absence of negativity in parent-child relationships. This projection, however, contradicts the inherent ambivalent nature of these of relations. In order to meet cultural expectations, a child represses his/her negative feelings toward his/her parents.

This inability to recognize and accept conflicting emotions toward parents consequently further augments the child's ambivalent feelings (as cited in Lorenz-Meyer, 2001). He also argued that ambivalence is most prominent between the same-sex parent and child dyad. Freud further explained that in a patriarchal society, the social status of a mother can be enhanced by giving birth to a son, therefore, according to him, the mother-son relationship as the most likely ambivalence-free of all family relationships (as cited in Lorenz-Meyer, 2001).

Other psychoanalytic theorists further developed the concept of ambivalence. Melanie Klein expanded on the idea of simultaneous irreconcilable emotions and proposed that ambivalence is the incapability to tolerate these opposing and ambiguous emotions, and can result in psychic disintegration (Sincoff, 1990). Some psychoanalytic therapists believed that the capacity to manage ambivalence indicates healthy psychological and emotional development of an individual. Being able to integrate positive and negative feelings toward significant others in life facilitates an individual to maintain constructive and satisfying personal relationships in different domains of their lives. To the contrary, failing to manage ambivalent feelings may result in "identity diffusion", "affective instability" and the use of various primitive defenses in interpersonal relationships, all of which are characteristics of borderline personality organization (Kernberg, Selzer, Koenigsberg, Carr, & Appelbaum, 1989).

In conclusion, ambivalence – of being pulled in psychologically opposed directions – according to psychoanalysts, resides in every individual and it is inherent in a range of human existence and interactions. Thus, functional individuals can tolerate and manage the love and hate emotions toward his/her closest ones in everyday life situations.

This type of psychological maturity may therefore generalize to other interpersonal relationships. Ambivalence in its excessive and irreconcilable form can lead to neurotic symptoms. To work through this psychological dilemma, one can be helped to process and tolerate these conflicting emotions through psychoanalytical work in which one comes to an understanding of oneself and a more objective assessment of the significant others. Furthermore, one has to learn to bear individual responsibility and to draw necessary boundaries between oneself and one's parents (Parker, 1995).

Sociological ambivalence.

As noted earlier, Freud touched upon some social and cultural factors that contribute to the experience of ambivalence. Nevertheless, the structure of social relations was never the focus in the psychological analysis of ambivalence (Lorenz-Meyer, 2001). Different from the psychological orientation, the sociological perspective focuses on the ways in which ambivalence stems from the structure of social status and roles. Sociological orientation investigates the process that affects the possibility of ambivalence coming up in a particular kind of social structure (Merton & Barber, 1963). Nonetheless, the sociological inquiry into ambivalence does not replace the psychological exploration, but complements it. Merton and Barber (1963) argued that the focus on the psychological aspects of ambivalence during the first half of the 20th century hindered the development of a sociological aspect of ambivalence. They proposed that a more systemic drawn psycho-social theory of ambivalence is more appropriate because these two orientations are interrelated.

According to Merton and Barber (1963), while the psychological concept of ambivalence refers to the individual's simultaneous feelings of love and hate toward the same person, the sociological theory of ambivalence refers to "incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior assigned to a status or to a set of statuses in a society" (Coser, 1966, pp. 94-95). Coser (1966) built on Merton and Barber's argument and stated that sociological ambivalence is "built into the structure of status and roles" (p. 175). Put simply, sociological ambivalence is defined as a conflict between roles and norms, and it is brought on by contradictory expectations that are built into the societal level as well as the individual level (Weigert, 1991). Merton and Barber (1963) asserted that sociological ambivalence can be one major source of psychological ambivalence when an individual develops contradictory feelings, beliefs and behaviors due to contradictory attitudes and actions embedded in his/her social roles and statuses. Connidis and McMullin (2002) further argued that:

Managing ambivalence in daily life shapes the very social structures that produce ambivalence in the first place, through either reproduction of the existing order or its transformation. Thus, a critical, sociological conception of ambivalence bridges social structure and individual lives by emphasizing the tensions between them, as individuals attempt to meet their own, their families, and society's contradictory demands and expectations (p. 565).

Luescher and Pillemer (1998) proposed that even though the term ambivalence is not used in postmodernist theory and feminist theory, both of these theories highlighted the potential for sociological ambivalence. The core ideas of postmodern and feminist perspectives challenge dualistic thinking, and they explore contradiction and paradox in

social and cultural structures. For example, the postmodern perspective argues that societal and cultural guidelines about how key human relationships, such as intergenerational relationships, should be carried out have almost disappeared due to the rapid and dramatic change of the family and societal structure in contemporary society. In like manner, Stacey (1990) described contemporary family relationships as “diverse, fluid, and unresolved” (p. 17). Consequently, people often feel confused and uncertain about how to approach various social and family relations (Denzin, 1991; Gergen, 1991). In addition, postmodern ideas emphasize the intensification of internal contradictions in society. Individuals nowadays are confronted with contradictory ideas and expectations on a wider range of issues than ever before. For example, van der Loo and van Reijen (1992) noted that fundamental contradictions have emerged between personal autonomy and community obligations and between a wish for individual freedom and a concurrent need for support from institutions (cited in Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). Individuals in families are clearly included in such delineation.

Feminist theory is another perspective related to the concept of ambivalence in the study of family relations. Feminist scholars have seriously challenged the assumption that solidarity exists among all members of a family. They examined a variety of issues, such as reproductive control, household division of labor and parenthood, in order to present a picture of ambivalent conflicts in contemporary families (Ferree, 1990; Thorne, 1992). According to Luescher and Pillemer (1998), “when the notion of an undifferentiated family interest and the conventional view of family unity are challenged, internal contradictions can take center stage” (p. 416). Exploring “internal contradictions”, feminist scholars identified the ambivalence built into women's division of labor of

domestic duties. These duties are both exhausting and disliked, but they are also regarded as an expression of love and connection with family members (DeVault, 1991; Thorne, 1992). In the same way, feminist researchers also illuminated contradictions in women's caring responsibilities. For example, caring for children or aging parents can be viewed as loving, meaningful, and satisfying. At the same time, because caregiving is taken as part of the rigid structure of women's family roles, it can be oppressive to women's other development. Caring, giving women can be overwhelmed by demanding caring responsibilities and they can be isolated from the larger society (Abel & Nelson, 1990). Thus, feminist research argues that sociological ambivalence exists in family relations, particularly for women's roles and responsibilities in the family.

Intergenerational ambivalence - Luescher and Pillemer (1998).

To address the “lack of theoretical work that allows for the integration of research findings” and “a tendency to interpret intergenerational relationships within limited frameworks that emphasize either intergenerational solidarity or conflict” (p. 413), Luescher and Pillemer proposed an “intergenerational ambivalence” model. They claimed that ambivalence is more useful and closer to the nature of the parent-adult relationship than the existing frameworks of solidarity and conflict. They explained that:

The study of parent-child relationships in later life must move beyond this love-hate relationship. The vacillation between images of mistreatment and abandonment, on the one hand, and comforting images of solidarity, on the other hand, are not two sides of an academic argument that will ultimately be resolved in favor of one viewpoint. Rather, we hold that societies and the individuals within

in them are ambivalent about relationships between parents and child in adulthood (p. 414).

Connidis and McMullin (2002) also argued that “a key contribution of ambivalence lies in its potential to direct our attention to this dialectical combination and away from normative treatments of both social structure and role conflict” (p.562).

Luescher and Pillemer (1998) explained that they were not providing a formal theory of intergenerational ambivalence; rather they were proposing a “general orientation” for the concept. Therefore, their model is mainly descriptive, providing the argument for ambivalence and the theoretical and methodological fundament for the framework (Curran, 2002). In their article, Luescher and Pillemer (1998) presented a working definition of intergenerational ambivalence as including both contradictions on a social level reflected in institutions and incompatible roles and norms, and contradictions on a personal/psychological level reflected in cognitions, emotions, and motivations. They defined intergenerational ambivalence as “contradictions in relationships between parents and adult offspring that cannot be reconciled” (p. 416). For example, ambivalence is present when an adult child holds both positive and negative perceptions toward his/her interactions with his/her parents; consequently, he/she feels both affection and resentment toward his/her aging parents. Intergenerational ambivalences “are not to be seen as negative or pathological but, rather, as part of the fundamental social task of linking the lives of successive generations” (Luescher, 2002, p. 591).

Luescher and Pillemer (1998) proposed that three areas of parent-child relationships are likely to trigger ambivalence. The first area is dependence versus autonomy, which is embedded in the paradox of parent and child preferring to be close to

each other emotionally while still maintaining self-sufficiency and independence. The second area is contradictory societal norms and values regarding intergenerational relationships. The third aspect is solidarity. Wherever intergenerational solidarity exists, ambivalence is also likely to happen.

Luescher and Pillemer (1998) also proposed modifications to current research designs on intergenerational relationships. They argued that survey questions on family solidarity limit the possibilities of observing ambivalence through scaling measures about intergenerational behaviors (e.g. living proximity, visits, exchanges of resources) and emotions (e.g. distant or conflicting vs. close or intimate). In addition, they suggested, for better assessment, multiple evaluation tools, and combined methods (quantitative and qualitative). Further, they proposed a life course approach that also evaluates changes in intergenerational relationships over time, not just an assessment of the characterizations of any one intergenerational relationship at a particular stage. Lastly, they suggested that future research needs to analyze variation in intergenerational ambivalence in regards to ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. The psychological impact of ambivalence on well-being also needs to be further studied.

Structural ambivalence - Connidis and McMullin (2002).

Luescher and Pillemer did not provide directions about how we can go about understanding the nature and consequences of ambivalence in family relations. Connidis and McMullin (2002) further developed the concept of sociological ambivalence in family relations with an aim of providing a framework for researching into the specific strategies individuals use to design their own social worlds. The contribution of Connidis

and McMullin's framework is to locate ambivalence at the level of the relationship instead of at the level of the individual as in the prior conceptualization of ambivalence.

Ambivalence proposed by Connidis and McMullin is a linking concept between individual agency and social structures. Their framework of ambivalence is based on critical theory (e.g. Marxism, feminism, Frankfurt school) that provides four basic principles. Firstly, social structures impose social rules that give certain groups of people privileges based on gender, age, race, class etc. Secondly, even though individuals are under constraints of social rules, they often actively create their own social worlds. Thirdly, individuals attempt to design their own lives by negotiating through interaction with others. Lastly, there are normally more conflicting interests than consensus in the different realms of society, and therefore the ambivalence in families is a nature-patterned feature of relationships. Social structures may restrain behaviors, but changes can still be initiated by individual social actors. In addition, their model has also created integration between the social processes in families and the social processes in other spheres of society. These linked processes generate ambivalence or contradictory behaviors or feelings toward others. Therefore, to explore how individuals deal with conflicting roles and psychological feelings, a researcher needs to investigate at both the individual level and the social structures that he/she is in. Therefore:

The question is not one of either individual strain or structural pressures but a dialectical combination of both, such that the wider structural tensions reach into, shape and condition the individual responses, which in their turn structure and shape the domestic situation (Morgan, 1985, p. 231).

In their article, Connidis and McMullin (2002) used the balance of work and

family in relation to partnerships as an example to illustrate their concepts. Many researchers reported that women are likely to express more ambivalence over work and family than men. The two authors suggested that this ambivalence is created by the condition of social structures, where men can use paid employment to excuse themselves from caring responsibilities while women cannot. To resolve the structural ambivalence, women not only have to choose among various roles that put demands on them, they also need to redefine and negotiate their roles and responsibilities. For instance, working mothers may place either family or work as a higher priority or they may strive to balance the two by negotiating the conventional expectations and demands related to each role. In this case, managing and resolving ambivalence can be seen as a process of creating change. Consequently, Connidis and McMullin (2002) contradicted Luescher and Pillemer (1998)'s definition about ambivalence as "contradictions in relationships between parents and adult offspring that cannot be reconciled" (p. 416), stating that "social actors regularly attempt to reconcile ambivalence or risk living in a constant state of inaction" (p. 563). Even though an individual may accept that ambivalence may not be reconciled permanently, they still initiate a continuous effort for temporary resolution. Struggling with ambivalence involves decision-making and action-taking, including the decision to take no action.

Ambivalence as proposed by Connidis and McMullin (2002) "emphasizes the interplay of individual action, human agency, and structured social relations" (p. 563). In understanding the challenge of managing family relationships, this approach induces "an examination of the processes involved in family relations as well as the reciprocal links between individual lives and the social structure, and between action and change" (p.564).

They encouraged researchers to explore the strategies that individuals use to manage or resolve ambivalence in their on-going family relationships and further stated that the strategies that family members use to deal with ambivalences may result in relationships categorized as solidarity, conflict, or unresolved ambivalence. They suggested that this type of exploration should focus on family processes rather than phenomena of the family as a static entity.

Mertz and colleagues (2007) gave a conclusion for the development and argument of interpersonal and intergenerational ambivalence in sociological denomination. They highlighted ambivalence initially mainly focusing on “incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs and behavior” (Merton & Barber, 1963, p. 94). Luescher and Pillemer (1998) then suggested intergenerational ambivalence as a new conceptual frame for the relationship dynamics between parents and adult children. Ambivalence is therefore:

Developed as structurally created contradictors that manifest in interaction. It is a useful concept when incorporated into a theoretical framework that views social structures as structured social relations, and individuals as actors who exercise agency as they negotiate intergenerational relationships within the constraints of social structure (Mertz et al., 2007, p.180).

Intergenerational ambivalence in attachment theory.

John Bowlby, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, formulated attachment theory based on concepts from biology, ethology, and psychoanalysis in the 1960s (Merz et al., 2007). He defined attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human

beings" (p. 194). While attachment behavior is most significant in early childhood, it is also "held to characterize human being from the cradle to the grave" (Bowlby, 1979, p. 129). Bowlby explained that individuals gradually build up beliefs and expectations regarding attachment from infancy to adolescence based on their experiences in their relationships with their care givers. People who have experienced a positive model of attachment perceive themselves worthy of care and love. They have a positive model of others and are able to maintain intimacy with others over the life course (Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004). They manage to maintain a balance between being autonomous and having satisfying interdependent relationships with others (Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004).

Mary Ainsworth, John Bowlby's colleague, created the famous "Strange Situation" experiment in her exploration of the interplay of attachment styles and behavioral outcomes of infants of 12 to 18 months old (Ainsworth et al., 1978). This research not only put the basic concepts of attachment theory into empirical tests, but also her findings provided insights into individual differences in attachment styles (Soares & Silva, 1998). The three major classifications of infant attachment behaviors were based on mothers' responsiveness to the emotional needs of their infants. The infants' adaptive behaviors in their relations to their mothers' responsiveness include secure attachment, anxious-avoidant attachment and anxious-ambivalent attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Attachment relationships between aging parents and their adult children have not been explored as much as have mother-infancy and mother-early childhood relationships. From an attachment perspective, aging parent-adult relationships are interesting because they involve the same people who have been through various life stages. At the start,

children are completely vulnerable and in need for parents' care for survival, and during the later stages of the life course, parents are in need of practical care from their children. There have been constant new experiences for both parties throughout the development of their relationship. According to attachment theory, if these new experiences become stressful, the attachment systems of both parties might be activated simultaneously (Bradley & Cafferty, 2001).

Studies showed that if adult children and their aged parents have internal representations of secure attachment relationships, the shift from parents being the all-able supporters to being needy of care from their children is less likely to lead to intensive problems due to the flexibility and balance in a secure attachment (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). However, if early attachment was experienced as insecure and ambivalent, adult children and their parents may face challenges in coping with the caring demands by aged parents (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2004). Early memory and feelings of sadness and resentment may be reactivated. Adult children may feel intensive conflicting feelings about their role as caretakers to their parents (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). They may try to fight off those negative emotions by avoiding their needy parents, and deny their parents' frail condition. However, they may still feel the filial obligation of caring for their frail parents because of the social norm of the expectations of adult children's filial responsibility to their aging parents (Merz et al., 2007). This inconsistency leads to ambivalent feelings toward the parents and cause even more caregiver burden and stress. However, if adult children cope with this stress and ambivalence creatively, this time can be an opportunity to mend the damaged connection and rebuild a relationship on more secure terms (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2004).

Mertz and colleagues (2007) asserted that attachment theory regards intergenerational ambivalence as a “problematic pattern of interaction within a certain attachment relationship” (p.180). Attachment theory “integrates the ambivalence concept as it can be explained by complex emotional and affectional reactions according to negative experiences manifested on a level of internal representation” (Merz et al., 2007, p. 181). Ambivalence therefore is generated by a pattern of interaction in which the individual views himself/herself as needy and weak, and the attachment figure as inconsistent and unresponsive. Consequently, he or she needs to constantly remind the attachment figure of his/her need of attention and care (Kobak et al., 1993).

Intergenerational ambivalence in Bowen family systems theory.

Murray Bowen, one of the key founders in the field of marriage and family therapy (MFT), developed an intergenerational perspective for understanding both individual problems and family processes (Nichols & Schwartz, 2008). Bowen theory expands the unit of study for intergenerational relationships from the dyad in attachment theory to the triangle and the interlocking triangles in the entire intergenerational system (Bowen, 1978). Differentiation of self is the cornerstone of Bowen family system theory; it is both an intra-psychic and interpersonal concept. In general, differentiation is a person’s ability to separate his or her emotions from thinking, and the capability to separate himself or herself from others, especially other family members (Nichols & Schwartz, 2008). In practice, the intrapersonal capacity of differentiation refers to “decreasing one’s emotional reactivity within important relationships, and therefore responding intentionally to the other”. The interpersonal capacity of differentiation refers

to “balancing the forces of separation and togetherness, taking responsibility for one’s experience, initiating and receiving intimacy voluntarily, and establishing clear boundaries” (Heiden Rootes, Jankowski, & Sandage, 2010, p. 91).

Bowen described differentiation of self as a continuum, from emotional fusion at one end to differentiation at the other. Emotional fusion is induced by what Bowen called “the togetherness force”. The more intensive the togetherness force, the more one’s feelings, thoughts and behaviors are determined by others (Fagan-Pryor & Haber, 1992). People who are closer to the emotional fusion side of the spectrum are more vulnerable to stress and anxiety, and they easily encounter interpersonal conflicts in their intimate relationships. However, with practice and conscious effort, such people can learn to deal with their anxiety and to exhibit better functioning in their relationship with their closest ones including their parents (Papero, 1990). Therefore, a differentiated individual “is able to maintain selfhood while simultaneously maintaining relationships with family, work colleagues and others, even in the face of powerful emotional forces that invite either enmeshment or ‘cut-off’” (Gray, 2004, p. 206).

As a master of paradox, Bowen gave equal weight to autonomy and emotional connectedness as characteristics necessary for the development of adult maturity. Bowen never used “ambivalence” as a formal term in his theory formation. However, some theorists and researchers have used “ambivalence” in their interpretation of his work. Klugman (1977) stated that “the capacity to recognize and tolerate, or own, ambivalence is an essential for the inner ownership of the self, for self-object differentiation” (p. 354). Bowen’s follower, Karpel (1976) described four modes of relationship in the process of differentiation: (1) unrelatedness, (2) pure fusion, (3) ambivalence fusion, and (4)

dialogue.

In the unrelatedness mode, one denies and rejects one's intimate needs for dependency on others by avoiding close relationships. Pure fusion, corresponding to Bowen's "comfortable fusion", is illustrated by individuals in the relational system accepting complete infantile dependence on each other. Pure fusion only exists in mother-infant relationship when the infant has to depend completely on the mother. This mode of relationship is almost impossible in adult relationships where all parties more or less have abilities to think and decide for their own lives. Ambivalent fusion mode is the transitional stage which characterizes most of the adult relationships. This mode is equivalent to Bowen's "uncomfortable fusion". The major characteristic of this stage is the conflict between "progressive tendencies toward differentiation and regressive tendencies toward identification, between the responsibility and self-support that characterize individuation and the blame, guilt, and manipulation for environmental-support that characterize fusion" (Karpel, 1976, p. 73). The ambivalence is between the fear of being engulfed in an overwhelming fusion where one loses one's own identity and the fear of being completely alone to be responsible for one's own existence. Dialogue is the last mode in this differentiation stage, where individuals in relational systems are secure enough to know that they will survive without depending on others. Therefore, anxiety and ambivalent level is relatively low in dialogic relationships. In a dialogic relationship, one is willing to recognize and honor one's own responsibilities for happiness.

Bowen's concept of the multigenerational transmission process explains that parents often project varying degrees of differentiation and fusion to their children across

generations (Bowen & Kerr, 1988). In high levels of intergenerational fusion, the “uncomfortable” or “ambivalent” fusion, both parents and children are emotionally reactive to each other. They deal with these intensive emotions by cutoff, overt conflicts or over dependence (Klever, 2003). Studies exploring the relationship between intergenerational fusion and individual and family functioning have confirmed Bowen’s observation. The more intensive the intergenerational fusion is, the more symptoms are in the nuclear family system (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dillard & Protinsky, 1985) and with the individual family members (L. Atkinson & Zucker, 1997; Bray, Harvey, & Williamson, 1987; Harvey & Bray, 1991; Skowron, Holmes, & Sabatelli, 2003).

According to Bowen and the followers of his ideas, in order to achieve a dialogic or a more differentiated relationship with less ambivalence, adult children need to develop a sense of personal authority. Personal authority refers to a more “peer-like intimacy in interactions with all persons, including parents, while maintaining an individuated stance” (Harvey & Bray, 1991, p. 300). Individuals with greater personal authority in their relationships are more able to achieve differentiation while experiencing emotional intimacy with others. This renegotiation process is observed to occur in the fourth decade of an individual’s life because the shifting of the power structure in the parent-adult child relationship allows a more mutual respectful and peer-like relationship to emerge (Williamson, 1981). Some research indicates that young women may have greater difficulty than men in establishing personal authority in their families of origin (Garbarino, Gaa, Swank, McPherson, & Gratch, 1995).

Research on Intergenerational Ambivalence

Most of the research on parent adult-child relationships has focused on concerns related to caregiving to parents needing intensive care due to illness and natural frailty. There is a lack of consideration of theoretical issues in the studies of this particular relationship (Lye, 1996). In addition, research findings generally do not report the perceived meaning the two parties made of the caregiving relationship, how care-taking arrangements are negotiated, and how some of their internal conflicts may be generated by structural power (Connidis, 1994). Even when researchers looked at emotions and detailed relationship dynamics, the focus was still on the feelings that adult children have toward their needy parents. Since Luescher and Pillemer introduced intergenerational ambivalence as a concept in 1998, there have been interesting debates about the concept and it has led to numerous studies exploring the various aspects of this framework (Luescher & Hoff, 2013).

Measurement and Evidence

There are basically two main methods of measuring ambivalence. One approach is to ask family members directly about the degrees of mixed feelings, including intimate and conflicting emotions, toward each other, or degrees they feel torn in two opposite directions (Fingerman & Hay, 2004; Katz, Lowenstein, Phillips, & Daatland, 2005; Pillemer & Suito, 2002; Steinbach, 2008; van Gaalen, Dykstra, & Komter, 2010; van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006; Willson, Shuey, & Elder, 2003; Willson et al., 2006). Another approach is to measure intergenerational ambivalence indirectly using separate scales for conflicts and affection. High measures on both scales indicate interpersonal ambivalence

(Birditt et al., 2010; Fingerman & Hay, 2004; Giarrusso, Silverstein, Gans, & Bengtson, 2005; Willson et al., 2003; Willson et al., 2006).

All the studies above, more or less, have proven the ambivalent nature of the parent-adult child relationship. For example, Giarrusso and colleagues (2005) identified four types of intergenerational relationships: amicable (high intimacy, low conflict), civil (low intimacy, low conflict), ambivalent (high intimacy, high conflict), and disharmonious (low intimacy, high conflict). The measurement they used was from Bengtson and colleagues' response to the challenge from the intergenerational ambivalence camp, and they accepted the importance of the ambivalence concept and admitted that ambivalence has been neglected in intergenerational research. They, therefore, combined the solidarity and the ambivalence model to be the so-called solidarity-conflict-model by adding conflict as a seventh dimension of parent-adult child relationships (Bengtson et al., 2002). They identified ambivalent type as the largest group of all. They stated "an ambivalent type emerges as both a discernable and sizeable category for parents" (Giarrusso et al., 2005, p. 418). Similarly, adopting affective solidarity and ambivalence as a conceptual framework in a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, Birditt, Fingerman, and Lefkowitz (2009) investigated perceptions of tension topics among mothers, fathers, and adult children within the same families, and the implications of those tensions based on solidarity and ambivalent theories. They found that the majority of adult children and their parents experienced tension in their relationships and such tension was related to lower solidarity and higher ambivalence.

van Gaalen and Dykstra (2006) developed a typology of relations based on data from 4990 participants' reports of their intergenerational interactions in the Netherlands. In descending order of relationship quality, the five types are: harmonious (high contact and support, low conflict), ambivalent (intensive contact and material support, high conflict), obligatory (low contact and support, low conflict), affective (high emotional support, low material support, low conflict), and discordant (mainly negative engagement). Ambivalent type is the second highest in terms of relationship satisfaction, indicating the inevitability of ambivalence in parent-child relationships and its neutrality nature. In a follow up study, van Gaalen, Dykstra, and Komter (2010) elaborated on their previous findings of the ambivalent type relationship. They found that over half of high contact and high support parent-child ties can be categorized as ambivalent and with high quality. They further divided ambivalence into "negative ambivalent", "positive dependent ambivalence", and "positive balanced ambivalent". Negative ambivalence is a relationship with support flowing mainly from children to parents with high conflict and respondents perceive their relationship quality to be low. Positive dependent ambivalent is a relationship with support flowing mainly from children to parents with low conflict and respondents perceive their relationship quality as high. Even though parents are the main beneficiaries in both of these two relationship types, the positive dependent ambivalence group has higher support to the parents than in the negative ambivalent group. The positive balanced ambivalent shows a high degree of exchange of support in both directions, with low conflict in these relationships.

Lang (2004) used filial task in midlife as a main research focus, collected related data from 115 middle-aged adults in Berlin and used a typology format to identify four

patterns of intergenerational relationship styles: (1) Detached Distance (low emotional closeness, low exchange of support); (2) Strained Altruism (low support, high strains); (3) Close Exchange (high exchange, low strains); and (4) Resilient Giving (high perceived obligations, more support, no strains). Lang suggested that the strained-altruistic and the resilient-giving relationship styles present the greatest potential for intergenerational ambivalence because both styles are based on a strong attitude and on obligations to take care of aged parents. The big difference between these two groups of children is that strained-altruistic children experienced more affective strains in their interactions with their parents. Therefore, this group came closest to the classical notion of being “caught in the middle” (Bengtson et al., 1996).

Lang (2004) cautioned that his findings of the four patterns of relationship cannot be perceived as “actual ways of coping with (institutional or personal) contradictions in the filial roles of adult children after they have occurred” (p. 201). He encouraged further research to employ more sophisticated methods to assess the detailed structural and affective constraints and the process middle-aged children go through to develop individual responses to these challenges. In addition, he was not able to identify open conflicts in research respondents who reported feeling ambivalence in their relationships with their parents. Thus, he suggested that “ambivalence should not be equated with the occurrence of conflict in intergenerational relationships” (p. 201). In other words, sometimes ambivalence is experienced in covert emotional and cognitive struggles for both parents and children. There may never be overt conflict manifested in the relationship. Consequently, questionnaires investigating the simultaneous coexistence of both solidarity and conflict to prove intergenerational ambivalence may not be sufficient.

His conclusion was supported by other key theorists and researchers of the intergenerational ambivalence concept (Luescher, 2004; Pillemer, 2004; Pillemer et al., 2007; Sutor, Gilligan, & Pillemer, 2011). Based on Lang (2004)'s conclusion, a significant number of the studies that measure the existence of ambivalence in parent-child relationships may not be valid because of the limitations of their conceptualization. Therefore, it is important for this study to define the conceptualization of intergenerational ambivalence from the very beginning. Open conflicts contribute to adult children's ambivalence toward their parents. Nonetheless, covert conflicts cannot be ruled out from the scope of investigation. Therefore, participants' direct reports of their feelings and thoughts of being conflicted and torn need more attention in the exploration process in this study.

Gender and Intergenerational Ambivalence

Gender has been shown to be an important variable in the studies of intergenerational ambivalence, with most research suggesting that daughters experienced more ambivalence than did sons (Fingerman & Hay, 2004; Nauck, 2012; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; van Gaalen et al., 2010; Willson et al., 2003) and both male and female adult children expressed more ambivalence toward their mothers than toward than their fathers (Nauck, 2012; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Troll & Fingerman, 1996; Willson et al., 2006). In addition, mothers and daughters appeared to have the most intense relationships that were filled with simultaneously intimate and conflicting feelings among all parent-child gender combinations (Birditt et al., 2010; Birditt, Miller, et al., 2009; Fingerman, 1998, 2001; Rossi & Rossi, 1990).

Adopting affective solidarity and ambivalence as a conceptual framework in a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, Birditt, Fingerman, Lefkowitz (2009) investigated perceptions of tension topics among mothers, fathers and adult children within the same families and the implications of those tensions, based on solidarity and ambivalent theories. They found that the majority of adult children and their parents experienced tension in their relationships and such tension was related to lower solidarity and higher ambivalence. Specifically, their analysis revealed that adult children reported more ambivalence with their mothers than with their fathers; however, in contrast to other studies, they found no difference in mothers' and fathers' ambivalent feelings toward their children. Their explanation was that, as parents age, their gender-specific parenting roles decrease to a more idiosyncratic relationship.

Lang (2004) identified gender differences in relationship styles. Most cases in the strained-altruistic relationship style were found to be mother-daughter dyads, while most of the detached-distant cases were related to father-son dyads. The resilient, giving style included mostly father-daughter dyads. He proposed that these findings reflected the gender structure of the relationship dynamic between adult children and their parents in previous research findings (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Silverstein et al., 1995). For example, the mother-daughter relationship was found to be filled with both intense positive and negative emotional experiences throughout the life course. In addition, adult children reported a higher degree of ambivalence toward their mothers than to their fathers (Willson et al., 2003). The father-child relationship was found to be less affectionate, with more focus on a practical exchange (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). He concluded that sons and daughters adapt gender specific ways of relating to their parents throughout their life

course including when their old parents are on the receiving end of support. In particular, daughters often find themselves with fewer options for rejecting social and caretaking obligations to their aging parents, and therefore, they may have fewer resources and strategies in managing contradictory demands than do sons (Acker, 1988; Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Willson et al., 2003). Consequently, daughters generally experience more ambivalent emotions and attitudes in their struggles to balance the demands from the various roles in their lives (Birditt, Miller, et al., 2009; Willson et al., 2003).

Age and Intergenerational Ambivalence

Age has less been an emphasis of analysis than gender. To find out whether children experience ambivalence toward their parents throughout the course of life or only at specific stages of life, Fingerman (2004) conducted a study collecting data using both open-ended and forced-choice questions relating to participants' relations with their parents. Interestingly, they found that, in general, children seemed to experience decreasing ambivalence toward their parents from their 20s to their 40s. Contrary to popular belief, teenagers reported less ambivalence toward their parents than young adults in their 20s. It might be that teenagers considered their conflicts with parents as part of a good relationship (Fingerman & Hay, 2004). The authors speculated that the tensions between children in their 20s and their parents were related to their specific life tasks. For instance, parents may evaluate their performance in their roles by how their young adult children turned out to be in their 20s (Ryff, Lee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994). For that reason, they may show disapproval of their children who have not established themselves as the way they believed the children should. Tensions inevitably existed in

this dynamic. As children matured into their 30s and 40s and slowly established themselves, parents also had time to accept their children's choice of lifestyles. Such acceptance also came from the children's part when they view their parents as unique individuals who also have struggles, weaknesses and strengths, and therefore their overall ambivalence in the relationship may decrease (Fingerman & Hay, 2004). In contrast, Birditt, Fingerman, and Lefkowitz (2009) found that older adult children perceived more tension in their relationships with parents than did younger children. They assumed that it could be that because middle-aged children were faced with more multiple roles, their attention to the relationship with their parents was therefore compromised. Even though studies seem to agree on the significance of age on the experiences of intergenerational ambivalence, there is no consensus on at what age(s) children may feel the most ambivalent toward their parents and how ambivalence plays out over a long period of time. Since one of the focuses of this study is on the development of the parent-child relationship over the life course, age is certainly a significant factor being explored.

Sources of Intergenerational Ambivalence

Based on past research, Luescher and Pillemer (1998) proposed three aspects of parent-child relations that are likely to create ambivalence. The first aspect is dependence versus autonomy, which is embedded in the paradox of parent and child liking to be close to each other emotionally and wanting to support each other in times of difficulty while also still striving for self-sufficiency and independence. For example, studies show that mothers and daughters have close and mutually supportive relationships. Looking closely though, mothers and daughters may express conflicting feelings toward each other over

issues such as personal space, autonomy in making life decisions and different approaches to child rearing etc. The second aspect is conflicting societal norms and values regarding intergenerational relationships. For instance, in caring for aging and frail parents, the norm of reciprocity (give and take) seems to be in conflict with the value of solidarity (giving without expecting return). This might lead to an ambivalent situation in that adult children feel responsible for their parents' wellbeing despite the distress that comes with the caretaking. The care-receiving parents also feel distressed and guilty about not being able to reciprocate. The third aspect is solidarity. Wherever intergenerational solidarity exists, ambivalence is also likely to exist. For example, studies of elder abuse found high solidarity and mutual dependency between the abusing adult child and the abused elderly parent. These cases normally present extreme solidarity where adult children are highly dependent on their parents because they have difficulty establishing themselves.

Since Luescher and Pillemer introduced the theory in 1988, the majority of the related studies have focused on investigating the existence of intergenerational ambivalence, and only a handful of studies have attempted to identify the sources of these conflicting emotions and attitudes systematically (Luescher, 2011; Willson et al., 2006). In addition, most of these studies had a focus on aging parents' ambivalence toward their adult children. In general, parents felt more ambivalence over issues related to their children's establishment as independent individuals achieving normative life tasks such as career development and marital status. In other words, both aged fathers and mothers expressed ambivalence toward their children who were less established and had more life

problems (Birditt et al., 2010; Fingerman, Chen, Hay, Cichy, & Lefkowitz, 2006; Pillemer et al., 2007; Yan, 2005).

van Gaalen and colleagues conducted a series of studies focusing on the interaction and interexchange in over two thousand parent-adult child dyads in the Netherlands. They found that ambivalence was especially intense when parents and children exchanged extensive financial and practical support. These parents and adult children had conflicts over personal and material issues. They concluded that “ambivalence is most prevalent when structural conditions offer fewer escape options” (van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006, p. 956). Escape options or exit options, including other family members to share responsibilities, the ability to act against social expectations and being independent from parental assistance, were important in the formation of intergenerational ambivalence (van Gaalen et al., 2010; van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006). In other studies, factors such as neuroticism (Birditt et al., 2010) and dependency in either or both parents and children were also found to be sources of ambivalence in the parent-child dyad (Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Willson et al., 2003).

A few studies attempted to identify sources of ambivalence from the perspectives of adult children. For example, Shemmings (2005) conducted a study based on attachment styles and ambivalence between parents and adult children. He interviewed twenty-four adult children and tried to understand filial attachment from their perspective. Based on the three attachment styles of infants to their attachment figures proposed by Ainsworth et al. (1978), he categorized three styles of filial attachment: avoidant, ambivalent and secure. Avoidant filial attachment was illustrated by adult children’s “defensive exclusion, through the denial and repression of distressing memories and

emotional experience” (p. 186). They expressed significant levels of irritation and preferred to have no or very little contact with their parents. Ambivalent filial attachment was shown by participants’ overwhelming emotions and painful memories. They expressed unresolved feelings of sadness and resentment. They longed for the relationship to improve. However, they also seemed to be pessimistic about the possibility of change in the relationship. Secure filial attachment was demonstrated by adult children’s willing emotional and physical availability to their parents. To their surprise, they found that this group of adult children did not always have a secure attachment to their parents when young. However, they were able to reflect their early experiences with compassion and openness. This seemed to prove that these adult children have integrated “a less-than-perfect past into a more coherent model of the present and future with their parents” (p. 187).

Another study which examined sources of ambivalence by considering attachment relationship in early life found an increase in ambivalence experienced by children if they were the primary caregiver for parents in poor health or they had a poor parent-child relationship at an early stage. This study reported parental rejection and hostility in early childhood as strong predictors of ambivalence in later life stage (Willson et al., 2003). These findings support strongly the significant impact of adult children’s early memories of their relationships with their parents on their ambivalent feelings and attitudes toward their parents in later life stages. Thus, studies that explore sources of intergenerational ambivalence need to look closely at the relationship dynamics from the starting point of this dyad.

A number of studies looked into the experiences of intergenerational ambivalence in Asian families. Their findings were very similar to those in Western societies with the additional aspect of acculturation differences that led to intergenerational tension and conflicts when these families lived in a Western society. Yan (2005) explored the expectations of fifteen mothers (age 65 or above) with respect to their children's marital status, childbearing, provision of support and living arrangements in Hong Kong. Similarly, she found that mothers experienced ambivalence when their adult children had not achieved normative life tasks, by remaining single and childless. In addition, insufficient financial support and unsolicited assistance from children and sharing of the household may also be sources of ambivalence.

In a study of Cambodian refugee families in the U.S. which employed an ethnographic approach, Lewis (2008) interviewed 79 people with ages ranging from 15 to 94 years. Over a period of three years, he used informal and unstructured interviews to encourage participants to "speak openly and give their own narrative accounts of a particular topic" (p. 700). His analysis of the qualitative data suggested that there were both affective and practical exchanges among family members. In addition, they emphasized the influence of filial piety from their culture. The notion of filial piety encouraged all generations to work together to maintain a peaceful family life. However, listening closely to the family members, he also identified ambivalence within each age group of interviewees. For example, a similar pattern of ambivalence was found among all the middle-aged adults. They expressed the strain of balancing various role demands such as work, child rearing, parents, and ancestor veneration. In the younger age groups,

they revealed ambivalence over contradictory cultural expectations and norms between Asian and American heritages.

Wu (2002) explored intergenerational ambivalence among frail Chinese elderly and their adult children living in the United States over the issue of care giving through a combination of quantitative and qualitative interview methods. The empirical analysis revealed that ambivalence existed among these Chinese American parent-adult child dyads, and some of this ambivalence had arisen from unique cultural norm conflicts and role changes. For example, tension occurred with respect to parents' living arrangements such as whether to live alone or with their adult children. Furthermore, many adult children felt ambivalence between their filial beliefs and their actual behaviors. For instance, most of them believed that they should support their aging parents financially. However, they were aware that their behaviors fell short of this belief. In terms of practical caregiving activities, both parents and children felt ambivalence. For parents, it was mostly about whether or not they should tell their children about their expectations regarding their children's involvement in their age-related care. For adult children, it was mainly about their struggles in balancing different roles and that they sometimes felt that they did not have enough resources to provide for what their parents needed or demanded. Wu also found that many other situations elicited ambivalent feelings in the dyadic relationships. Issues included disagreement regarding education and career choices, financial planning, marital partners, and acculturation. In the exploration of the factor of acculturation, Wu (2002) found that adult children found themselves struggling in deciding whether to stick to traditional Chinese family values such as filial piety or adopting the American mainstream values of personal freedom and the focus of the

nuclear family. The limited number of studies done with Asian families have their scope of investigation mainly on the present state of the relationship dynamics. They failed to present the development of parent-child relationship, which has been proved vital.

Managing Intergenerational Ambivalence

As revealed in the research literature, ambivalence is an inevitable part of parent-adult child experiences throughout the life course. The simultaneous existence of both positive and negative emotions and attitudes arises from various sources and it is expressed in many different ways. Because the lasting and intimate nature of this dyad, parents and children might learn to manage their ambivalent feelings using different strategies depending on personal styles and cultural expectations. In that ambivalence is “managed”, there have not been substantial studies in this domain. Hence, there is not enough information about how individuals participate in the overwrought moments of the family development cycle, and correspondingly, there is also little evidence of how intergenerational ambivalence is managed or resolved (Luescher & Hoff, 2013; Plakans, 2004). In the limited studies in this area, the qualitative method was typically the primary choice of research method due to the complexities and uniqueness of each relationship being studied (Beaton, Norris, & Pratt, 2003; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998; Mancini & Blieszner, 1989; Yan, 2005).

Psychoanalysts such as Melanie Klein and Rozsika Parker suggested that although there could never be a complete integration of ambivalent feelings, managing ambivalence and attending to the anxiety and guilt triggered by intergenerational interaction can lead to self-understanding and more complete perceptions of the others

(Lorenz-Meyer, 2001). Parker (1995) suggested that the acceptance and acknowledgement of the ambivalent nature of parent-child relationship could be a moderating variable for satisfying management of the conflicting emotions. She continued to expand that by reflection and acknowledging the ambivalent feelings within, one starts to take responsibility and to eventually try to draw boundaries between oneself and one's parents. It seems that what she is proposing is two levels of actions that are interrelated. The first level is intrapersonal, wherein one learns to be aware of one's ambivalent feelings in interaction with parents. Through reflection, one accepts that it is a normal part of the relationship. Then on an interpersonal level, for example, one may experiment to negotiate with parents by drawing boundaries.

Luescher and Lettke (2000) suggested that it is useful to differentiate between two types or dimensions of ambivalence when studying it. The first type is the personal dimension in which ambivalence is produced by the subjective experiences of emotional closeness and distance, intimate and conflict. The second type is the institutional dimension in which ambivalence is related to how members conform to or deviate from structural and institutional norms and guidelines. Connidis and McMullin (2002) argued that:

Managing ambivalence in daily life shapes the very social structures that produce ambivalence in the first place, through either reproduction of the existing order or its transformation. Thus, a critical, socio-logical conception of ambivalence bridges social structure and individual lives by emphasizing the tensions between them, as individuals attempt to meet their own, their family's and society's contradictory demands and expectations. (p. 565).

They further postulated that confrontation, rationalization and acceptance may be mechanisms that are used by individuals to deal with intergenerational ambivalence.

To the best of my knowledge, there is only one qualitative study directly related to a detailed and in depth exploration of managing intergenerational ambivalence. It was a study on how first generation college students managed their ambivalent feelings and attitudes in their relationships with their low income, non-college educated parents. They recounted their felt ambivalence as uncomfortable, anxious and sometimes painful. Many of them felt a sense of disconnection with their parents because their parents did not understand and therefore could not relate to what they were experiencing in college life. To manage their ambivalence, these participants reported using different strategies to ease their anxiety and to preserve their closeness with their parents. Many of them described their behaviors to avoid role disruptions and to protect their parents' sense of competency. For example, some achieved that by not disclosing their struggles that their parents might not understand and then might feel anxious and guilty about not able to help. Others tried to maintain the connection by telling their parents their experiences and telling their parents about their appreciation of their devotion to their advancement. Some parents took pride in their children's accomplishment and tried to find ways to show their help. In these situations, students told "white lies" to confirm that their parents' "help" did contribute to their achievement (Rondini, 2010).

Provision of support in intergenerational relationships has been the major area for researchers to understand adult children's strategies in resolving tension and ambivalence. Lorenz-Meyer (2004) found that in order to avoid feeling ambivalent, many sons chose to avoid thinking about parental care. He characterized it as "strategy of repression" and it is

facilitated by the assumption that someone else, frequently a sister, will initiate the caregiving discussion or take over the main responsibilities at the end. After evaluating many cases, Lorenz-Meyer (2004) concluded that ambivalence can be positively handled only if the caretaking arrangement is explicitly discussed and negotiated with both parents and siblings. However, he also noticed that this was not easily achieved because both parents and adult children found it difficult to bring up caretaking related issues for different reasons. For parents, they avoided raising the issues because they did not want to put pressure on their children. For adult children, they were unwilling to bring up the topic because they did not want their parents to feel that they did not want to take care of them. In reflection about arrangements for parental care, most adult children, especially sons, believed that there were not stable, unbreakable, normative rules for filial conduct nowadays. Most males expressed an emphasis on the importance of personal choice as to how to support their parents. On the contrary, female participants argued a balance of personal freedom and cultural expectations of caregiving to aging parents. In conclusion, “women were more likely than men both to be aware of ambivalence on the normative level and to express personal ambivalence in relation to prevailing norms” (p. 242). Women may feel guilty if they cannot provide care for their parents for factors that are both controllable and uncontrollable.

Birditt and Fingerman (2005) conducted a study to assess the types of strategies adult children used to resolve tension in their relations with their parents. They also explored whether the strategies used vary by individual characteristics. Lastly, they wanted to identify the implications of these different strategies. Of a total of 158 family triads completing their questionnaires, they found that there were more parents and

children using constructive strategies (e.g. accommodation, working together to find solutions, understanding each other's views, and acceptance) than destructive strategies (e.g. yelling and arguing) and avoidance (e.g. avoiding discussion of differences, talking to someone else, lying, and stonewalling). The results also revealed that parents and adult children in good relationships were more likely to use constructive strategies than those with a poor relationship quality. Moreover, they found that parents were also more likely to deal with their tension constructively than their children were. Furthermore, the more constructive the strategies parents and adult children used, the less degree of ambivalence they felt in their relationships. In contrast with constructive strategies, avoidance was associated with lower relationship quality and greater ambivalence. Surprisingly, they found that destructive strategies were not related to lower affective solidarity. They speculated that people with more ambivalent relationships might express those emotions destructively. However, being ambivalent did not mean that they were less affectionate toward each other in relationships (Birditt, Miller, et al., 2009).

Beaton et al. (2003) conducted a study of 30 couples to understand the unresolved issues in adult children's marital relationships involving intergenerational problems. They identified several unresolved issues with parents and in-laws, including holiday arrangements, family activities, grandparenting, financial support from parents, living arrangements, ways to confront parents, parents' health issues and unsolicited advice. Of all these unresolved issues, the researchers uncovered five themes that caused ongoing ambivalent feelings in each of the partners in the couple relationship. These five themes were: (1) balancing time between nuclear and extended family; (2) preferences of spouses versus parents; (3) rule and role changes; (4) power struggles; and (5) worry about future

obligations. The researchers also found four methods couples used to manage their unresolved intergenerational issues. Despite the fact that couples did discuss these issues with each other about once or less than once a month, only 7 of them made an effort to discuss with their parents directly. This finding indicated that open communication about issues that cause tension between generations may be infrequent. In addition, they also found that husbands were less likely than their wives to confront their parents directly. To avoid direct confrontation with their parents, many couples resolved issues that caused them ambivalent feeling with their parents and in-laws indirectly. This was achieved in two ways: (1) conveying their opinions and expectations to parents before an anticipated difficulty, and (2) explaining to their child why they do not approve some of the grandparents' ways if it involved grandparenting issues. On the other hand, a small number of couples chose to avoid their unresolved intergenerational issues for reasons such as fear of confrontation and damage to the relationship.

All the studies reviewed above did not look into the development of ambivalence management over an extensive duration of time, even though existing studies indicate that aging parents and adult children continuously strive to resolve their ambivalence in their relationships. For example, in Shemmings (2005)'s study, he found that some adult children who showed secure filial attachment toward their parents actually did not share secure attachment with their parents when they were young. Nonetheless, they were able to overcome the negative impact of their early experiences. Shemmings (2005) did not explore the strategies these adult children used to resolve their negative feelings toward their parents over their life course. It will be clinically valuable to understand the process

of these adult children have integrated “a less-than-perfect past into a more coherent model of the present and future with their parents” (p. 187).

Summary

The definition of generation in this study locates generations in the complex interplay of familial sphere and societal sphere that considers the connections between family and society (Scabini & Marta, 2006). Researchers have been paying attention to studying intergenerational relationships for the past several decades. Two prominent frameworks were proposed in studying aging parents and adult children relationships. The framework of intergenerational solidarity stemmed from the debate of possible disaggregation of families due to industrialization in the western societies. In the 1970s, Bengtson and colleagues proposed the intergenerational solidarity construct to conceptualize the close bonds between generations despite the changed living arrangement from extend families to unclear families. This solidarity model dominated studies on intergenerational relationships until late 1990s when Luescher and Pillemer (1998) challenged the one-dimensional nature of solidarity model and proposed the concept of intergenerational ambivalence. They argued that parent-child relationships are neither pure solidary nor full of conflicts. In fact, many aging parents and their adult children are ambivalent about their relationships and the contradictions in their relationships generally cannot be reconciled.

Connidis and McMullin (2002) located ambivalence at the level of the relationship instead of at the level in the individual in the Luescher and Pillemer (1998)’s model. In addition, they challenged Luescher and Pillemer (1998) by stating that rather

than perceiving ambivalence as the contradictions in relationships that cannot be reconciled, individuals as social actors continuously design their own lives by negotiating through their interactions with others. They proposed a working model that encourages researchers to look into the strategies in the process of relational negotiation.

Since the establishment of the intergenerational ambivalence theory, a significant number of studies have attempted to investigate the ambivalent nature of the parent-adult child relationship. To the best of my knowledge, all of these studies have proven the contradictory nature of the parent-adult child dyad. However, most of these studies adopted quantitative methods that focused on investigating the existence of intergenerational relationship and only a handful of qualitative studies have attempted to identify the sources of these conflicting emotions and attitudes systematically (Luescher, 2011; Willson et al., 2006).

Moreover, the majority of these studies were done from the perspectives of aging parents. A few studies interviewed adult children, and they all supported strongly the significant impact of adult children's early memories of their relationships with their parents on their ambivalent feelings and attitudes toward their parents in later life stages. However, the only two existing studies done with Chinese families have their scope of investigation mainly on the present state of the relationship dynamics. They failed to present the development of parent-child relationship, which has been proved vital.

Furthermore, only a limited number of studies attempted to identify strategies aging parents and adult children used to manage their ambivalence. None of these studies focused on the development of ambivalence management over a period of time despite the indication that aging parents and adult children are unceasingly searching for ways to

resolve the ambivalence in their relationships.

Finally, the concept of intergenerational ambivalence was developed and expanded by sociologists from Germany, the United States, and Canada (Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Luescher, 2011; Luescher & Lettke, 2000; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). Major studies investigating the construct of intergenerational ambivalence were done in the United States (Birditt, Miller, et al., 2009; Birditt, Rott, & Fingerman, 2009; Fingerman et al., 2006; Fingerman & Hay, 2004; Pillemer, 2004; Pillemer, Munsch, Fuller-Rowell, Riffin, & Sutor, 2012; Pillemer & Sutor, 2002; Pillemer et al., 2007; Willson et al., 2003), the Netherlands (Schenk & Dykstra, 2012; van Gaalen et al., 2010), and Germany (Ferring, Michels, & Boll, 2009; Steinbach, 2008). Although these are all western countries, each of these countries has its own unique culture, customs, political systems and history. Nevertheless, none of these studies gave an account of the contextual factors and explanations about their research findings with regards to intergenerational relationships. It is almost impossible to understand the experiences of individuals and their families without learning about their contexts (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997; Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

To fill the gaps described above, firstly, this qualitative study attempted to understand the intergenerational ambivalent experiences from the perspectives of adult children. Secondly, this study explored sources of adult children's ambivalence and looked closely at the relationship dynamics from the starting point of this dyad and over the life course. Thirdly, this study used a life-history research method that maintains a balance of life stories and context, and it treats context as a necessary backdrop and a reference point for researchers and readers to better understand the experiences of the

participants (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Lastly, the findings contribute to the clinical literature by investigating the process of how these adult children integrated “a less-than-perfect past into a more coherent model of the present and future with their parents” (Shemmings, 2005, p. 187).

Chapter Three

THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR CONTEXT

Hong Kong, one of the world's leading financial centers and one of the most densely populated cities, is located on the southeast coast of China (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2011, 2012a; Russell, 2007) . The land area of the city is about 1,104 km², and it consists primarily of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon peninsula, the New Territories and Lantau Island. Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city of over 7 million people of which over 90% are Chinese along with a highly visible and significant segment of residents and expatriates of other ethnicities (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2011; Russell, 2007).

Hong Kong was a small trading port until the Qing Dynasty government ceded Hong Kong Island to the United Kingdom as a crown colony following the First Opium War in 1842. At that time, there were only 7,450 people in Hong Kong, surviving on farming, fishing, and vendoring in the area (Endacott, 1973). The Kowloon peninsula became part of the colony in 1860, and the New Territories joined the colony subject to a 99-year lease in 1898. In 1984, the British government agreed to return the sovereignty of the leased New Territories together with the rest of Hong Kong to China on 1st July 1997. Under the “one country, two systems” policy formulated by the Chinese government in the 1980s, Hong Kong is regarded as a special administrative region (SAR). Under this

policy, Hong Kong SAR maintains its capitalist economic and political systems, exercises a high degree of autonomy, and is largely self-governing (Russell, 2007).

Hong Kong has transformed into a capitalist society which has been regarded as the paradise of capitalism since the 1950s (Rabushka, 1979; Woronoff, 1986). Following World War II, Hong Kong went through rapid industrialization and became a manufacturing and export center, and then transited to a service-based economy in the 1980s (Y. H. Chan, 1995). The city developed into a financial center in the 1990s and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange is now the sixth largest in the world (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2013). The highly capitalist economy of Hong Kong has been ranked as the most free economy in the world in the Index of Economic Freedom for 18 consecutive years (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2013). The government of Hong Kong plays an inactive role in the economic sector, generally leaving development to market forces and private institutions. Hong Kong has enjoyed remarkable economic growth over the past few decades. From 1961 to 2012, GDP increased by 25,321% from HK \$7,434 million to HK\$ 1,889,800 million (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2013; Hong Kong Government, 1995).

There is a close link between macro changes and micro experiences. Many of the events experienced by individuals and their families are the major parameters shared by that generation and class of families in the society (C. H. Ng, 1994). Therefore, it is impossible to understand the experience of individuals and their families without learning about their contexts and cultures. In addition, family systems are modified by the economic, socio-cultural and political factors in the society that the families are embedded in (E. Lee, 1997; B. K. P. Leung, 1996; S. W. K. Yu & Chau, 1997). Cole &

Knowles (2001) noted that in life history research “context is a reference point, an essential backdrop that helps us understand an individual’s life and experience” (p. 79). According to them, contextual information includes socioeconomic and political conditions of community and family, family heritage and the influence of religion, education, and gender. Because one of the emphases of this study is on parent-child relationship development over the life course, the descriptions include how the city of Hong Kong has evolved since the 1960s, the decade in which the participants were born. The relationship dynamics between parents and children were established in the early stage of this dyad and showed consistency throughout the life course in the stories shared by the participants. Therefore, more emphasis is placed on the exploration of the context in which the participants were young and dependent on their parents. Participants’ demographic information is woven into the contextual descriptions throughout the chapter. The last part covers the filial piety concept that regulates intergenerational relationships in Chinese societies. The possible ambivalence on the part of the adult children as the result of the practice of filial piety is addressed.

From Early 1960s to Late 1970s:

The Backdrop of the Participants’ Childhood

Traditional Chinese culture wherein Confucianism provides the core values to guide people’s lives and relationships dominated individuals’ familial experience in 1960s Hong Kong. Parents of the participants were immigrants from mainland China where traditional familial culture was rigidly practiced in the 1950s. Leaving their hometown and a prescribed way of living and relating to each other, young couples were

challenged by different values and norms in a new city. Some of them insisted on a traditional approach to organize a household; while some of them were flexible enough to adapt to some modified family rules. Nonetheless, traditional familial culture was still the framework that provided structure for the participants' families when they were young.

Traditional Chinese Family Relationships

As one of the world's oldest cultures, China's traditional value system was established and evolved through a complex process based on the philosophical teachings and religious beliefs of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism over centuries (Lam, 1997; E. Lee, 1997; Lin, 1990; Marek, 1990). Since the Han Dynasty (206 B. C.), Confucianism was espoused by the ruling class due to its emphasis on the hierarchical structure of authority and the maintenance of a harmonious society. In particular, Confucianism, as a secular social theory, provides sets of rules for leaders to use, and for people in various hierarchical structures to follow (Abbott, 1970; King & Bond, 1985).

Family was regarded as the basic structure of society, and its solidarity and conformity to prescribed roles have been central to the Confucianism value system. A traditional household was often a three-generational cohabitation based on a the patrilocal principle (Lan, 2002; S. W. K. Yu & Chau, 1997). This means roles, obligations and duties were strictly prescribed within the family structure. The oldest male was the family leader who oversaw every aspect of family maintenance and prosperity. The young wives of family members were regarded as the most inferior. They were treated as outsiders to the male-dominated family and expected to take part primarily in the domestic domain, such as raising children, taking care of the elderly, cooking, cleaning and other household

tasks (S. W. K. Yu & Chau, 1997). Within the immediate family system, children were expected to submit to the absolute authority of parents, especially the father (Chow, 2001; Kwan, 2000a; Yang, 1997). The younger siblings were required to follow the leadership of elder siblings, particularly the eldest brother. Therefore, the father and the eldest son had dominant power in the family (Hsu, 1963; Kwan, 2000a). Within the parental dyad, the father was often the stern disciplinarian whereas the mother was often the nurturing and caring figure. The eldest son carried the family name and received privileges whereas the eldest daughter was trained to help the mother to manage the household and to take care of the younger siblings (E. Lee, 1997). The father-son dyad was superior to all other family relations including marital ties, with attributes of continuity, inclusiveness, and authority (Freedman, 1966; Hsu, 1971; E. Lee, 1997). Second to the father-son relationship was the extremely close mother-son tie. Dien (1992) stated that the enormously high value of male children to the mother leads to an extreme closeness between mother and son in traditional Chinese families. Compared to her male siblings, a daughter was more distant from her parents growing up and consequently demonstrated more psychological independence.

Traditionally, marriages were arranged and were the union of two families rather than two individuals (Huang, 2005). The division of labor within the marriage was that the husband managed the business with the outside world and provided for the family while the wife took care of the inside of the household (P. Y. Chu, 1995); E. Lee, 1997). The husband had the ultimate power to make major decisions for the family. Couples tended to focus more on their relationships with their children than with each other (Huang, 2005; E. Lee, 1997). As for the roles and status of wives, the Confucian “Four

Virtues” required a woman to “perform the appropriate behavior conforming to the ethical code, to be careful in her speech with no-nonsense comments, provide a pleasant appearance to please her husband, and to be diligent in the management of domestic duties” (Chu, 1995; p. 94). As for the requirement of submission to their husbands, daughters-in-law were also expected to serve their parents-in-law without question or complaint (Liu, 1998). On the surface, women seemed to play passive roles in the traditional family system. In fact, many women strove to build influence in the family. One of the ways they achieved power was to bear sons and to raise them as obedient and loyal to them. After the marriage of their sons, and when their sons became influential in the family, they also gained authority as mothers-in-law (Dien, 1992; K. Johnson, 1983).

In researching into Chinese family relationships, scholars and culture experts defined the Chinese as having a familistic collectivistic culture (C. Y. Chiu, 1990; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Kagitcibasi, 1996). In the Chinese collectivistic culture, individuals are considered and treated as mutually depending on each other, and this interdependence is the most basic psychological formation that extends from families to clans, and to the society as a whole (Hsu, 1972). Within the familistic collectivistic structure, the acts of obeying and serving parents were defined as “filial piety (*xiao shun*)” which is the highest of all virtues within Confucian teachings (Chow, 2001; King & Bond, 1985). It is also the core concept that governs the intergenerational relations in Chinese families (Ho, 1996; Hwang, 1999; Lan, 2002; Yang, 1997; Yeh, 2003). Implicit in Confucian moral teaching is the expectation for the younger generation to reciprocate what the parent generation has done for them. Thus, it commanded an interdependent

relationship between the parent and child generations at various points in the family life cycle (Kwan, 2000a; Lan, 2002).

According to the participants, their families, especially when they were young, ascribed to many of the traditional norms and practices described above. For example, their parents married each other without a courtship period because they were introduced to each other by relatives or family friends. Moreover, fathers held themselves as heads of the families, and they played the strict disciplinary roles in parenting. Many participants recounted the incidents when their fathers used physical punishment on them when they were disobedient. They were expected to submit to their parents' authority without question. Sons were more valued than daughters; therefore, they were given more resources for advancement. In a traditional economic model, fathers worked outside and provided for the family while mothers took care of the business inside the household. Consequently, fathers had the ultimate power to make major decisions for everyone in the family. However, in a changing economic mode, which I describe next, mothers started to bring home financial support. They started to challenge fathers' authority in marriage and family. About half of the participants said that their mothers were decision makers in the family. Many of them recounted tension both covert and overt in their parents' marriages.

The Emergence of Industrialization

All research participants were born between 1959 and 1972 in the midst of industrialization in Hong Kong. Industrialization was induced by the unstable circumstances in China that had existed since the 1920s. The Chinese civil war broke out in 1927 between the Communist party and the Nationalist party. The war represented an

ideological split of left and right, communism and capitalism. The two parties were united to fight against the Japanese invasion in late 1937. When the second world war ended in 1945 after the Japanese admitted defeat, full-scale civil war resumed in 1946 (Karl, 2010). Over the next three years, Chinese and overseas entrepreneurs fled with their capital from major cities in China, particularly the leading industrial center Shanghai, for fear of the victory of the Communist party (B. K. P. Leung, 1996). Between 1946 and 1948, the influx of capital to Hong Kong accumulated to sixty billion dollars, which was estimated to be two thirds of the total capital invested in various industrial activities (S. L. Wong, 1988). The entrepreneurs also brought with them their skilled employees who helped to establish the early structure of industrialization. Textile manufacturing introduced by Shanghai factory owners was the first industry to flourish and remained the leading sector until the late 1970s (B. K. P. Leung, 1996). Unskilled labor was necessary to the growing industry. The population of Hong Kong increased from around 0.8 million to 3 million between 1945 and 1961 (B. K. P. Leung, 1996).

The majority of the parents of the participants came to Hong Kong as refugees from neighboring Guangdong Province during this period while the conditions in their hometowns were harsh. With help from relatives and friends, parents were able to find unskilled jobs and poorly conditioned accommodations. Despite challenging beginnings, they were determined to establish a new life in Hong Kong mainly because they found conditions back home intolerable after many years of war and destruction (Salaff, 1995). With little education, as with the mainstream, most parents of participants were only able to find unskilled low-paid jobs. The occupations of fathers included driver, coolie, tailor, fisherman, construction worker, vendor, cook, and small family business owner. Jobs

were usually introduced by people they knew and they stayed in those occupations for most of their working lives. They experienced little job and salary advancement throughout their work cycles. Needless to say, the low wages of fathers were not sufficient to support their families; consequently, mothers had to join the work force too. Mothers' jobs were usually interfered with intermittently by the demands of childrearing and other household demands unless they had assistance from grandparents. Mothers worked as domestic helpers, cleaners, factory workers, seamstresses and baby sitters. Harboring the refugee and immigrant mentality of working hard, the parents of participants along with other new arrivals contributed to the city's golden era of sustained high growth, full employment and falling poverty from the 1960s to the early 1970s (Chau, 1994).

Lacking natural resources, including water and energy, Hong Kong had to depend solely on the export of manufactured goods during the process of industrialization (Salaff, 1995). Therefore, wages had to be extremely competitive to maintain minimum costs to compete with other industrialized countries in the region. The profile of the Hong Kong industrial economy was described as producing standardized consumer goods for export to the West (Riedel, 1973). The consumer goods produced by small and medium sized manufacturing firms were relatively low-quality, required labor-intensive production with little demand on technological innovation and capital investment (B. K. P. Leung, 1996; Salaff, 1995). By the end of the 1960s, the new industry of electronics, plastics, metals, toys and watches also took advantage of the cheap, disciplined and obedient labor in Hong Kong (Chou, 1966).

Other than formal factories, “cottage industries” operated in shop-house cubicles or shop-houses also created opportunities for workers. Small by nature, they were highly flexible, adaptive and valuable to the city’s economic vitality (Shelton, 2011). For example, the plastic industry flourished from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s and sustained the development of these small-scale family manufacturing businesses. In addition, due to the demand for plastic flowers in North America and Europe at the time, Hong Kong became the world’s largest plastic flower export center. Since the final stage of plastic flower making was relatively easy and did not require machinery tools, many factories contracted the final part of the production to family-based workshops. Many of the participants in this study remember helping their mothers making plastic flowers at home after school. One participant also talked about the memories of her and her siblings helping their parents in their metal manufacturing shop-house. Although poverty was rampant in the 1960s, there were bountiful opportunities for the families to at least support their basic needs.

Women’s labor was not only suitable for the labor-intensive textiles and clothing industry, it also kept the cost at a competitive level (B. K. P. Leung, 1996; Salaff, 1995). Four out of ten of the female participants worked in factories in the early 1970s when they had barely graduated from primary school. They changed jobs frequently due to the unstable situations of small firms and opportunities for higher pay. Echoed in Salaff (1995)’s study of twenty-eight young unmarried working women in Hong Kong in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the female participants were forced or encouraged to drop out from school to conform to family needs (Salaff, 1995). The average number of children among the participants’ family of origin was 5.5, larger than the average house size of 4.5

reported by the census in 1961 (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2011). The older children, especially older girls, were required to start working early in order to support the family including younger siblings' educational advancement (Salaff, 1995).

The continuous influx of refugees and immigrants led to an upsurge in demand for housing, giving rise to the emergence of tenement buildings and illegal hillside squatter huts. A survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong found that half of residents were living in cubicles in 1957. They also reported that 1.3 million people shared only about 118,000 tenement floors. That means an average of eleven people lived on one floor. Specifically, 70 per cent of all 4.7 person households were crammed in less than 11.15 m² of floor space (Maunder & Szczepanik, 1958). Those who could not even afford these overcrowded apartments had to shelter in simple and crude squatter huts built on hillsides or rooftops. It was estimated about 300,000 people lived in squatter huts scattered across the hills of Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon peninsula (Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 2013; Maunder & Szczepanik, 1958).

When asked about their childhood memories, many participants described experiences of being poor. Not only did they not enjoy the material things like their children do nowadays, but they also recalled food scarcity. Being in a subtropical climate, rice is the primary staple food of the Hong Kong people. Participants recalled times when the rice jars in their house were emptied. Parents had to borrow rice from relatives. The better days meant they had rice, but had little vegetables and meat. Often, soy sauce mixed with rice was a regular and only dish for the family dinner. To ensure enough food and safe shelter for the whole family, parents, especially fathers, had to work day in and day out. As a result, most fathers remained distant from their children. The relationship became more strained when fathers used physical punishment when the

children fell short of expectations. Some participants also described their fathers as bad tempered, and they blamed it partly on the stress brought on by financial difficulties during that time. The lack of money was also a source of conflict between parents. Consequently, only six participants said that their parents had a good enough marriage. Other than parental covert or overt conflicts, the participants also told stories about disagreements between parents and grandparents. Moreover, the participants also described their harsh living conditions. They talked about their big families cramming into small apartments, single rooms or squatter huts with some family members sleeping on the floor. Owing to the small living space, they liked to play outside with their friends during the daytime. The participants, mostly the boys, often got scolded or punished when they came home late at night. Nevertheless, most of them spoke with appreciation about their parents' sacrifice, devotion and commitment to the family.

Industrialization and Family Bonds

The impact of industrialization on social bonds has stimulated critical analysis and theories in various parts of the world since the beginning of the last century (F. M. Wong, 1972). One of the major themes is often the consequence of women's employment outside of the house, which freed them from some restrictive social roles. Consequently, the birth rate dropped, the age of marriage was pushed back, and a more egalitarian marital relationship model emerged (Salaff, 1995). A small nuclear family has become the dominant family structure. In view of these dramatic changes, some have suggested that traditional family unification has declined. On the other hand, some researchers found that despite the change of family structure and disappearance of the cohabitation of

three generations, there are still strong family bonds and intergenerational solidarity (Hammarstrom, 2005).

So how has the strong Confucian familism withstood the corrosion of industrialization in the city of Hong Kong? Statistical measures of family change show that industrialization has indeed led to “defamilization”. For example, the birth rate, which was extremely high in the 1950s, declined 43% from 1961 to 1971. There was also a strong relationship between education and number of children. In 1971, 21% of illiterate mothers had given birth to six or more children; while only 5% of mothers with post-secondary or above education had borne more than five children (Rosen, 1976). In addition, the average age for marriage rose. In 1971, 68% of women aged 20-24 had never married, compared to 36% in the United States. At age 25-29, 20% of Hong Kong females had never married, compared to only 12% in the United States (Salaff, 1995). This trend in demographic change has continued and by the year 2011, average household size was only 2.9 persons compared to 4.5 persons in 1971 (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2012b). The average age for first marriage for males is 31.1 and for females 29 (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2011). The fertility rate dropped from 5.16 in 1960 to 1.2 in 2010 (The World Bank, 2013). This trend is reflected in this study with participants who grew up with an average number of 5.5 siblings and themselves raising an average number of 1.5 children.

Apparently, family dynamics is beyond statistical measures. Many researchers explored ways families adapted to structural and functional change in the face of industrialization and modernization. By collecting data from 100 middle-class families in Hong Kong, Wong (1972) analyzed the relationship between industrialization and family

structure and ideology. He concluded that the nuclear family structure characterized by more egalitarian spousal relationships and more liberal intergenerational interactions was indeed a prevalent form of family structure in industrializing Hong Kong. He also found that although not living together, extended families still shared resources, kept regular communications, and organized social get-togethers. In an ethnographic study of twenty middle class families in Hong Kong, Rosen (1976) described regular reciprocal practical and financial assistance among extended family members. It was a common practice to support aging parents financially after adult children have had their own families. In turn, parents, especially mothers, offered childcare assistance while young parents are occupied by fulltime employment.

In Salaff's study of twenty-eight young unmarried working girls from 1971 to 1976, she found exceptionally strong bonds among the families of those girls. She went on to propose the concept of centripetal family perspective to comprehend the "convincing evidence of organic continuity in family goals" (p. 7). Similar to Lau (1981)'s utilitarianistic familism, Salaff (1995) defined the centripetal family as "a power base to manipulate other institutions. Families consequently stratify the community while endeavoring to develop their own power and wealth" (p. 8). Moreover, in the centripetal form, the family "gathers in its forces by demanding the primary loyalty of its members and mobilizing their labor power, political, and psychological allegiances on behalf of kinsmen" (p. 8). Therefore, it is not far off to conclude that although industrialization had significant impact on families and especially family structure, family members still adhered to traditional familial values that allowed them to gather resources for the purpose of family advancement during this period of time. The participants reported how

their parents, especially their mothers, compiled, organized and re-distributed family resources to invest in some siblings, normally sons and younger siblings, to advance them through education attainment.

From Early 1980s to Mid 1990s:

The Backdrop of the Participants' Young Adulthood

The Blooming Economy and the Emergence of the “New Middle Class”

By the late 1970s, Hong Kong built up a reputation as a major manufacturing, commercial, and shipping center in the Asia-Pacific Region. It continued to thrive on the government's laissez-faire economic policy and had continuous restructuring (Jao, 1994). It transformed from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy with significant contribution from financial, trading, and shipping activities in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the manufacturing industry continued to function as the pillar of the economy (T. Y. C. Wong, 1994). In 1991, Hong Kong ranked as the 10th leading exporter in the world. The economy grew at an impressive annual rate of 7.7 per cent from 1967 to 1992. Per capita income increased from HK\$3,779 (US\$630) in 1966 to HK\$127,778 (US\$16,487) in 1992 (Jao, 1994).

The “China” factor has played a central role in transformation and development during this period (G. E. Johnson, 1994). Subsequent to the death of Mao in 1976, the new leader, Deng Xiaoping, implemented economic reform under a scheme named the “Open Door” policy two years later. The coastal regions of south and south east China were opened up for direct foreign investment. Hong Kong entrepreneurs seized the

opportunities to resolve the problems of rising labor costs and difficult recruitment by relocating labor-intensive and low valued-added production to China (G. E. Johnson, 1994; Salaff, 1995; T. Y. C. Wong, 1994). This relocation facilitated Hong Kong's industrial restructuring and local manufacturers assumed new roles to move up-market activities such as technology innovation, product design, marketing and trading (Salaff, 1995; T. Y. C. Wong, 1994). While this development created new opportunities for entrepreneurs, young educated professionals and technical workers, non-educated and low-skilled factory workers faced challenges finding jobs after the factories they worked in moved to China. They were left with no choice but to switch to low paying service related jobs (Salaff, 1995).

As stated earlier, poor living conditions were one of the major hardships for families during industrialization. In order to improve the living environment and ensure the safety of the residents, the Government of Hong Kong started to build subsidized housing for lower income groups, spurred by a fire that broke out in a squatter area leaving 53,000 people homeless in 1953 (R. L. H. Chiu, 1994; Scott, 1989). The housing intervention was rather limited in the first twenty years until a series of anti-colonial rule riots erupted during the mid-1960s. The poor living and working conditions were thought to be some of the main causes of this social unrest (Scott, 1989). In 1972, the Government intensified the extent of housing intervention and implemented a Ten-year Housing Program for the development of government subsidized housing (R. L. H. Chiu, 1994; Scott, 1989). By 1992, about 2.8 million people, 50 per cent of the Hong Kong population, were living in public housing units (R. L. H. Chiu, 1994).

Another government direct intervention that made significant impact on people's lives was free secondary and subsidized post-secondary education during this period. In 1978, the Government raised the six-year free and compulsory education to nine years. More post-secondary, vocational training and technical institutes, and commerce schools were established in order to fulfill the demand of the transitional economic market (Government Secretariat Hong Kong Government, 1981). In the early 1980s, there were only two formal universities in Hong Kong and only 2% of secondary students had the opportunity for higher education. The Government expanded university level programs to several tertiary institutes and built a third university to meet the growing demand for professionals in various industries in late 1980s (T. Y. C. Wong, 1994). Tertiary education doubled the intake of students in early 1990s. In addition, a self-financing adult education institute was also founded to provide alternative continuous education modes such as distance learning for mature working students (T. Y. C. Wong, 1994).

A small number of the participants who worked in factories met with difficulties during this stage of economic transition; however, they were able to move quickly to other jobs because they were young. All participants reported an improvement in their families' standard of living due to a smaller earner-dependent ratio and an increment in wages. Most of the families also moved into public housing at this stage. In addition, they were at the age to take advantage of the nine-year free education by attending regular day schools or evening schools. Some of them went beyond secondary education to receive semi-professional or professional training. Only one participant had primary education. She was in the position to support her younger siblings' education advancement as they still held low-skilled jobs during their time of interview – domestic worker and

slaughterhouse worker. Although half of the participants held university degrees, only two of them went straight to university in their education pursuit. The rest of them finished their higher education in the self-financing adult university while working fulltime. A few of them even finished their master's degrees in their forties. They were able to enter more secure careers and get higher pay with their education. Their professions were nurse, journalist, pastor, government officer, insurance agent, trading manager, senior secretary and bank employee. More than half of the participants belong to the "new middle class", created with the increasing affluence of the society from the 1980s to early 1990s. Unlike their parents, they do not share the immigrant mentality and they are different from their parents in lifestyle, values, attitudes and social aspirations (B. K. P. Leung, 1996). Consequently, participants expressed difficulty in understanding and communicating with their parents. Needless to say, it was difficult for aged parents and adult children to see many life issues the same way.

From Mid-1990s to Now:

The Backdrop of the Formation and Raising of the Participants' Own Family

The Establishment of the World's Financial Center and the Fluctuating Economic Environment

The Basic Law was proposed in 1990 to ensure the maintenance of the status quo under the "one country, two systems" principle. This framework allows the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government a high degree of autonomy to govern its free market economy (Scott, 1989). For the most part, the Chinese government has

stayed out of the economic sector and allowed the Hong Kong SAR government to run its own show. Under the positive non-intervention or laissez-faire market model, the transformation of the structure of the economy can be considered as a “market mechanism reacting to internal and external challenges, creating new dynamism for growth and development” (T. Y. C. Wong, 1994, p. 541). Although minimalist, the government has various ways to intervene and to provide a favorable environment for business investment. Such practices include the policy of low and simple taxation, the rule of law and fair market, no restrictions on capital flows in and out of Hong Kong, barrier-free access for foreign business and a highly efficient network of communication and transportation (Jao, 1994).

Even though Hong Kong has no natural resources, it is blessed by a deep-water port and an excellent geographic location that allows economic connections from all over the world. The time-zone position of Hong Kong is right in between the United States and Europe and facilitates a 24-hour trading in world financial markets. Hong Kong is classified as a functional financial center because the industry creates substantial employment opportunities. Total finance-related employment tripled between 1975 and 1992 (Jao, 1994). In 2011, Hong Kong overtook New York and London to claim the first position in the World Economic Forum Financial Development Index.

As a small open economy, the economic condition of Hong Kong is closely tied to the demand situations of its leading economic partners such as the US and Europe. Being one of the world’s leading financial centers, Hong Kong is also highly susceptible to regional and global financial crises (Government of the Hong Kong ASR, 2009). Just three months after the handover in July 1997, Hong Kong was hit hard by the Asian

Financial Crisis. The crisis prompted a fall of 22.8% in the stock market within a week. The Hang Seng Index lost nearly 2/3 of its value from 1997 to 1998. The real estate market crashed due to the combined impact of the financial market and ill thought-out government housing planning. The property market plays an important role in the Hong Kong economy. Housing is the most important form of saving and investment for many families. People who bought their properties during the peak of the real estate market had to face “negative equity”. Families were struggling to pay down their mortgage debts. Domestic consumption was shrinking and the unemployment rate hit record levels from below 4 percent in 1997 to 7 percent by the end of 2002 (Lui, 2005; Radelet & Sachs, 2000). The atmosphere in the city was gloomy with news reports of both financial crises and suicide incidents (Lui, 2005; Yip, Law, & Law, 2003).

The outbreak of the deadly infectious Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) brought another unexpected shock to the Hong Kong economy in 2003. Hong Kong was on the World Health Organization’s list of affected areas between February and June 2003. The city was in complete panic for fear of contagion. The daily routines of the citizens were seriously disrupted. Schools were suspended and social events ceased. People wore masks in public and washed their hands frequently. Tourists stopped visiting. Consequently, businesses such as restaurants, cinemas, and shops suffered severe losses of income. By the end, the disease had infected more than 1,700 people and claimed 299 lives. Under the influence of SARS, consumption spending by local people and tourists was severely affected, worsening unemployment. As the number of new cases started to decline in late April 2003, local residents could not wait to get back to their normal life. Fortunately, the disease was controlled quickly and by June people started to resume their

normal daily activities, and Hong Kong started its economic recovery (Siu & Wong, 2004).

Referred to as the financial tsunami in Hong Kong, also known as the Global Financial Crisis or financial crisis of 2007-2009, this is considered by some to be the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Originating in the United States, the damage quickly spread to stock markets around the world. Large international financial institutions were on the verge of collapse, and governments had to bail big banks out. Soon afterwards, the housing market also crashed and employment situations worsened. Inevitably, the economy of Hong Kong was affected significantly. Financial markets and other commercial activities were dampened and the property market plunged (Government of the Hong Kong ASR, 2009). The Hong Kong economy recorded negative growth of 2.5% in the last quarter of 2008 (Zhang & Tong, 2009). The economy started to show signs of improvement by the end of 2009 and it has been steadily recovering since.

The Political Unrest

It was not until the 1980s that Hong Kong began to politicize. Elections for the legislature only began in 1985 and the first direct election started in 1991, just six years before the handover of sovereignty to China. Political parties emerged in the late 1980s, and in the early 1990s the government sped up democratization (Kam, 2000). Before that, during 150 years under British colonial rule, there was strong political control by the government, and people's political participation was largely undermined. Lau (1981) describes the political system of Hong Kong as an authoritarian, bureaucratic, alien and

non-participant policy. Political power in Hong Kong was highly centralized and was mainly in the hands of bureaucrats and capitalists (C. K. Chan, 1996). Because of the adoption of a laissez-faire or non-interventionist market economy, businessmen and capitalists still play a very significant role in the political structure. As a stable economy and economic growth were the primary concern of the government, capitalists were co-opted in the central political structures to protect their interests and ensure the successful running of the capitalist system (Kam, 2000).

In 1984, Hong Kong began its last period as a British colony. To prepare the city to become a Special Administrative Region of China in 1997, the Hong Kong government initiated a series of political reforms in spite of the strong opposition from the Chinese government. The most significant change was in the composition of members of different political councils. The composition of the different councils has been gradually dominated by elected members. This provided new channels and opportunities for people to gain political influence (S. W. K. Yu & Chau, 1997). However, the Chinese government rejected a “through train” policy by which the 1995 elected Legislative Council would automatically become the first legislature of the SAR government in 1997. Thus, after July 1st 1997, the existing legislature was abolished and the new SAR government replaced it by forming a Provisional legislature in which members were not directly elected but indirectly chosen by a small number of groups, which were selected by the Chinese government. The Provisional Legislature only worked for one year and the election for the first formal SAR Legislative Council, which had fewer directly elected seats compared with that of 1995, was conducted in 1998 (Kam, 2000).

With an uncertain political and economic outlook both locally and globally, Hong Kong people harbor a sense of insecurity and anxiety for its future development (Lui, 2005). It was during this period of economic fluctuation that all the participants established their own families. Some of the participants had to face the reality of negative equity and job loss. Two male participants were unemployed and one female participant who is also a single mother lost her job between the first and second interview. Fortunately, all three of them went back to work fulltime by the third interview. The economic turmoil brought enormous stress and uncertainty to the families. Unlike their parents who raised an average of 5.5 children, their average number of children in this group of participants is 1.5. Many of them expressed stress in raising children in this uncertain economic and political circumstance. In reflection, they admired their parents' diligence in raising so many children.

The majority of the participants mentioned their private properties, public housing or rental housing during the interview. Developments in the property market have significant implications for the Hong Kong economy because residential property is a major asset on household balance sheets and property related loans account for the majority of bank lending in Hong Kong (F. Leung, Chow, & Hang, 2008). Being the most densely populated city in the world, land is definitely one of the scarcest resources in Hong Kong (H. L. Chan, Lee, & Woo, 2001). The Government is the sole owner of the land in the city, and it started to intervene in the housing market in the 1950s. Major interventions included building public housing, the restriction of land supply and rent control in some years. Consequently, the government still has power to influence the property market despite its open economic model (H. L. Chan et al., 2001; Peng &

Wheaton, 1994). Nevertheless, property prices have been on a roller coaster ride since the 1980s. For example, property prices increased dramatically by more than 1.5 times during 1984-1993, followed by a slight drop of 12% during 1994-95. Property prices to a historical high in 1997 and then decreased by 50% during the Asian financial crisis (H. L. Chan et al., 2001; Hong Kong Monetary Authority, 2001). Property prices in Hong Kong declined remarkably during the Global Financial Crisis in late 2008 after sharp increases in 2007-08 (F. Leung et al., 2008) and turned around quickly in 2009. Hong Kong has ranked third on the world's most expensive cities list (Global Property Guide, 2013). Housing affordability is a prominent social and political issue and raises concerns about the sustainability of this property market price dynamic (Ahuja & Porter, 2010). The majority of the participants belong to the middle-class and they expressed concerns and stress about the housing market and how it affected their lifestyle.

Contemporary Hong Kong Chinese Families

Family structure has changed significantly in Hong Kong since the 1960s. The average household size decreased from 4.5 persons in 1971 to 2.9 persons in 2011 (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2012a). The average age for first marriage for males is 31.1 and for females 29 (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2011). The fertility rate dropped from 5.16 in 1960 to 1.2 in 2010 (The World Bank, 2013). The traditional extended family arrangement was replaced by nuclear family households. Moreover, the divorce rate in Hong Kong has been increasing at alarming rates. The ratio of divorces granted to marriages granted was 1: 24.6 in 1981. It increased dramatically to

1: 6.8 in 1991. It continued to increase to 1: 2.4 in 2001 and 1:3.0 in 2011 (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2012a).

Urbanization, industrialization and the influence of other cultures and values have introduced changes and challenges to traditional lifestyles and values. (Hong Kong Government, 1991). Some studies have found that although older generations still hold on to some traditional beliefs, the younger generation has shown a rejection of conservatism and traditionalism (E. Lee, 1997; Yuan, 1987). The provision of quality public education, the replacement by nuclear families of traditional three-generational families, the economic values of new sciences and ever-changing technological revolution have all transferred the power of knowledge and economic competency from elders to the young generation (S. H. Ng, 1998; Yuan, 1987; Yue & Ng, 1999). Studies found that changes in the economic mode of production have brought about a fundamental change in the status and power of older people both within and outside the family (S. W. S. Chiu, 1991; Chow, 1997)

On the other hand, a number of studies found that traditional Chinese values are still shaping lives of Chinese people and families and that there is a coexistence of traditionalism and modernism (Tai, 1989; Yang, 1996). Yue (1999) noted that “given the central importance of family life in Chinese societies, it is unlikely that the social and economic changes would have brought about a wholesome erosion of filial obligations and expectations” (p. 216). In an article entitled “Familism and development: An examination of the role of family in contemporary China mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan”, Yang (1988) reviewed a series of studies conducted in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. She studied four aspects of family change: the father/son axis, hierarchical power

structure, mutual dependence, and dominance of family interaction. She found that although the specific ways of family members relating to each other might have modified, cultural values about family relationships are resistant to change. For example, after finishing their schooling, younger generations find jobs and have their own money. As a result, parents' power to make major decisions about their children's mate selection and personal expenditure has decreased. The father/son axis emphasizing obedience to authority has declined. On the other hand, the separation of residence does not decrease the opportunity and willingness of mutual interdependence of family members.

Ho (1996) reported that some core filial obligations such as ancestral worship and offering financial care to parents continue to be accepted while other filial obligations such as absolute obedience are rejected by young people (Ho, 1996; Tsai, 1999). While adult children might still respect and listen to their parents, they might not show absolute obedience (C. M. Chan, 1997). Similarly, Ho (1996) argued that filial piety still persists but in a modified form in Hong Kong. The younger generation typically provides an affordable amount of money to elderly parents as indications of taking up filial responsibility (Ho, 1996; Raiten, 1989). Traditionally, in Chinese society, elderly people were more likely to live with children, notably the elder son (Y. W. Wu, 1995; Yuan, 1987). Some elderly people still have a strong perception of the reciprocal and feel that they should be taken care of by their children. Alternatively, other elderly people accept that there is no obligation for their children to live with them (A. C. Y. Ng, Phillips, & Lee, 2002). In this study, eight participants have two living parents. Among these eight sets of parents, three sets of them live with each other, and three sets of them live together with one single or divorced child. The last two sets of parents live apart, with one spouse

living in a home for the elderly where they receive intensive care and the other spouse living alone in their own apartment. Twelve participants have only one parent alive. Six of these parents live alone but close to one or more children. Two parents live with a child who is single. Three parents live with the participants' siblings and only one participant has her mother living with her and her family.

Lack of Government Support to Families

The Hong Kong government is guided by the principles of laissez faire, and it limits its intervention in both the economic and social sectors. It encourages people to rely more on the private market and their families for tangible and emotional care and support. The government has a low-tax and low welfare policy (Hong Kong Government, 2007; Lau, 1981). Hence its family policy aims at reinforcing rather than replacing the role of the family in supporting its dependents (Hong Kong Government, 2007; Shae & Wong, 2009). The government's objective of affirming the main duty of the family to care for its dependents is reflected in the White Paper, Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond:

The overall objectives of family welfare services are to preserve and strengthen the family as a unit and to develop caring interpersonal relationships, to enable individuals and family members to prevent personal and family problems and to deal with them when they arise and to provide for needs which cannot be met from within the family (p. 19).

The government continues to assume that the family is willing and able to perform the caring duties for its dependents. Many aging parents have no choice but to

rely on their adult children. This sometimes puts pressure on their children and their families (Chow, 1992a; Shae & Wong, 2009; S. W. K. Yu & Chau, 1997). The guiding principle for the care for aging individuals is “care in the community”. This policy was formally adopted in 1979 in Hong Kong in a Government White Paper on social welfare development for the 1980s (Chow, 1992b; Phillips & Yeh, 1999). However, the required community services are inadequate, so community care has consequently been family care in practice (A. C. Y. Ng et al., 2002).

There was no mandatory retirement protection scheme in Hong Kong until 2000. There are 210,000 older people aged 60 and above living in poverty, accounting for 25% of the total elderly population, thus one in four in the elderly population is considered poor (S. W. S. Chiu, 1991; Chow, 1997). The majority of the care-taking responsibilities of aging parents, including financial and tangible care, fall on their adult children. Adult children indicated that filial piety remain the core value that has governed their relationship with their parents (O. M. H. Wong, 2009). In addition, both sons and daughters share the responsibilities of taking care of their parents while daughters might be the main care providers. Sons might be the care managers who also provide financial and emotional support (Kwok, 2006; O. M. H. Wong, 2009). Fourteen participants in this study support their parents financially by giving monthly payments. Three participants expressed that they can barely make ends meet themselves and they cannot afford to pay their parents. Their parents have to rely on their siblings for financial support. They normally give their parents some symbolic amount of money during big Chinese festivals such as Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn festival. Only three participants said that their parents have savings and do not demand monetary support from them. Among the

fourteen participants who supported their parents financially, two of them feel the strain and are spread thin because of this responsibility. Others said that responsibility is shared by their siblings and their share is acceptable. Despite their circumstances, all participants believe that it is their responsibility to care for their parents in providing both tangible and emotional support. They believe that filial piety is deeply rooted in the culture, and they ascribe to this value.

As for Hong Kong women's status in family and society, in general women today enjoy a higher social status than women did in traditional Chinese society. Their participation in both public and private domains enable them to live a different lifestyle from traditional Chinese women (C. H. Ng, 1994; Pearson & Leung, 1995). However, despite these advancements, the distribution of caring responsibilities in families is still quite unequal between men and women. Moreover, women may be in an even more burdened position because they are required to perform dual roles and therefore bear double workloads (K. W. Chan et al., 1995). In the home, the distribution of responsibilities between husband and wife is typically lopsided, especially in the working class (Choi & Lee, 1997; Ma, 1991; Pearson & Leung, 1995). Among the ten female participants in this study, seven of them work fulltime, two of them have part-time jobs and only one is a housewife. Nine of them are the primary parent for their children's overall development. While they were not complaining about their assigned roles, they expressed some stress and concerns about their children during the interviews. The majority of the male participants are also quite involved in their children's lives in this study. Unlike their distant fathers, they have significant knowledge about their children and show clear concerns about their children's well-being. Nonetheless, except for one

widowed father and one father that shares equal parenting with his wife, the rest still thought that their wives spend more time with their children than they do. While there is no discrimination in terms of financial support to their aging parents, more female than male participants are involved in providing daily care to their parents.

The Practice of Filial Piety and its Potential for Intergenerational Ambivalence

Filial piety is a Confucian ethic that has been guiding Chinese parent-child relationships for over two thousand years. One cannot fully understand Chinese parent-child relationship without learning about the concept of filial piety (Yeh, 1999). Since the Han dynasty (206 B.C.), Confucianism was espoused by the ruling class due to its emphasis on the hierarchical structure of authority and the maintenance of a harmonious society. The norms and virtues of traditional Chinese family relationships were prescribed a hierarchical structure to define and govern intergenerational and intragenerational relationships (Ho, 1994, 1996; Hwang, 1999; Kim, 1997; King & Bond, 1985; E. Lee, 1997). Filial piety is the core aspect of Chinese intergenerational relationships, and it functions as the basis of familistic orientation (Ho, 1996, 1997; Ho, Hong, & Chiu, 1990; Yang, 1997; Yang & Yeh, 1991). Filial piety has been defined as a “specific, complex syndrome or set of cognition, affects, intentions, and behaviors concerning being good or nice to one’s parents” (Yang, 1997; p. 252). “*Xiao shun*” the Chinese term for filial piety commands children to respect (i.e. *xiao*) and to obey (i.e. *shun*) their parents (Ho, 1996; Kwan, 2000a; Yang, 1997). The ethics of filial piety persisted across situations and throughout the lifespan. In other words, even when those in the younger generation became adults, such top-to-down hierarchical dynamic

continues to apply to the parent-child relationship. They are required to offer practical and emotional support and care for their aged parents until the death of their parents. (Ho, 1996; Kwan, 2000a; Yang, 1997; Yue & Ng, 1999).

Filial piety could also be regarded as a reciprocal dyad (Hsu, 1971; A. C. Y. Ng et al., 2002; Yeh, 2003). Even though filial piety is regarded primarily as flowing upward to the older generation, parents are also expected to provide sufficient nurturing and education to their children in a downward manner. The principal rule between parents and children is that parents must love their children out of benevolence, and children must respect and be obedient to their parents out of filial attitude. The Confucian ethical system emphasizes not only the principle of respecting and being obedient to the superior, but also favoring the intimate. Sarri (1990) observed that Chinese parents often exercise authority and discipline simultaneously with conveying the message that they do out of love and concern for their children. Therefore, children tend to internalize feelings of affection and reverence along with parental discipline and control. In other words, the intergenerational relationship is hierarchical yet intimate.

Chinese societies have undergone a rapid industrialization, urbanization and westernization process for the past century, and have evolved from an agricultural into commercial and industrial economic models (Hwang, 1999; Yang, 1996; Yue & Ng, 1999). Some studies have found that although the older generations still hold on to some traditional beliefs, the younger generation has shown rejection of conservatism and traditionalism (E. Lee, 1997; Yuan, 1987). Young people in Chinese societies are able to achieve financial independence from their parents at a much younger age than before. In return, they have more negotiation power for both physical and emotional autonomy from

their families (Yuan, 1987; Yue & Ng, 1999). They also demonstrate an embrace of competition, egalitarianism, hedonism, autonomy, and self-expression (Yang, 1986). Conversely, a number of studies have also found that traditional Chinese values are still shaping lives in Chinese societies (Tai, 1989; Yang, 1996; Yue & Ng, 1999). Yang (1998) stated that individuals respond to societal changes by combining traditional core values with values promoted in the modern society. Ho (1996) observed that some core filial obligations such as supporting aging parents and ancestral worship remained valued while other filial obligations such as absolute obedience were discarded by young people (Ho, 1996; Tsai, 1999). Yue and Ng (1999) noted that “given the central importance of family life in Chinese societies, it is unlikely that the social and economic changes would have brought about a wholesome erosion of filial obligations and expectations” (p. 216).

Chinese filial piety emphasizes the dependence of parents on their children when the parents are old. It is a form of expression of love and intimacy for both generations to follow these strictly prescribed behaviors. Nevertheless, dependence inevitably produces ambivalence because it restricts choice, demands obligations, and sets up entrapments for both parties (Smelser, 1998). In addition, the lack of agreement as to what constitutes filial piety between parents and children may be a source of psychological stress and ambivalence for some Chinese adult children. Lorenz-Meyer (2001) stated that higher degrees of ambivalence are mostly associated with more ambivalent interpretations of cultural rules and social institutions. Ho (1997) argued that the obligations of filial piety in Chinese culture have dictated children’s actions and as a result, they are not able to act “as a free agent capable of making alternative decisions” (p. 145). Inevitably, the

constraints of filial duty have become a source of unresolved conflicts and ambivalent feelings (Back, 1997). He proposed that:

Genuine harmonization of interpersonal relations requires recognizing, working through, and accommodating ambivalent feelings toward others, especially one's family members. Otherwise, we may be in denial of negative feelings or hostile impulses. Harmony then degenerates into pseudo harmony and role-affect dissociation (p. 147).

Summary

Cole and Knowles (2001) emphasized that context should be a reference point for researchers and readers to learn and understand individuals' life experiences in a life history research. The backdrop of the participants' and their family stories is the Chinese city of Hong Kong between the early 1960s and 2013. During this period, the city has gone through dramatic changes economically and socially. In addition, the city has changed from a British colony to a Special Administrative Region of China. Family systems are greatly influenced by these changes in the society (C. H. Ng, 1994).

Parents of the participants were immigrants from mainland China where traditional familial culture was rigidly practiced in the 1950s. Thus, the traditional parent-child relationship was close to the traditional practice that children were expected to obey parents' commands and respect parents' authority. Fathers held themselves as heads of the family, and they played the strict disciplinary roles in parenting. In addition, male children were more valued than their female siblings. Therefore, they were given more resources for advancement. Eldest daughters were requested to work in factories to

support a big family. Their uneducated parents could not earn enough to support the whole family during a time of poverty. During this time, Hong Kong has established itself as a manufacturing center to export goods during the process of industrialization.

By the late 1970s, Hong Kong became a major manufacturing, commercial, and shipping center in Asia (Jao, 1994). It continued to transform to a service-based economy with significant contribution from other sectors such as finance in the 1980s (T. Y. C. Wong, 1994). The participants reported an improvement in their families' standard of living due to a smaller earner-dependent ratio and an increment in wages. With more resources, the government began to provide public housing and free education. Many of the participants belong to the "new middle class" created by this increasing affluence of the society from the 1980s to early 1990s. Unlike their parents, they do not share the immigrant mentality and they are different from their parents in lifestyle, values, attitudes and social aspirations (B. K. P. Leung, 1996).

By the 1990s, Hong Kong had established itself as one of the major financial centers in the world (Jao, 1994). As a small open economy, the economic condition of Hong Kong is closely tied to the demand situations of its leading economic partners as well as to regional and global financial crises (Government of the Hong Kong ASR, 2009). In addition, there has been political unrest since the turnover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Consequently, Hong Kong people harbor a sense of insecurity and anxiety for its current life and future development (Lui, 2005). Guided by the principles of *laissez faire*, the Hong Kong government is not providing any intervention to ease the stress and concerns of its citizens. It encourages people to rely more on the private market and their families for tangible and emotional care and support (Lau, 1981). Many aging parents

have no choice but to rely on their adult children for tangible and emotional support. This arrangement may put pressure on their children and their families who are adhered to the traditional practice of filial piety (Chow, 1992a; Shae & Wong, 2009; S. W. K. Yu & Chau, 1997).

Chapter Four

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The emphasis of this study is on Chinese middle-aged individuals' perceptions of their relationships within their family-of-origin, particularly with their parents. This chapter begins with a rationale for choosing a qualitative research method. Following this is a description of the research process in the sequence of epistemological assumptions, research methodology and then research methods. The research methodology section highlights the life-history research approach, which has its root in social constructionism. This approach includes the researcher's contribution in the co-creation process and illuminates the "intersection of human experience and social context" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 9). The research method section presents the concrete procedure and strategies used in the process of inviting participation, data collection, and data analysis. This chapter ends with a presentation of the principles that guided the ethical considerations.

The Choice of Qualitative Research Method

A good understanding of participants' lived experiences requires an in-depth exploration of the complexity and the evolutionary nature of human relationships. In contrast to quantitative research design, which tends to examine central tendencies and summarizes causal relationships between variables, a qualitative analysis offers ideographic explanations and is better at understanding how negotiations take place in

complex family relationships (Bengtson et al., 2002; Denzin, & Lincoln, 2000). In addition, a qualitative approach uses a narrative format that provides a rich description of the participants' own observations and interpretations about their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gale, 1993; Huntsley, 1993; Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990; Schwartzman, 1984). In this narrative process, participants are invited to express views in their own words rather than using researchers' predetermined terms and categories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gehart, Tarragona, & Bava, 2007). In this study, I refrained from imposing my own preconceived hypothesis to fit the participants' answers to my pre-constructed categories. Instead, I listened carefully and respectfully to the participants' own words, according to their own frames of mind with reference to their own experiences in their own cultural context.

Equally important, qualitative research methods are most useful and powerful when they are used to discover how participants perceive and relate to the world (Eichler, 1987). Therefore, qualitative research does not only look into person's lives, stories and behaviors, it also studies interactional relationships in various contexts and cultures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As described in the development of the framework of intergenerational ambivalence in the previous chapter, sociological and structural ambivalence is currently a crucial component in the definition of the concept. In this research, I was curious to find out how middle-aged children perceived the interactional effect of the Hong Kong context, their family history and their own agency in the process of learning to adapt to their relationship with their parents in different stages of their life. In the process, I learned about the ways they interpreted the norms and expectations of Chinese culture in different historical contexts. Among qualitative methods, the life-

history approach, which has significant emphasis on context, offers a sound choice for this research. Life history studies “rely on and depict the storied nature of lives” and are “concerned with honoring the individuality and complexity of individuals’ experiences” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 20). Most importantly, life-history research “goes beyond the individual or the personal and places narrative accounts and interpretations within a broader context” and “draws on individuals’ experiences to make broader contextual meaning” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 20).

Qualitative research methods are particularly appropriate for exploring subjective experiences about issues that have not been explored extensively and about which little is known (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). How Chinese adult children manage their relationships with their parents, particularly during ambivalent moments, has never been investigated. Since the concept of intergenerational ambivalence was only introduced in 1998, most of the studies have used quantitative methods to define the existence of ambivalence and its typology. Quantitative methods have constraints in exploring more complex issues such as how ambivalence is managed and how it interacts with cultural and historical contexts (Eichler, 1987).

The intergenerational ambivalence theory is the predominant framework in current research into parent-adult children relationships, and it seems to offer a clear direction for my research. However, I did not wish to be limited by this theory or to overlook other important factors and processes in the relationships between aging parents and adult children. I developed research questions to guide the data collection and analysis phase of the research on this particular theme. Nevertheless, I was prepared to have these questions modified or changed based on new understandings and directions

during the course of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, my choice of a research process is a more fluid, flexible and responsive qualitative approach (Moon et al., 1990). As stated by Cole and Knowles (2001), qualitative research “is more like the flight of a butterfly than a bee: its path is meandering and indeterminate. It is not possible to predict at the outset where the inquiry process will lead as it seldom goes directly back to the places set out in an initial review of literature” (p. 64).

Family therapy researchers have urged the need for research methods that are more consistent with systems theory and therefore research findings are more relevant to family clinicians (Echevarria-Doan & Tubbs, 2005; Haene, 2010; Moon et al., 1990). Some researchers have suggested that qualitative methodology may at least partially respond to this request because “the qualitative research paradigm is isomorphic with the cybernetic underpinnings of the field of family therapy” (Moon et al., 1990, p. 363). Qualitative methodology is similar to that of the family therapist, using open-ended questions to start conversations and to develop further dialogue. Thus, it generates knowledge that is in a language and a format similar to family therapists (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Echevarria-Doan & Tubbs, 2005; Haene, 2010; Moon et al., 1990). Since the idea of this research was prompted by my experience as a family therapist (I will describe this in more detail in the later part of this chapter), I hope that the results can be useful for clinicians who work with Chinese families. Research findings that only prove the existence of ambivalence and its nature have little clinical value. Only when researchers start to look closer and deeper into the strategies that adult children use in managing ambivalence in their relationships with their parents can they offer insights for family therapists. Therefore, this study contributes to the growing body of qualitative literature

in marriage and family therapy, which has been encouraged in the field because of the epistemological similarities between qualitative research and family therapy theories (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Echevarria-Doan & Tubbs, 2005; Gale, 1993; Gehart, Ratliff, & Lyle, 2001; Haene, 2010; Moon et al., 1990; Sprenkle & Piercy, 2005).

Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology refers to theories of reality and knowledge (Gehart et al., 2001; Kvale, 1996) and it has been defined in various ways. For example, Crotty (1998) stated that epistemology is a way of “looking at the world and making sense of it” (p. 8). It deals with “the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis” (Hamlyn, 1995, p. 242). Therefore, it is concerned with “providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (Maynard, 1994, p. 10). Consequently, it is vital to consider issues regarding epistemology in scientific research. It is generally expected that researchers, especially qualitative researchers, declare their philosophical and epistemological premises from the very beginning of the design of their research, because the assumptions of theories of knowledge give direction to all aspects of the study (Gale, 1993; Kvale, 1996; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Shek, Tang, & Han, 2005; Sprenkle & Piercy, 2005). In the process of deciding on an epistemology for research, researchers need to reflect on their own theories of knowledge and their orientation to the world and the people around them. When epistemological assumptions are also lived in other areas of researchers’ lives, the authenticity of the research process is ensured (Anderson, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001)

In the early stage of scientific research, the main quest of social scientists who studied human behavior was “objectivity”. They designed their research methods and articulated their report writings to give readers a valid, reliable, and objective picture of the objects studied. Those studies are mainly quantitative and grounded in logical-positivist premises with a belief in the existence of value-free knowledge and reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Even in early qualitative research, western anthropologists situated themselves in an uninvolved position to observe and study “alien, foreign, and strange” peoples and cultures on some undeveloped lands (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 13). To ensure validity and reliability, some investigators conduct human behavioral studies in lab settings applying controlled procedures and clearly defined and detached variables (Strong, 2004). Through this objective investigative process, researchers believe that their interpretations and conclusions are “reality” or at least close to the reality of what the objects experienced. This type of research orientation is classified as having a positivist paradigm (Strong, 2004). Nonetheless, the majority of current qualitative studies are conducted from other epistemological positions, including post-positivism, phenomenology, critical theory, feminism, constructivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Post-positivists challenge the positivist stance by stating that although a real and objective world exists, researchers have bias and sensory restrictions when trying to comprehend and explain it (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Phenomenology is the most frequently used post-positivist theory, which endeavors to explain the lived experience of the participants around a particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Critical theory and feminism stress that individuals’ perceptions and understanding of the

world are influenced and shaped by background, context and culture in which social values are embedded (Guba, 1990). Constructivism considers the individual cognitive process in knowledge construction about the world (von Foerster, 1991). Hermeneutics emphasizes the role of interpretation in the process of generating knowledge. It emphasizes textual metaphor and interpretation as ontological facts of individual existence (Schwandt, 1994). Social constructionism emphasizes the social and intersubjective aspects of knowledge creation, and therefore social-constructionist research centers around the interpersonal nature of the interpretive process and meaning construction (Anderson, 1997; Gergen, 1994).

This study is based on a social constructionist perspective which suggests that knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and participants through a linguistic process. Moreover, from a social constructionist point of view, qualitative methods offers a more human, less mechanical relationship between the researcher and the “researched”. This is contrary to the assumption of subject-object separation adopted by positivist approaches. The researcher is regarded as a “learner” and “non-expert” in the process of curiously learning about participants’ lived experience (Anderson, 1997; Gehart et al., 2007). In addition, researchers, in their interaction with participants, also contribute to meaning-making and knowledge-creating in the exploration process by asking questions, responding to the newness, and sharing ideas (Anderson, 1997; Gehart et al., 2007; Levin, 2007). Oakley (1981) suggested that the “goal of finding out about people through interviewing was best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee was nonhierarchical and when the interviewer was prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship” (p. 41). Collaborative inquiry, therefore, is

not a methodological model, it is rather a philosophy of the collaborative stance in the process of considering and designing different aspects of a research study (Gehart et al., 2007). In the case of this study, my personal experience as a Chinese daughter who has been through struggles and confusion as well as intimacy and growth in my relationships with my parents inevitably contributes to the interests, development and analysis of this research. When my own confusion and pondering about my relationship with my parents echoed with my clients' stories in clinical process, the interest in this research was born. Therefore, this research is also intimate to me in that it is unlikely that I can be "objective" and not include my part in the research process. Consequently, this study is a co-creation of the research participants and myself as the researcher.

Methodology: Life History Research

Research methodology is chosen not only to best suit the research questions, but also to reflect on the epistemology theory decided on for the research. The methodology or strategy of inquiry in this study is life-history inquiry. With its root in social constructionist theory, life-history research proposed by Cole and Knowles (2001) aims to gain insights into the broader human condition, such the complex interaction between life and history, self and context, as well as the individual in relationships. Because communities and societies are made up of clusters of individuals, in depth exploration of an individual life-in-context will hopefully give us insights into the complexities and confusions of the collective culture (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009). Aston (2000) proposed three underlying assumptions of life history studies. The first assumption is that the life stories people tell are embedded in a social, historical and

cultural context (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson, 1995). The second assumption is that in the process of understanding life stories, various parties contribute to interpretive attempts based on their own unique realities (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). The third assumption is that events of an individual's life are linked and interconnected and that "the past is alive in the present" (Rosenwald, 1992, p. 272). In the following, I use these three assumptions of life history research to highlight the key characteristics of this approach.

The Assumptions of Life History Research.

The interplay of life stories and context.

The balance of life stories and context distinguishes life history research from other types of qualitative methodologies. Moreover, to contrast ethnographic research in which the "unit of analysis" is the "context" itself, life history research treats context as a necessary backdrop and a reference point that helps the researcher to better understand participants' life experiences and perspectives (Cole & Knowles, 2001). To understand the distinctions between "life history" and "narrative", Hatch (1995) elicited help from a group of expert researchers through collecting answers to a set of questions covering various aspects of narrative and life history. Ardra Cole responded by writing: "narrative focuses on making meaning out of individuals' experiences; life history draws on individuals' experiences to make broader contextual meaning" (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 124). In the same study Pauline Chinn notes "a life history is composed of self-referential stories through which the author-narrator constructs the identity and point(s) of view of a unique individual historically situated in culture, time and place" (Hatch &

Wisniewski, 1995, p. 115). In other words, the focus of life history is on “the experiences that people share and the possibilities they give for wider implications, with the assumption that there is much that we share with others on a contextual level” (Aston, 2000, p. 72).

Acker (1983) argued that individual experience is located in a particular social and historical context and is “embedded within a set of social relations that produce both the possibilities and limitations of that experience” (p. 425). Personal Narratives Group (1989) conceptualizes context as a dynamic process “through which the individual simultaneously shapes and is shaped by her environment” (p. 19). Context therefore is not destiny but there is room for change and growth. Hence, life history research also has a focus on the ways in which people shape their lives and might provide models for others to move beyond the limiting aspects of their identity and environment (Aston, 2000). Along the same lines, in his response to Hatch and Wisniewski (1995)’s study, Andrew Sparkes emphasized the usefulness of the life history research method in gaining insights into participants’ processes of change, due to its constant movement between individual stories and social and cultural histories

Cole and Knowles (2001) suggested that various contextual influences shift, merge, and blend over time. The researcher, along with the participants, needs to sort through the meaning of these interactive influences on the participants’ lived experiences. They believed that exploring context should be a natural and easy endeavor because “lives are always lived within context” (p. 80) and often “participants’ articulations of the obvious and not-so-obvious connections with the world, society, and community surrounding their experience will surface in the dialogue” (p. 80). The researcher only needs to

introduce follow-up questions for participants to expand their description when it comes up in the dialogical process. They offered specific guidelines about how to go about exploring the contexts (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Using life history methodology means that the subject matter of my research is based on the ordinary experiences of adult children with their parents, experiences that are embedded in culture, history, social and political context. Through the stories that adult children tell, we have the opportunity to examine the interaction between individual, family and society. As adult children shape and are shaped by their interpersonal relationships and cultural norms, their stories inform our own realities and allow us to learn from them.

The nature of interpretation.

Life history inquiry is a “representation of human experience that draws in viewers or readers to the interpretive process and invites them to make meaning and form judgments based on their reading of the ‘text’ as it is viewed through the lenses of their own realities” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 11). Through interpreting life history narratives, understanding of the lives examined increases (Bloom & Munro, 1995). Interpretation comes into every moment of inquiry (Rosenwald, 1992). The life stories that participants tell are their own interpretations and such stories do not capture the fullness of “life as lived” and “life as experienced”. Moreover, the telling of stories is “influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience and by the social context” (Bruner, 1984, p. 7). Although people do not tell life stories from an objective stance, they give their own realities and truths (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). When the researcher hears a participant’s recount of lived experiences, she also makes her own interpretations. The

meanings she formulates are shaped by her own place and time in the world (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Every participating agent (researchers, participants, and readers) is included in the meaning-making and knowledge-creating process. There is no single reality, but only multiple meanings and perspectives (Anderson, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Gehart et al., 2007).

Part of the inter-subjective and interpretative nature of life history work is the co-creation of meaning between the researcher and participants (Anderson, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). In view of this, the researcher endeavors to honor the participants' reality as much as possible (Acker et al., 1983). Thus, the researcher needs to acknowledge the multiplicity of interpretations and meanings that are inherent to life story research (Carter, 1993). The questions the researcher asks during the conversation generally give direction to how conversations flow and which areas of experience are covered (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Therefore, the researcher needs to take responsibility through constant reflection, examination and explication (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Cole and Knowles (2001) emphasized reflexivity in the research process. Reflexivity is not only related to matters of (inter) subjectivity and the significance of acknowledging one's stance as researcher. It is also about being ethical and respectful of participants. Being reflexive leads to "heightened awareness of self, other, and the self-other dialectic" (p. 30).

The connections of events of life.

Although people reveal their stories in fragmented ways, there are links between the events of a story. In order to make a story understandable to the reader, there needs to

be historic continuity (Polkinghorne, 1995). According to Rosenwald (1992), "Life stories ought to illuminate connections among the series of narratives that any informant might construct" (p. 7). Moreover, Rosenwald (1992) argued that "historicism in the sense that any event, any experience, any action can be better understood if we recognize earlier moments surviving and resonating within it" (p. 272).

Even though each life story is unique and is illustrated in a particular life situation, more often than not participants' stories are about endeavors to change their social learning experiences. In the unfolding of one's story the effects of the constraints of family and social system are illuminated and the logic of individual courses of action becomes clear (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). In some stories, there is an acceptance of social norms while in others those norms are confronted and challenged. Linking elements of a life allows us, according to the Personal Narratives Group, "to see lives as simultaneously individual and social creations, and to see individuals simultaneously as the changers and the changed" (p. 6).

In this study, the scope of exploration was the participants' family experiences, especially their relationship dynamics with their parents throughout the course of life. Current relationship styles, including both positive and negative, were closely connected to the participants' past interactions especially during their childhood when they were highly dependent on their parents. In addition, their stories also reflect the social norms of Hong Kong society. While their family life experiences are shaped by the cultural norms, they also exercise their own agency in managing their experiences in order to live comfortably and meaningfully.

Method

Rigor and Trustworthiness

“Every report of research contains knowledge claims and every report of research must provide evidence to support these claims; however, judgments about how any piece of research does both of those things must be fundamentally tied to the epistemological roots of the research methodology” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 123). Conventional research based on logical-positivist premises seeks for scientific truth that conforms to the established criteria of validity and reliability. The goals of the outcomes of research are for generalizations and predictions (Kvale, 1996). However, these criteria and goals contradict with the social constructionist perspective. Hence, an alternative assessment is needed to better reflect the epistemological base of life history research (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Wolcott, 1994).

Life history researchers have proposed implementing and presenting rigorous research procedures to support the quality of their work (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997; Wolcott, 1994). In addition, one of the hallmarks of qualitative research is the transparency of the research process, what Kilbourn (1998) referred to as “self-consciousness,” which makes explicit the researcher’s connection between method and meaning (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Thus, the main body of this chapter gives a detailed and transparent account of the research process I went through from deciding on the research topic to writing up of the findings. The process invites readers to judge the rigor and trustworthiness of this study on their own.

Research as a Reflexive Activity

A key factor that contributes to “good” life history research is a researcher’s acknowledgement of her subjectivity in a research account (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Researcher-subjective perceptions shape the whole research process from the choice of topic to the analysis process and in the emphases of the final presentation (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1998) stated that a researcher “is the instrument of inquiry and the lens of description, interpretation, analysis, and narrative that is crucial that her voice be monitored, subdued, and restrained (though never silenced)” (p. 86). The term reflexivity is used to describe the process of examining and presenting researcher subjectivity. According to Finlay (2012), reflexivity is being “thoughtfully and critically self-aware of personal/relational dynamics in research and how these affect the research” (p. 318). Mason (1996) also proposed that reflexive research requires researchers to critically scrutinize their own actions and role in the research process.

While I describe my contribution as a researcher in different stages of the research process, I want to focus on telling the story underlying my choice of this research topic, my own intergenerational relationship and the professional skills I bring to the research process. All of these three factors contribute to my subjectivity as a researcher in this study.

The story behind my choice of research topic.

My interest in initiating this research emerged from my work with individuals and couples in Hong Kong. Individuals and couples seeking therapy often come into conflict with their parents and in-laws. Issues include living arrangements, practical and

emotional support to parents and in-laws, the emotional proximity of adult children to their own parents, parents' involvement in childrearing and daily household management. From clients' expressions of their experiences and my clinical observations, the emotions provoked in discussing and managing these intergenerational issues are intense and conflicting. Spouses frequently feel torn between what they believe they have to do in order to fulfill their filial duties and what they can do to maintain the balance of the demands from their various roles in life. In addition, many, mostly men, expressed difficulties in handling the complaints from their spouses about their mothers and their mothers about their spouses. For many women, the exhaustion of trying to take care of their aging parents and in-laws, to look after their own children, and to also keep a job to contribute to the family's finances inflicts negative consequences on their emotional and physical health. When looking beyond their current issues to inquiry about relationship dynamics, clients often brought up years of accumulated disappointment, sadness and resentment in their relationships with their parents.

Harlene Anderson, one of the founders of the social constructionist collaborative approach, has been conducting workshops for family therapy students and mental health professionals in Hong Kong since 2007. I have been acting as her assistant for such workshops. She often invites volunteers to join her in conversation about issues that they want to find direction for in their lives. Conversations repeatedly and consistently are about participants' relationships with their parents. My thinking is that in a group of people who know each other, volunteers may only share important personal details that they believe will not evoke negative judgments about themselves from others. One way to avoid judgment is to share challenges that will resonate with other participants' life

experiences. Not surprisingly, many of the conversations triggered intense emotions in all the participants. Most of them would be in tears. I, as one of the witnessing participants, could certainly relate to the conversations and the conflicting feelings the volunteers felt in their struggle to find a satisfying way to relate to their parents. During a private conversation with Dr. Anderson in 2011, she revealed that it was fascinating to her that in most of the cases she had interviewed in Chinese societies including Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese Mainland, issues were about multigenerational relationships, whereas issues that were discussed in other parts of the world such as North and South America and Europe were more diverse. In our discussion, we reflected on the significance of intergenerational relationships on the lives of individuals in Chinese families. In sum, the observations and reflections in my professional life have guided me to this choice of topic. I believe a more intimate and in depth understanding of Chinese intergenerational relationships will help mental health professionals to provide better help to individuals and families in the Chinese societies.

My own intergenerational relationships.

Like most of the volunteers at Dr. Anderson's workshops in Chinese regions, I have my own experiences, both positive and negative, in my relationship with my parents. Therefore, researching this topic is relevant not only professionally, but also personally. Both my professional and personal development contributed to the subjectivity that I brought to the research process. It is important for a life history researcher to make her subjectivity explicit so that this becomes part of the data for evaluation and scrutiny (Aston, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 2001).

I was born in a peasant family in a small village in Northern China. I am the oldest of three children, with one brother and one sister. In my parents' perception, I have always been independent, resourceful and stubborn. To this day, my dad still tells stories of me running away at the age of three to my grandparents in the next village. From a very early age, I found ways to solve problems when I helped around the house and farm. I think that, owing to my independent and strong personality, I was never emotionally attached to my parents. I was always out there doing my own thing. My younger brother, on the other hand, was very attached to my mother. My dad's explanation was that growing up without brothers in her own family-of-origin, my mother favored my brother more than my sister and me. Nevertheless, my mother did not distinguish between son and daughters in her vision for our life achievement. She always encouraged me and my sister to develop our potential and in her own words "girls can achieve as much as boys".

We migrated to Hong Kong when I was thirteen years old. Many of our relatives suggested that my parents send me to work in a factory to support the family. But to my parents, it was not an option that I would go on in life without a good education. I eventually went to the last year of primary school even though at my age I was supposed to be in secondary school. My parents wanted me to catch up on the English curriculum to which I had no exposure in China. Sadly, my mother did not live to see what my sister and I achieved academically. She died of cancer one year after arriving Hong Kong. Although I was not emotionally close to my mother, and I might have been jealous of my brother growing up, I do not harbor resentment toward her. On the contrary, I am thankful for her inspiration and dedication to my personal and educational development.

Looking deeper though, I also wish that I had a more intimate relationship with her when she was alive.

My father is now seventy years old, retired, living with my stepmother thirty minutes away by car from me. I see him three times a month on average. He comes to see my children and we have family gatherings with my brother and sister's families. My father did not have much in the way of savings when he retired at age sixty-five from his job as a cook. There is not a proper retirement pension scheme in Hong Kong; thus, my siblings and I support him and my stepmother financially. This arrangement does not put a strain on our relationship because my father is not demanding. Moreover, I believe it is what I am supposed to do.

I describe my relationship with my father as average and emotionally distant. My father, in general, never opposed my major life decisions because he somehow trusted my judgment. Therefore, we never had any major conflict. The only difficulty we have is that we simply cannot relate. We do not have deep meaningful conversations partly because we have had very different experiences in our lives. The gap was widened by my experience of living in the United States for seven years and by my being married to a Canadian Caucasian. In retrospect, I think it is also resulted from our different views of role expectations. My father, like most Chinese parents, still focuses most of his attention and hope onto his children. For example, he offers endless advice and complaints about my brother's various personal choices in life. I used to get frustrated and irritated, and told him that my brother, who is a university graduate, married and a professional building surveyor working full time, is just doing fine. I suggested that my father find some other interests such as travelling to nearby areas and joining activities in elderly

centers. About two years ago, I realized that my father would probably never change, because to him, not focusing on his children's lives means he is not a responsible father. So when he complains now, I just listen. I also sense that my father has higher expectations for my brother because he is the only son of the family.

I feel closer to my father since my children were born because seeing the way he interacts with my children warms my heart. My children have somehow acted as a bridge between the two of us; through the children we can relate and understand each other. My parents were honest and hardworking people and they devoted themselves tremendously to my development. I am thankful to them but at the same time I wish we could relate differently. Rationally, I know the gap between us is mostly due to the drastic difference between our growing up environments. This difference is very similar to the experiences of the participants of this study.

The professional skills I brought to the research process.

I was trained as a marriage and family therapist in the Masters of Marriage and Family Therapy program at Brigham Young University in the United States from 1999-2001. I came back to Hong Kong right after my graduation. Before I started a teaching career at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2005, I worked at an NGO providing individual and family therapy in the Kwai Chung district, in which most residents belonged to the lower social-economic class. My clinical experience during this time was valuable in part because it allowed me the opportunity to learn about the differences and similarities between the Chinese families I encountered and the American families that I worked with during my studies. Naturally therapists, especially inexperienced therapists,

struggle with applying learned theories and approaches to the real families coming to their therapy rooms. Applying concepts and models created in the Western culture to a Chinese city added layers of confusion. Cultural nuances are often overlooked when we are insiders. My advantage of having learned about another culture has enhanced my sensitivity to noticing many subtle messages and implications within my own culture. The differences between the two cultures intrigued me and I started to ask many “why” questions about culture and “how” questions about effective therapy models. I realized that the therapy models I learned in graduate school such as Structural, Cognitive and Behavior, Intergenerational, somehow hindered me from truly listening to my clients. I was too busy in trying to change them to become “functional” and “ideal”. I knew I needed a new way of understanding and relating to my clients and the culture they were embedded in.

It struck a chord in me when I read Harlene Anderson (1997)’s book, *Conversation, language, and possibilities: A postmodern approach to therapy* during the first few months after I came to work at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In her framework, which follows the post-modern social constructionist tradition, human systems are regarded as systems of language and communication. Clients’ stories and voices are respected and privileged. Language, to her, is generative and it shapes individual life and relationships. Therefore, when a therapist engages and participates with a client in a dialogical process of story-telling, the potential for infinite ways of change occurs (Anderson, 1997). She encouraged therapists to be “genuinely fully engrossed” (Anderson, 1997, p. 60) in conversations with their clients:

When we listened carefully to clients we actually became interested in what they were saying. Thus, we found ourselves fully engrossed in their unique stories and earnestly inquisitive about their views of life and their dilemmas. We became more focused on maintaining coherence within a client's experiences and committed to being informed by his or her story. What began as a purposeful conversational technique became a natural curiosity and a spontaneous way of talking with people and being in relationship with them (pp. 60-61).

Anderson's collaborative approach has served as a framework for my professional and personal development since 2005. Guided by social constructionist concepts, many of the "why" questions I asked earlier in my career were partially answered in dialogues with clients. When I was thinking about a research topic to pursue for a PhD, I decided to look into intergenerational relationships. This topic was puzzling to me because it is very complex and emotion-provoking, and I did not know enough about it. Therefore, I wanted to explore deeper into this phenomenon. Inevitably, my skill as an experienced therapist who practices collaborative therapy contributed to the research process.

Inviting Participation

To object to "dressing up commonsense ideas in scientific garb" (p. 66) and to avoid "perpetuating the scientization of research into the human condition" (p. 66), Cole and Knowles (2001) advocated using "inviting participation" instead of "sampling" for participant selection. In qualitative research, "inviting participation" is based on the researcher's goal to gain insights into a specific phenomenon (Gehart et al., 2001) and to uncover "the full array of multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 40). With life

history inquiry, researchers choose depth over breadth, and the goal of research analysis is not for generalization (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Therefore, unlike quantitative studies, an increased sample size does not guarantee more power in qualitative research (Gehart et al., 2001). In general, researchers aim for “saturation” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or “completeness” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) of the data to determine the number of cases and the analysis process. Researchers usually do not decide the number of cases beforehand. Rather, the number of participants is decided throughout the analysis process with a goal to reach saturation (Gehart et al., 2001). Cole and Knowles (2001) suggested inviting a small number of participants who make a commitment to work with researchers over a period of time throughout the research process to gain in-depth understandings of an area of mutual interest. The researcher may recruit participants through personal networks and referrals or formal recruitment.

The participants in this research are middle-aged Hong Kong Chinese men and women who are age forty to fifty-five with at least one secondary school aged child (age 12 to 19) and one or two living parents. Participants with children are included because existing research findings report that child rearing is often a source of tension between middle-aged children and their parents (Clarke et al., 1999). Other than the requirement of being born and grown up in Hong Kong in order to achieve certain level of contextual unity, I had no other demographic requirements such as socio-economic class or religious affiliation.

A “snowball” sampling method was adopted in this study. I invited the participants identified through my personal and professional networks. I explained my research project to people in different areas of my life such as friends, colleagues,

students, and community contacts and asked them for referrals. Among the twenty participants, I knew only three of them previously; two of them are my former students and one of them was a client whom I interviewed in a supervision group of five students three years before the research. It was not possible nor was it my purpose to include a group of participants that were representative of the population as a whole. Nonetheless, I was conscious about recruiting participants that were from various backgrounds in terms as socio-economic status, educational attainment and family structures.

To establish an authentic and caring working relationship, I approached each potential participant directly after I received their contact information. I explained to them the purpose and procedures of my research, as well as the role of the researcher and the participants. I also invited them to share with me their concerns and questions regarding the various aspects of the research. From the very beginning, I was conscious about co-creating a conversational space with participants so they would feel comfortable about sharing their concerns and opinions openly. Therefore, it was important for me to prepare participants by providing sufficient information about the inquiry process, and hopefully, they made informed decisions about their participation (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

I interviewed ten male and ten female participants and the number was decided in the proposal stage of this study based on an estimation because it was not possible for me to predict the number of participants needed in order to achieve “ a kind of saturation or an intellectual or narrative exhaustion” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 78). Nonetheless, during the process of interviewing each of the twenty participants twice, I did not find

new themes and insights for the last two to three participants. Therefore, I believe I collected enough data to achieve saturation.

Data Collection

I employed face-to-face in-depth conversational interviews to capture the life stories of the participants in this study. Information related to the research topic was co-created by the researcher and participants through guided conversation (Cole & Knowles, 2001) or conversation with purpose and intention (Anderson, 1997). In this section, I want to describe the process of co-construction of knowledge or “data” based on the social constructionist collaborative approach (Anderson, 1997; Gehart et al., 2007) combined with guidelines provided by Cole and Knowles (2001). Anderson (1997) stated that conversation “is the most important vehicle for the construction of meaning” (p. 108), and “conversation in a postmodern interpretative and narrative perspective is a linguistic phenomenon: a meaning-generating process” (p. 109). Hence, research as a dialogical conversation is a “generative process in which new meanings – different ways of understanding, making sense of, or punctuating one’s lived experiences – emerge and are mutually constructed” (Anderson, 1997, p. 108). Moreover, this mutual or shared inquiry requires a process in which both researchers and participants are “in a fluid mode characterized by an in-there-together, two-way, give-and-take exchange” (Anderson, 1997, p. 112).

A collaborative relationship between the researcher and participants is essential in social constructionist research process (Anderson, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Haene, 2010). The participants, therefore, are considered as co-researchers. The researcher and

co-researchers “immerse themselves within their ongoing relationship” to induce “an infinite merging of new meanings” (Haene, 2010, p. 5). Therefore, the emphasis on collaboration needs to start from the beginning of the shared inquiry. For example, I needed to clarify purposes with the participants and to explain to them the meaning and importance of them telling and sharing their life stories. I also shared with them why this research was both professional and personally meaningful to me. The participants and I decided on the setting and length of the interviews together. In order to create a focus for the research, a set of questions was created before I met with participants. These questions were “sufficiently broad to allow space to roam but not so broad or vague that the focus of the research is easily lost or participants are uncertain about how to respond” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 73). In addition, questions were open and free from suggestion that conversations go in a particular direction (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Faulkner & Thomas, 2002).

To start inquiry after mutual agreement on basic structures, a researcher adapts a curious and “not-knowing” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) “learner” (Anderson, 1997) position:

Dialogue, by its very nature, involves not-knowing and uncertainty. Sincere interest in another necessitates not-knowing the other, their situation, or their future ahead of time, whether the knowing is in the form of previous experience, theoretical knowledge, or familiarity... As well, dialogue requires a not-knowing attitude toward its outcome. Because perspectives change and dialogue is inherently transforming, it is impossible to predict, for instance, how a story will

be told, the twists and turns its telling may take, or its seemingly final version (pp. 34-35).

To start learning about participants' experiences and perspectives, I began with "starter questions" (Anderson, 1997), such as "what do you think is the most important aspect about your relationship with your parents that I should know about?" "When you think about your father/mother, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?" "How do you usually describe your relationship with your father/mother to the people you know?" "Are there any recent significant incidents that happened between you and your father/mother that you want to share with me?" I gave the participants enough time and space to formulate their response and a new question was offered if they did not think the questions asked were relevant. In many cases, if they did not start off sharing significant events, we began by drawing genograms of their families. I found that this worked well as a warm-up exercise not only because it eased the participants into the conversation, but also because it allowed them time to recall their memories, reflect on their experiences and to formulate answers to my succeeding questions. Once the conversation started, I realized that I did not need to use my prepared questions because the dialogue between the participant and me developed naturally. I only needed to ensure that we covered all significant relationships and life stages in the first interviews.

When the participants were describing their experiences, I observed carefully their verbal and nonverbal expressions. Anderson (2007) defines listening as "attending, interacting, and responding with the other person" (p. 36). The listening process involves "trying to hear and grasp what the other person is saying", "being genuinely curious", "asking questions to learn more about what is said and not what you think should be said",

and “checking with the other to learn if what you think you heard is what the other person hoped you would hear” by “using comparable terms or different words from those that the other is using” (p. 36). By immersing myself in the listening process, the questions that facilitate the research conversation emerged from the ongoing dialogue naturally (Anderson, 1997). Questions in a qualitative research interview are generally evolved along the process. Therefore, it is very likely that the first interview will be different from later ones. As I became more embedded in the conversations, I learned to adapt the initial questions to the emerging topics and focal concerns (Marzano, 2012). In the case of this interview process, several issues that came up during early interviews provided direction for me to ask related questions in later interviews. For example, the issue of son preference and favoritism, especially on the part of mothers, came out significantly in the first few interviews. I made note to explore this area with all the participants later on.

The initial title for this study was formulated as “Managing intergenerational relationships: Experiences of middle-aged children in a Chinese society”. I did not want to go into interviews looking for ambivalence; rather I wanted to invite participants to tell their stories in their own words. If ambivalence or any other themes were important, they would surface naturally in the conversations. Ambivalence was only introduced when the descriptions given by the participants seemed to fit the concept. I checked with them if ambivalence could be used to describe their feelings and situations. The intergenerational ambivalence theme emerged as significant as the interviews went on.

Because of the importance of “context” in the life history research, Cole and Knowles (2001) offered specific guidelines about how to go about “exploring the context” (p. 79). In contrast with ethnography research in which the “unit of analysis” is the

“context” itself, life history research treats context as necessary backdrop and a reference point and that helps the researcher to better understand participants’ life experiences and perspectives (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Cole and Knowles (2001) suggested some typical contextual influences that might be revealed through research conversations. In addition, contextual influence shifts, merges, and blends over time, and therefore the researcher, along with the participants, needs to sort through the meaning of these interactive influences on the participants lived experiences. Cole and Knowles (2001) believed that “exploring the context” should be a natural and easy endeavor because “lives are always lived within context” and often “participants’ articulations of the obvious and not-so-obvious connections with the world, society, and community surrounding their experience” will surface in the dialogue (p. 80). The researcher only needs to introduce follow-up questions for participants to expand their description when it comes up in the dialogical process. During the course of interviews in this study, familial as well as societal cultures, religious influences and practice, gender issues, educational backgrounds of different generations and relationship and contextual factors were discussed.

To ensure sufficient exploration and saturation of the research dialogue, I interviewed each participant twice with at least two months’ time in between to facilitate reflection by both the participants and me. While the first interviews were more general, exploring various family relationships in different stages, the second were more in depth, with a focus on participants’ relationships with their parents and detailed accounts of their affective, cognitive and behavioral adaptations. The length of the forty interviews range from one hour to two hours with the majority of the conversations lasted about one and a

half hours. After the first research conversation, two copies of the video recordings were made for the participant and me. Due to time constraints, I hired two assistants to transcribe the video-recorded interviews. The conversations were transcribed verbatim in Cantonese with an aim to preserve semantic meaning. I ensured my immersion into the material by listening to the interview recordings and reading the transcribed texts numerous times (Cole & Knowles, 2001). I reorganized the transcribed first conversations into several main themes, e.g. relationship with mother, relationship with father, relationship with siblings, and personal development. Both the original and reorganized transcriptions were sent to the participants before the second interview to help them to prepare for the second interview. I kept a record of some reflections and follow-up questions before the participants and I returned for the second conversation. I checked with every participant at the beginning of our second interview to see if they had read the transcripts. Only five of them indicated reading through the materials and the rest claimed that because it was their own story, they remembered it. I only started the second interviews after I finished all the first interviews with all twenty participants.

My initial plan for the third interview, the feedback session, was to continue to interview them individually. Although the arrangement was agreed to at the beginning of our first interview, I still checked with them at the end of the second interview about their thoughts and input. The first five participants had no objection or any alternative suggestions. The sixth participant suggested that instead of meeting individually, we could meet as small groups. According to him, he enjoyed parenting groups in his daughter's school at which several parents got together to discuss their common interests and concerns. This group meeting idea was interesting to me because it would add variety

to my research method, and socially constructed knowledge in a group situation would benefit my research findings. The rich ideas that result from an open-response format and the synergistic, generative effect of group discussion are often not able to be obtained from individual interviews (Edmunds, 1999). I thanked him for his idea and consulted with other participants. To my surprise, all of them agreed to this proposal. In this co-constructed research process, my initial plan was modified.

After finishing analyzing the first two interviews, I presented the initial analysis to the participants by sending them an eight-page write up before the feedback session. I consulted with them again about their preference for meeting in small groups or individually. Only one participant requested to meet with me individually. By the end, two more participants met with me privately due to time clashes between group meetings and their other activities. The remaining seventeen participants were divided into four groups with members of six, five, four and two. The participants expressed their opinions about my initial analysis. My final results were formulated by taking their feedback into account. In addition, we focused on exploring their experiences with the process of managing ambivalence. The process theme did not occur to be as important until I immersed myself deeply in the data during the process of analyzing the first two interviews before the feedback session. The participants generally agreed with the stages I proposed and added more valuable insights to its final product.

Data Analysis

In contrast to quantitative analysis, there are no commonly agreed procedures or rules for analyzing qualitative data (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Spencer, Ritchie, &

O'Connor, 2003; Wolcott, 1994). Approaches to data analysis vary in terms of epistemological assumptions of the research process and the position of the researcher's account (Spencer et al., 2003). Nonetheless, it is commonly agreed that life histories are complex by nature and therefore data analysis demands an equally complex process (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009). In life history research, data analysis is the process of meaning making. All meaning making is a social activity (Lemke, 1995), and in research, it starts when the researcher defines his/her project and goes through the process of the data gathering. After the mutual inquiry process, meanings and insights are negotiated and emerge throughout the research dialogue. Therefore, in life-history or collaborative research, data analysis cannot be independent and separated from other parts of the research process (Gehart et al., 2007).

For clarity of discussion, my focus in this section is on the meaning making process after the research conversations between the participants and me ended. In this stage, according to Cole and Knowles (2001), researchers need to possess "mental readiness to understand and accept the complexity of the task, the creative nature of the process, and the requirements of time, patience, and commitment to a sometimes convoluted and chaotic process" (p. 99) of the researcher.

The analysis of life history is the most creative part of the research project (Plummer, 1993) and it requires:

Brooding and reflecting upon mounds of data for long periods of time until it "makes sense" and "feels right," and key ideas and themes flow from it. It is also the hardest process to describe: the standard technique is to read and make notes,

leave and ponder, reread without notes, make new notes, match notes up, ponder, reread, and so on (p. 152).

Data analysis is a creative but tedious process. In this study, participants' stories were analyzed as a collection of stories around common themes and comparing and contrasting between different stories also provided significant insights into the topic (Gates, Church, & Crowe, 2001; Thompson, 2000).

In this part, I attempt to arbitrarily divide the data analytic process into six phases loosely based on the thematic analysis procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) supplemented by other researchers such as Charmaz (2006); Ingersoll-Dayton et al. (2011); Mason (2002); Nelson Goff et al. (2006); Ritchie, Spencer, and O'Connor (2003); Ryan and Bernard (2003); Spencer et al. (2003).

Phase 1: Familiarizing with data.

Since I did all the interviews by myself, I came to the analysis process with knowledge of the data and some initial analytic ideas. Before I started actually coding the data, I immersed myself in the data by reading the transcriptions carefully and watching the interview recordings again. I wrote down my ideas, which included possible patterns, connections between incidents and also noted my emotions while going through the conversations. Although this was a time consuming process, I found myself appreciating the experiences of the participants on a deeper level and noticing some connections that did not occur to me previously.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes.

With twenty interviews, I generated more than 1000 double-spaced pages of data. I had to find ways to better manage this massive amount of data. This stage is important because a sound organization of the data is crucial for developing insightful life history accounts (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Like an efficient archive, this stage has a goal to create a system that allows for tracing of data to the original source, and it ensures easy access and ongoing visitations (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Siedman, 2006).

I did substantial reading and thinking to decide upon an appropriate data management strategy. With such voluminous data collected, I was concerned my organization skills might fall short in managing with a traditional method of indexing and filing. I finally decided on using the qualitative software program NVivo to manage the protocol data. The main controversy in using a software program for qualitative data analysis is its tendency to remove segments and concepts from their context (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Spencer et al., 2003). However, with the improvement of the attaching and retrieving functions and the availability of hypertext links in the most recent version of Nvivo, this shortcoming is greatly minimized (Seale & Rivas, 2012). Books and articles on qualitative data analysis predominantly acknowledge the value of using software programs in organizing qualitative data (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Matheson, 2005; Seale & Rivas, 2012; Spencer et al., 2003; Wolcott, 1994). Spencer and colleagues (2003) asserted,

The search functions in most computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) packages are invaluable for content analysis, and the capacity to retrieve word strings in large data sets can assist discourse analysis. Those

wishing to carry out certain forms of non- cross-sectional analysis can make use of hyperlinks to find connections and strands in the data which would be extremely difficult and time-consuming to do manually. (p. 209).

Nonetheless, all researchers agree that computer software cannot replace the researcher within the analytical process. In other words, computer software, for the most part, can be used for organizing and managing data, but cannot be used for the later stages that are descriptive and explanatory accounts (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Kelle, 1997; Matheson, 2005; Spencer et al., 2003; Wolcott, 1994). I concur with this standpoint and therefore NVivo was primarily used for data administration and archiving in this study.

I employed Nvivo10 which is the most updated version of the program, with an aim to construct a thematic framework as suggested by Ritchie et al. (2003). To identify initial codes, I first gained an overview of the data and became thoroughly familiar with the data set by reviewing two male and two female participants' interviews. The interviews were chosen based on the richness of their stories. One male and one female reported peaceful relationships with their parents, and the other male and female's stories were full of discontent and conflict with parents. I ensured the diversity of participants' experiences and circumstances. I started generating codes which defined as "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). I slowly built the coding structure by including all the concepts in the data and did not let research questions limit my choices. In other words, codes were identified inductively. In this approach, the codes and themes identified are not guided by the questions asked of the participants during interviews. Moreover, the coding process was not led by the

researcher's theoretical interests in the researched topic. Therefore, there is not a coding frame based on specific analytic preconceptions to begin with, rather, significant codes and themes emerge from the data in the process.

I also followed the guideline of non-cross-sectional data organization described in Mason (2002) because, according to him, this approach is more appropriate for narratives and biographies because it looks at unique and discrete parts and units in data. This approach offers better sensitivities than cross-sectional analysis in capturing the distinctiveness of different parts of one particular interview and of different interviews and to understand complicated narratives or processes (Mason, 2002). After creating hierarchical coding for the initial four interviews, I decided to continue coding with the same intensiveness and thoroughness for the rest of the transcriptions, because I found that although there are similarities among the four cases, each of them gave something very unique and important. In doing so, I hoped to preserve the richness and uniqueness of the data. This decision was proven to be invaluable when I started to see new connections between different categories and themes in later analysis stages.

Phase 3: Searching for themes.

The identification of a theme requires the researcher to reflect on the initial codes that have been generated and to gain a sense of the continuities and linkages between them (Bryman, 2012). Ryan and Bernard (2003) proposed eight elements to look for in searching for themes: (1) Repetitions: topics that recur again and again; (2) Indigenous typologies or categories: unfamiliar local expressions; (3) Metaphors and analogies: thoughts and ideas expressed in the forms of metaphors or analogies; (4) Transitions:

ways that topics shift in conversations; (5) Similarities and differences: ways that are similar and different among different participants; (6) Linguistic connectors: words showing casual connections in the minds of participants; (7) Missing data: answers to questions by participants that might not be complete; and (8) Theory-related material: social scientific concepts.

While all the eight elements guided the identification of themes, I found paying attention to and reflecting on similarities and differences between different cases, codes and themes the most useful in the process. It is similar to the method of constant comparison in grounded theory:

It occurs initially at the level of data (as by comparing the various instances or exemplars that have been coded and then categorized similarly), and then by exploring similarities and differences between separate categories, and also perhaps, more holistically by using selected categories to make comparisons between sampled cases (Henwood, 2006, p. 72).

In this phase I sorted and grouped the codes under a smaller number of broader categories or 'main themes' and placed them within a general framework. The hierarchy of main and subthemes of the codes was gradually established throughout the process of coding. The three essential requirements to preserve the essence of the original material proposed by Ritchie and colleagues (2003) guided my coding. First, key terms and phrases from the participant's own language were retained as much as possible. Second, I kept the interpretation to a minimum at this stage. Third, material was not discharged as irrelevant because its connection with other themes was not clear. At the end, I constructed ten general categories such as family development, personal development,

relationship with mother, relationship with father, relationship with siblings, childhood memories etc. Under each category, there are up to ten subcategories, concepts or themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes.

Charmaz (2006) proposed distinguishing between two main forms of coding: initial coding and selective or focused coding. Initial coding was described earlier and it result in a lengthy and in some cases messy code list. Focused coding is to summarize or synthesize the original data based on the coded categories, themes or concepts. This helps to decrease the amount of information to a more manageable level and to distill the essence of the argument for later representation. It is important that the researcher pays attention to every detail of the original transcription to ponder its meaning and significance to the researched topic (Ritchie et al., 2003). The deductive approach was also used in this stage. That is, after intergenerational ambivalence and its related themes emerged inductively, a deductive framework based on the concepts of intergenerational ambivalence was used to organized the data (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2011; Nelson Goff et al., 2006). In this process, I reviewed the codes that guided my research questions and existing literature. Moreover, I consolidated interconnections between concepts and categories and reflected on the relationships between the general theoretical ideas that were presented in the literature review session and the coded themes (Bryman, 2012).

To further refine my themes, I read all the segments for each theme and ensured that they had a coherent pattern. If they did not fit, I re-arranged them, creating a new theme, or deleted or removed problematic segments from the theme or to another theme. I then moved on to considering the relevancy of each individual theme with respect to the

whole data set and whether the thematic hierarchy or structure reflects the “meaning evident” in the data set as a whole (Bruner, 1984, p. 91). I also paid close attention to the data that might have been missed in earlier coding stages. Additional themes were identified due to a deeper understanding of the data. At the end of the phase, I got a good sense about my themes and how they connect with each other and how they formed together to tell a story (Bruner, 1984).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes.

In this phase, I defined and further refined the themes I thought should be included in my analysis. Defining and refining mean “identifying the essence of what each theme is about, and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). I did this by reading data segments for each theme, and organizing them into a coherent description. Each of the themes needed to fit into the overall story in relation to the research questions. Therefore, it was important to consider the individual themes and the connections between them and to ensure that there was not overlap among them. Furthermore, sub-themes were also presented in order to demonstrate the hierarchy of meaning within the data (Bruner, 1984).

By the end of this phase, I could clearly define what the significant themes were and how they were related to each other and the research questions. Because the themes were given working titles, I started to consider the terms I could use in the final analysis and the presentation. “Names need to be concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). As described earlier, my initial analysis was presented to the participants in groups and individually for

feedback at this stage. Their input was considered and I further analyzed the data and made new connections before the next stage.

Phase 6: Producing the report.

This phase involved the write up of the research along with the final analysis. The goal of the write-up of a life history research is to tell the complex story of the data in a way which convince the audience of the trustworthiness and credibility of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is crucial that the researcher gives a “concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93) account of the story the data conveys. I decided to present the data in three chapters with the first chapter devoted to preparing the readers to understand and interpret the analysis in the following chapters by providing contextual information about the lives of the research participants. Next, I wanted to tell the stories of existence and describe sources of intergenerational ambivalence in this study. Then, I attempted to explore the strategies and process of managing ambivalence as told by the participants. Finally, I decide to further discuss the findings and how they might contribute to our understanding of intergenerational relationships in Chinese societies and how the findings might help family therapists to work with Chinese families.

I found that the write-up was also a process of analysis because many of the connections of the themes were identified during this final stage (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Writing deepened the understanding of the data, and I came up with most of the final terms and phrases to organize and describe the data during this stage. In order to provide sufficient evidence for the themes, I give vivid examples and segments that capture the

essence of the ideas. In addition, the write-up is more than just presenting the findings. The analysis narrative needs to go beyond description of the data to present interpretive meaning with the purpose of making an argument in relation to research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Wolcott, 1994).

Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the Human Subjects Ethics Sub-committee of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. “Ethical relationships are the binding matrix of life history research” (Gates et al., 2001, p. 152). Gates and colleagues (2001) adopted the code of ethics in the nursing profession to guide the ethical considerations for life history research. The four principles are: autonomy (self-determination), nonmaleficence (to do no harm), beneficence (to do good), and justice (fairness). Autonomy, or self-determination, is the right of the individuals to act independently and free of the control from others. Nonmaleficence is the ethical and professional responsibility to do no harm. Beneficence, the opposite of nonmaleficence, is the duty to do good. Justice relates to fairness that is reasoned, informed, and equitable. The ethical implications of this study were guided by such four ethical principles.

Autonomy in the Research Relationship

To protect participants’ autonomy, the researcher should seek consensus and validation from them throughout the whole research process. In this study, people in my personal and professional networks first reached out to the participants, explaining briefly about my research and then acquiring their consent to pass on their contact information. I

then approached them by telephone to introduce my study in some detail and to answer their questions relating to various aspects of the research. Everyone I contacted agreed to participate. I was conscious of imposing upon their busy schedules, so we arranged interviews at times that were most convenient for them. The venue of the interviews was at the Professional Practice and Assessment Center at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, for its convenience in terms of transportation and recording facilities. I also gave them alternatives if they preferred other places. At the end, all the interviews took place at the Professional Practice and Assessment Center.

During the first interview, before I started asking participants about their stories, I first told them about my story, which included my professional background, the reason why I was interested in this topic, and the basic content of my research proposal. Confidentiality issues were also discussed. For example, only myself and a research assistant who would transcribe the interviews could have access to our complete conversations. If I needed to share the recorded interviews with people other than the two of us, I would have to request their further consent. Real names would be concealed in the representation of the findings. They were invited to decide on the names they preferred to use in my writing. Moreover, I told them about the possible involvement and time commitment required in the research process so that their decisions to participate were well-informed. They also had the right to withdraw from participating in the research at any time. Furthermore, we discussed their right to refuse to answer questions they felt uneasy about. Lastly, I obtained both verbal and written consent from the participants regarding their participation in the research and video/ audio recording our conversations.

Because the feedback group format was decided later on, I added more confidentiality considerations before the group meetings. I assured the participants that the focus of the discussion was on the initial analysis, which was presented, in thematic form. I would not press for their personal stories during the group discussions. In other words, they would only disclose their individual details if they wanted to. We used nicknames during feedback groups and agreed to keep the information discussed confidential.

Nonmaleficence in the Research Relationship

The researcher exercises a duty of care that protects the participants' well-being (Gates et al., 2001). Grumet (1991) cautioned that the personal nature of a narrative form of inquiry has the potential to put the participants at risk: "even telling a story to a friend is a risky business; the better the friend, the riskier the business" (p. 69). Similarly, Butt (1992) advocated that researchers be respectful of participants' privacy and also not to impose therapy. Cole and Knowles (2001) also emphasized "care, sensitivity, and respect" (p. 43) in an authentic research relationship. This research aimed to explore the relationship dynamics between adult children and their parents in Hong Kong. Although I respected participants' decisions about whether or not to answer my questions and was sensitive toward their reactions during the interviews, there was still a great deal of intensive emotion, both positive and negative, felt and expressed in the interview process. The participants laughed, cried, pondered, and struggled while I was walking alongside them sharing my laughter, tears, thoughts, and appreciation. The interview process was an intimate shared journey between the participants and me.

As an experienced marriage and family therapist, I was constantly cautious about my participants' psychological stress or anxiety especially when relationships between the participants and their parents were abusive or traumatic. One female participant started to share memories of her distressing childhood almost immediately following introduction the research. She told me stories about how her mother punished her by hitting, burning her face using incense, and ridiculed her by forcing her to stand outside the family apartment with no clothes on when she was only five. She showed hurt, anger, and helplessness during the conversation. I had her leading the direction of the telling process, not imposing questions to investigate further into her distressing memories. I sensed that she needed a witness for her telling of the traumatic experiences. I gave her space and time to reveal her stories in ways she felt comfortable. In addition, I did not stop her even when I thought that the information she told me was enough for the study. She calmed down after telling of her childhood experiences and went on to describe her struggles and triumphs in adulthood. I talked to her over the phone the day after to make sure that she was emotionally stable and asked her if she needed referrals for counseling and related supportive services. In this process, I was conscious about my role as a researcher, and not to cross the line to become her therapist. While there is a fine line between the two, I had to make constant judgments and decisions during the course of interviews in order to prevent any type of harm to the participants.

Beneficence in the Research Relationship

Beneficence reflects the goodwill of participants and the researcher in engaging in a common interest to co-create a work for the benefit of self and others (Gates et al.,

2001). To express the reasons behind their decisions to join the research, many participants stated that the topic of parent-child relationships was worth investigating due to its significance in their own lives. Several of them indicated that they were working through issues with their parents and they hoped that participating in this research could somehow facilitate their efforts. Being a social constructionist therapist and researcher, I took note of what they were telling in the beginning and made an effort to ensure that we could also somehow meet their expectations in the study.

Because the interviews were unstructured, guided only by key questions, participants had room to decide what to say in our conversations. I noticed that almost every participant had something they felt strongly about and wanted to articulate. For instance, a female participant spent almost thirty minutes telling me about her decision to quit her TV news anchor job to become a fulltime mother, and how she found it difficult to go back to work after spending ten years as a homemaker. She continued to describe the journey of finding satisfaction in her current part-time job and doing volunteer work. A male participant told me in the second interview how challenging it was for him during the time when he and his first wife were getting a divorce. Many years after the divorce, he still experienced guilt toward his daughter. To me, there is a difference between wandering off from the research focus to talk about something irrelevant and expressing a need to tell stories about their lives that were important to them. The latter typically carries a sense of seriousness and a trace of genuine emotion. I would bring the dialogue back to focus in the case of straying from the subject, but would almost always provide space for the important stories to be told. At the end, although the formats and sequences of the stories came out in countless ways, they were uniquely rich and powerful. At our

feedback session, many participants told me that somehow telling stories about their parents had helped them to understand their situations with different perspectives and they felt more at peace afterwards. Therefore, the journey of us exploring their experiences with their parents was beneficial to the participants' own process of learning about themselves and their relationships with their parents.

Justice in the Research Relationship

Justice “entails credible, believable treatment of life histories that includes some transparency of the researcher’s perspective. The researcher and the participants invest considerable time, and justice also requires that the researcher’s findings provide a return for that time and attention” (Gates et al., 2001, p. 161). The research process should not limit its attention to the relationship between the researcher and participants and the participants and their social contacts. It should also act as a catalyst for the broader society and the audience for whom the research was intended (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009).

I understand that no matter how much I tried to be equal, respectful and transparent, there was this almost inevitable tendency that my voice was more privileged than the participant’s, especially during the presentation stage of the research process. I minimize the power gap by constantly reflecting on how I dealt with my privilege (Pillay, 2009). In addition, this research looked closely at the intimate relationships between Chinese adult children and their parents in Hong Kong with an aim to promote understanding about this significant relationship. Knowledge that stays in the ivory towers of academia does not benefit either the society or the participants who have

devoted their time and effort. My findings will help researchers, educators and family therapists to gain insights and to apply knowledge to their areas of expertise. In addition, I will make an effort to present the findings, in various forms such as articles written in Chinese and on occasions such as seminars and workshops with different audiences in order to maximize the benefits of the research findings to the public.

Summary

Qualitative research methods using a narrative format that provides rich descriptions of the participants' own observations and interpretations about their lives are suitable for inquiring into the complexity and evolutionary of the parent-child relationship (Denzin et al., 2000; Gale, 1993; Huntsley, 1993; Moon et al., 1990; Schwartzman, 1984). Besides, qualitative analysis looks into lives and stories of individuals and their contexts and cultures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Among qualitative methods, the life history approach, which has its root in social constructionist theory, offers a sound choice for this study. The life history method proposed by Cole and Knowles (2001) emphasizes the interplay of life and history, self and context, and in addition, the individual in relationships guides the process of the inquiry for this research. Aston (2000) identified three underlying assumptions of life history studies. First, the life stories people tell are embedded in a social, historical and cultural context (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson, 1995). Second, in the process of inquiring and understanding life stories, various parties including researchers, participants and readers all contribute to the interpretation based on their own realities (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). Lastly, the events of an individual's life are linked and interconnected so

that “the past is alive in the present” (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p. 272).

To acknowledge my subjectivity in the research process, I gave an account of the factors that contribute to the co-creation of the research product between the participants and me. The observations and reflections in my professional life have guided me to my choice of research topic. Inevitably, my professional skills as a collaborative family therapist contributed significantly to the interview process. Further, this research is also intimate to me personally because I am part of the community of Chinese adult children with aging parents.

The process of qualitative inquiry follows closely the guidelines of life history research. It begins with the respect and sensitivity I paid to the participants when I invited them to join the co-research process. At the end, I interviewed ten male and ten female middle-aged Hong Kong Chinese men and women (age 40 to 55) with at least one secondary school child (age 12 to 19) and with at least one living parent. I interviewed each participant twice with each interview lasted from one to two hours. The conversations were collaborative and generative. Research findings were co-created in the dialogues (Anderson, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001). The participants also took part in a session in which the majority of them met in small groups to offer feedback on my initial analysis of the first two interviews. Ethical considerations were taken seriously by adhering to the principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice throughout the research.

The thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun (2006) acted as road map for the data analysis process in this study. The process comprised six phases: familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and

naming themes, and producing the reports. I employed the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 10 for data management and thematic framework construction. Themes were inductively generated from the data in identifying themes in initial coding in the first three phases (Charmaz, 2006). In phase four, after intergenerational ambivalence and its related themes emerged as significant, the deductive approach and selective or focused coding was used. In phases 5 and 6, I further refined and organized themes into a coherent description that related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The writing up of the report is included in the analysis process because many of the connections between the themes were identified during this stage (Cole & Knowles, 2001). In addition, the interpretive meaning along with the description of the data made an argument in relation to research questions.

Chapter Five

THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE

The participants in this study are ten males and ten females aged forty to fifty-three. All were born and raised in Hong Kong. Among the twenty participants, two females are divorced and one male is widowed and the rest are married. In terms of education, one participant completed primary school, four participants finished lower secondary level (form three), three participants completed secondary school (form five), four participants hold associate degrees, six participants are university graduates and two participants have a master's degree. The educational attainment of this group is higher than the average of their peer group in Hong Kong. All of the participants are parents themselves and have one or two living parents whose ages range between mid-sixties and early-eighties. The average sibling number from the participants' family of origin is 5.5 while the average number of children in their current families is 1.5. Seventeen of the participants are formally employed, one participant is unemployed, one participant is a housewife and one participant is starting her private practice in the counseling field.

This chapter focuses on the experience of intergenerational ambivalence from the perspectives of adult children. The conceptualization of ambivalence, which is the participants' direct descriptions of their conflicting thoughts and feelings toward their parents, supports the ambivalent nature of parent-adult children relationships. Samples of these descriptions that capture participants' internal struggles are first presented in this section. The negative and positive sides of the ambivalent experiences are the main focus

of this chapter. Six parental behaviors that are identified as sources of participants' emotions, such as anger, resentment, disappointment, sadness and sense of loss, contribute to the negative side of ambivalence. Parental devotion was identified as the source of the participants' positive emotions, such as appreciation and respect for their parents. In additions, factors such as filial piety and religious beliefs were identified as barriers that block the participants from exiting from their troublesome relationships.

Due to the significance of respecting participants' own narratives in the life history research approach, the participants' own words are included as much as possible to preserve the essence of their expressions in reporting the findings. The excerpts quoted verbatim and used to illustrate the findings are generated from twenty-three parent-adult child relationship dyads that were identified as ambivalent. I chose the excerpts from the stories that stand out as vivid and intense. Consequently, some participants' stories are told and quoted more than others. I intend to show that participants who have experienced more sources of ambivalence also express more intense and prolonged ambivalence. As stated in the methodology chapter, even though the seventeen non-ambivalent relationships are not quoted in research findings, the themes in their stories have helped extensively in the identification of sources of ambivalence by comparing and contrasting different experiences in the analysis process.

Conceptualization of Intergenerational Ambivalence

Intergenerational ambivalence has been conceptualized directly and indirectly in existing quantitative studies with the aim of capturing opposing feelings that individuals hold simultaneously about their parents or children (Suitor, Gilligan, et al., 2011). The

ambivalence reported in this study by participants is their direct description of their conflicting thoughts and emotions. They are aware of their internal struggles and have expressed feelings of being torn and of discomfort. When talking about these experiences, many of them expressed strong emotions through weeping or describing their feelings as “angry (𨔵)”, “furious (怒氣)”, “unhappy (唔開心)” “resentful (憎)”, “frustrating (萌睜)” “hatred (仇恨心)”, and “having grievances (唔憤氣)”. On the other hand, they also talked about their respect and appreciation for their parents’ devotion to the family. Sometimes, they directly expressed their felt conflicting emotions as “tangled (抖纏不清)”, “complicated (複雜)”, “ambivalent (矛盾)”, and “love and hate (既愛且恨)”. When describing their contradictory or oscillating feelings and thoughts, signal words such as “but (但是)” “although (雖然)” “however (不過)” “on one hand (一方面) ...one the other hand (另一方面)” were used as thought reversing phrases.

Samples of Intergenerational Ambivalence Descriptions

The intention to present samples of the participants’ direct descriptions of their ambivalent experience here is to illustrate the awareness the participants have about their internal struggles and their feelings of being torn and of discomfort. I attempt to illustrate the excerpts from the interview conversations as examples that I used as a base to identify the participants’ experience of ambivalence in their relations with their parents.

Pai, 48, the third of eight children, a part-time insurance agent, lives with her husband and two children. Pai’s widowed mother is in her seventies, and lives with Pai’s youngest brother and his family in the district where they grew up. Pai described her

relationship with her mother as distant and cold. According to her, her mother never showed affection or even paid attention to her. Pai was the most diligent student among the eight children. She was always among the top of her class and went on to study journalism at a prestigious local university supported by scholarships. After she started working as a journalist, she gave most of her salary to her parents to support her younger siblings. Before she got married and had children, she worked as a news anchor at a local TV station. Despite all of her achievements and responsible behavior, she feels her mother never approved of her. Now in her forties, she is still trying to come to terms with her feelings of loss and resentment toward her mother's indifference toward her by rationalizing her mother's behavior and recognizing her mother's devotion to the family:

I tried to understand the situation from my mother's perspective. I thought about the tough conditions of my childhood and how my mother had to take care of eight of us. She didn't run away from the responsibilities and the hardships, but instead, she made lots of sacrifices to raise us. She deserves our respect and appreciation. Maybe she didn't have enough time and attention for every child. When I think about this, there is some understanding (少少諒解) in me; but (但是), I still cannot accept (接受) her. She completely ignored (完全當我無道) me.

The interview with Pai about her relationship with her mother mainly focused on incidents over Pai's life course during which she felt her mother did not like her as a person. Pai feels hurt, disappointed and resentful toward her mother's lack of devotion toward her. On the other hand, she reasons with herself about the limited resources that her mother had. She feels ambivalent in her feelings and attitudes toward her mother's

treatment of her. She is aware of her internal struggles. She even confronted her mother once. I will describe such confrontation in the next chapter.

Seung, 47, the youngest of six children and a divorced mother of two, lived with her teenage daughter during the period of the two interviews. She perceives her mother as a negative, demeaning, and manipulative person and their relationship was described as distant. Her mother favored her brothers and invested all of the resources in her brothers' advancement growing up. She feels sad for her oldest sister who had to give up her study to work in a factory to support their brothers' schooling despite her outstanding academic aptitude. As with Pai, Seung described a historic pattern of relational nature between her mother and herself. Moreover, she believes her lifelong struggles regarding lack of confidence are mainly due to her mother's relentless negative comments about her as a person and everything she did. It took deliberate effort to overcome her negative self-image. When describing her feelings toward her mother during one point of her life, she stated:

On one hand (一方面), I understand that my mother loved us and she was very responsible to take care of us and raise us. But on the other hand (但是, 另一方面), I still feel very unhappy (唔開心) that she prefers sons over daughters (重男輕女) and she used lots of negative comments to reject me. Also for me, I did not have enough opportunity to learn and try lots of things (when growing up). I had to try really hard to convince her or even had to lie to get what I wanted.

Similar to Pai, Seung feels ambivalent because she resents the ways that her mother has treated her but at the same time she respects her mother's devotion to the

family. She started to realize her own conflicting emotions and attitudes toward her mother several years ago.

Tak Shen, 50, is the eldest of two sons and is married with three children. Tak Shen's father was born into a well-off landlord family in a rural village in Southern China. His father fled to Hong Kong after the Chinese government confiscated all of his family properties in the 1950s. He wanted to establish himself again in Hong Kong by starting a small business. However, he did not have enough money to start. Attempting to gather enough capital, he turned to gambling. He became a very difficult person after losing money gambling. Tak Shen said his father was drunk regularly and he was frustrated and weary on a regular basis. Looking back, he believes his dad vented his frustration on him and his brother:

I am very aware that I used to love and hate (既愛且恨) my father at the same time. I cared for my father very much, and, so as did my brother, loved him and hated him (愛他又很恨他). My father didn't give us anything positive growing up. He beat us severely and scolded us meanly. We learned all the swearing words in our hometown dialect from our father. I felt (love and hate toward him) strongly when I became a young adult. Why did he do those things to us? He didn't give us anything good.

Tak Shen joined the Christian church in his twenties and went to a seminary to become a pastor. It was during this time he started to realize his ambivalence for his father. He started to rebuild a relationship with his father who was then in his fifties. It took him over a decade to feel close to his father who became calmer and softer with age.

Mr. Kwok, 51, the second of seven children, the oldest son and married with two children, described his relationship with both of his parents as ambivalent. His parents had had a conflict-ridden relationship since he was little and the children were divided into two camps, supporting their favored parent. Mr. Kwok was his mother's favorite because he was the oldest son and he was a good student. Growing up, his mother constantly spoke ill of his father to elicit Mr. Kwok's support. He was empathetic to his mother because his father was an angry man who administered physical punishment to his children. However, as Mr. Kwok grew older, he started to question the truthfulness of his mother's claims. He later realized the damage his parents had done to the family union and became distant from them. Nevertheless, he still supported them financially even when he was unemployed. He described his ambivalence and feelings of being torn:

If she was not my mother, I would absolutely choose not to be in contact with her. I would walk away if I saw her. However (不過), because she is my mother, I am forced (被逼) to interact with her. I admit my mother went through great hardship to raise us and she loved us, but (但是) she told too many lies.

He continued to describe his conflicting emotions and attitudes:

I feel very ambivalent (矛盾). They are my parents and I am in debt to them for raising me. But (但是) the destruction and hurt they had brought upon me and our family is long lasting. In addition, their negative influence on the way I think and the way I interact with my current family is ongoing.

Mr. Kwok feels intense conflict between his responsibility as a son and his dislike of and anger toward his parents. He has been troubled by this internal struggle. He was going through a process of soul-searching during the time of the research interviews. He said

that he realized he made many wrong decisions including his career choice. He also recognized how much he was like his father and he despised the similarities.

Jessica, 48 and the oldest of six children, lives with her husband and two teenage daughters. Her widowed mother chose to live close to her two sons in another district. Jessica said that on the surface it looks like she is a dutiful daughter who shows filial piety to her mother. However, underneath, she has been angry with her mother for as long as she can remember. She cannot express those emotions to her mother because she knows her mother cannot accept and might respond rather negatively.

Jessica started working part-time in small workshops when she was only eleven years old. She loved school and always made sure she finished her homework during recess while other kids were playing. When she turned twelve, her mother gave birth to her twin brothers after having had four girls. Jessica was “forced” out of school to work in a toy factory. Her great-uncle wanted to help to pay her tuition fees, but her mother refused because they needed the salary Jessica earned. When people in the neighborhood showed sympathy to Jessica’s situation, her mother told them that Jessica did not like studying. Jessica later heard that from her friend’s mother and was furious. She decided to continue her studies by attending evening school after dropping out from formal school. Her mother then persuaded her to work overtime and not to go to school. Jessica could only attend night school during the time she could not find overtime work in factories. She insisted on helping her three sisters through school; two sisters completed high school and one finished university. However, she did not like it when her mother mentioned her contribution to her siblings:

Sometimes she told our relatives that my younger siblings' current (good lives) are due to my contribution. I don't want to hear that. When I hear that, I feel very unhappy (唔開心). A lot of times, I get angry (嬲). I have been angry with her for several decades... Sometimes, I feel that I should forgive her because it was very difficult back then. She didn't have any other way, forcing me to work might have been the only solution (to our poverty).

She continued to describe her internal conflicts:

My mother now buys lots of good food as a way to compensate me... I don't feel like eating them and just let those foods rot when my daughters don't eat them... I feel bad and I don't want to be like this, but (但) sometimes I am very angry (嬲) at her.

Jessica never had a chance to complete secondary school and consequently her choices for jobs were limited to low paid labor. After factories in Hong Kong moved to the Chinese Mainland, she started to work as a domestic helper. She also never resigned her post as a responsible oldest sister to her younger siblings. She was the one her siblings turned to when they were in need. Jessica has recognized that she shouldered many of the responsibilities that should have been her mother's and she is aggrieved by it.

Based on the conceptualization and sample descriptions of ambivalence illustrated above, among the forty parent-adult child dyads, twenty-three of them can be described as ambivalent at some point in the parent-child relationship development. Only four participants reported ambivalence-free relationships with both of their parents. Both males and females expressed more ambivalence toward their mothers than toward their fathers. This mirrors a cross-cultural study done by Nauck (2012) in which he found that,

in different cultures, relationships with mothers were more likely to be ambivalent than those with fathers. During our feedback sessions, many participants agreed that they felt more ambivalent toward their mothers than toward their fathers. They explained that their parents adhered to traditional roles whereby mothers were the ones taking care of the household and making decisions regarding their life situation. The styles and decisions of their mothers sometimes came into conflict with the participants' own personalities and preferences. For that reason, they appreciated their mothers' efforts but simultaneously felt resentful toward their mothers' interfering behaviors. Their fathers were more distant when they were growing up, thus they did not feel close to their fathers and they also did not feel as much negativity toward them.

Female participants expressed more intense ambivalence toward their mothers than did male participants. Many daughters in this study expressed resentment for their mothers' favoritism toward their brothers. Ambivalence came in part because these adult daughters are also expected to care for their aging parents by providing tangible and emotional support, while they feel resentful toward their mothers' unfair treatment in the past.

Almost all of the descriptions of ambivalence given by the participants in this study are historic in nature. The descriptions show that ambivalence has roots in early parent-child interaction and it is an on-going feature of parent-child relations over the life course. This is consistent with life course theory that argues that relationship quality at any particular point in time is not an isolated state but a manifestation of historical patterns of interaction (Elder & Johnson, 2003). Studies found that early life experience

has a significant impact on adult children's relationship qualities with their parents (Allen, Blieszner, & Roberto, 2000; Elder, Rudkin, & Conger, 1995).

Sources of Intergenerational Ambivalence: The Negatives

Existing studies support the existence of intergenerational ambivalence (Luescher, 2011, 2012b; Willson et al., 2003), but only a handful of studies have attempted to identify the sources of conflicting emotions and attitudes systematically (Luescher, 2011, 2012b; Willson et al., 2006). Thus one of the main aims of this study is to identify the possible sources of ambivalence between the participants and their parents. In general, the incidents and narratives that the participants gave about their interactions with their parents included both positive and negative aspects. When they experienced more ambivalence, the atmosphere of their stories was more negative and there were more negative recounts of their memories. However, if they told of mostly positive events and exchanges with their parents, they normally did not experience ambivalence in their relationships with their parents. Accordingly, six repetitive parental behaviors were recognized to be the sources of the adult children's negative side of ambivalent experiences. They are: i) son preference and parental unfairness; ii) parental psychological control; iii) parental marital discordance; iv) moderate to severe corporal punishment; v) parental dependence; and vi) parental selfishness. All the sources, to various extents, are parental behaviors that were established during the early stage of the parent-child relationship and continually contributed to children's ambivalent experiences over the life course.

After further comparing and contrasting these six parental behaviors and their associations with adult children's simultaneous presence of contradictory feelings and thoughts, I identified a main theme that overarches all the six negative parental behaviors. This main theme is the participants' perceived connection between their negative and undesirable living experiences and their parents' negative and offensive behaviors from their childhood to adulthood. In other words, the six parental behaviors alone do not lead to children's ambivalence unless children perceive their negative living experiences as a result of or connected to, these parental behaviors. There are two aspects of living experiences that the participants talked about in interviews. The first is the mental and emotional aspects of living, which is their mental and emotional well-being. Negative mental and emotional aspects of living during the time children were living with their parents and after leaving their parents' home can all be sources of ambivalence if the participants make the connection between their undesirable experiences and their parents' past and current behaviors. The second aspect is the material aspect of living, which is about how adult children are living now with regard to their education, employment, financial status and lifestyle. Ambivalence arises if adult children see their less than satisfying attainment of the material aspects of living as a result of their parents' past and current behavior and influence.

I describe below the six parental behaviors that are identified as the sources of adult children's negative side of ambivalence, together with how the connection or link between these behaviors and the participants' undesirable living experiences are revealed in the interviews.

1. Son Preference and Parental Unfairness

The practice of son preference was the issue that triggered the most intense anguish and ambivalence in female participants during interviews. This concept especially influenced mother-daughter relationships because more mothers than fathers were reported to show a son preference attitude in this study. Eight out of ten female participants indicated that their mothers devoted more energy and resources to their brothers than to them and their sisters. One of the remaining two did not have brothers, and she believed that her mother wanted a son but had to stop after having five daughters due to economic constraints. The mother of the last participant passed away when she was age four. She suspected that her mother experienced pressure from her maternal grandparents to have sons. In contrast, only three female participants believed that their fathers treated them unfairly because of their gender.

In a Confucian patriarchal system, women were omitted from the genealogies of their birth family after marriage. One participant felt “very sad (好傷心)” when her mother mentioned an old saying, “A married out daughter is like spilt water (嫁出去的女, 潑出去的水)” on an occasion she could not specify. This proverb explains the perception of daughters’ lack of economic and social value to their parents in the traditional patrilineal system. Women were not allowed to receive any productive assets from their biological family lineage, and they became assets of their husbands’ family after marriage. Consequently, they always had to attach to a man – father before marriage, husband during marriage, and sons at old age – to survive (Das Gupta, Jiang, Li, Xie, & Chung, 2003). The value of sons to mothers was the primary force for mothers to prefer sons over daughters. Chinese mothers raised their sons to be emotionally attached to them

through personal devotion and sacrifices when sons were young (Dien, 1992; Hsiung, 2004). Unfortunately, mothers' son preference is experienced as unloving and rejection by their daughters in this study. Moreover, female participants also perceive their mothers and sometimes their fathers as unfair in terms of resource allocation between boys and girls.

Son preference perceived as parental rejection by daughters.

Parental acceptance and parental love, the opposite of parental rejection, is expressed through parental devotion/sacrifice and attentive daily care in Chinese culture (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010; C. Wu, 2007). Parental devotion and sacrifice includes giving whatever resources parents can afford to the advancement of their children (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010; C. Wu, 2007). In addition, parental care is demonstrated through food and daily care (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010). Conversely, parental rejection in Chinese culture is shown by absence of parental devotion and attention to daily care. In this study, some female participants described their parents, especially their mothers, as inattentive, distant and unsympathetic to their emotional and tangible needs and wishes. Although some mothers were attentive to their daughters, they still devoted more to, and invested more resources in, their sons.

Pai, the achiever among her parents' eight children, said that her mother over and over again commented that since she was a girl, she was told that she should not study; instead, she should help out more at home. However, Pai loved to study and always performed well in school. Seeing that, her mother said to her, "it would be good if you were a boy, what a pity that you are a girl." Pai believed that her mother thought it was

useless for a daughter to be outstanding because at the end it would benefit another family. Moreover, she thought that in her mother's eyes, she did not deserve all the honors she received from school and her profession. For example, she recalled an incident that happened in her early professional life. She received a five-month journalism fellowship to the United States. It was an honor because only ten journalists from all over the world were chosen for this particular fellowship each year and she was the first female journalist from Hong Kong who had ever been selected. She was thrilled and felt very proud of herself. When she told her parents, her father was pleased but her mother's reaction was, "Why did they ask you to go? Why didn't they choose a male?" Pai was hurt and disappointed because she knew the main reason that her mother was upset because she could not bring home any income during the five months she was on the fellowship program. She continued to describe her perception of and feelings about her mother's treatment of her:

I never felt that she (her mother) loved (愛) me. I remember we were asked to write essays about our mothers during primary and secondary school. We were asked to write about how great our mothers were. It was very difficult for me to write. I felt my mother did not love (愛) me. What could I possibly appreciate about her?... My mother never spent any time with me ever since I was little. Bonding needs nurturing, and investment of time is necessary. But my mother almost never devoted any time to me.

Pai's expression showed that she felt unloved and rejected by her mother and the rejection was shown by her mother's lack of devotion of time to their relationship.

In a similar account, Seung, the nurse who is committed to continuous education for personal and professional advancement, described her childhood as “very unhappy (唔開心)” and “alone (孤獨)”. She is the youngest of her parents’ six children. In her memory, both of her parents were busy making ends meet. She was often left alone at home and was not allowed to go out to play with other children. Her mother hit her when she sneaked out to meet her friends. She said the only attention she received from her mother was scolding and put-downs. She started to go to a Christian church when she was about fifteen and was a secondary student. She tried to learn to express her love for her mother by giving her hugs and helping her to do laundry. But her mother continued to be indifferent to her. Nevertheless, her mother devoted all of her attention and resources to the development of her three sons. Seung described her feelings of numbness to her mothers’ indifference:

(I) actually felt numb (麻木) . When you ask me now, I (can say I) had no feelings at all. I didn't know what it was like to be happy or unhappy... I cried all the time. I told people my mother only loved money and she didn't treat me well (對我唔好) .

Again, Seung’s description is about her perception of her mother’s lack of love toward her and her sadness about the distance between them.

Priscilla, 50, a married stay-home mother of one, stated her feelings when she described how her mother loved her brother more than her and she felt rather bothered when she was young by her mother’s preference of her brother over her:

(I was) unhappy but didn't feel that I could oppose. I felt unhappy (唔開心) ... We were in the same family, but my mother favored my brother. I couldn't do

anything about it. I was left to be unhappy and alone and didn't feel like I had the choice to dislike my mother for liking my brother more... I felt a little bit angry

(少少勝) (about it).

Other than parental attention and devotion, food has a symbolic meaning of showing love and acceptance in Chinese culture. Parents, especially mothers, prepare children's favorite foods to express love and concern. In turn, children show enjoyment eating the foods to accept parental love (Martinson et al., 1999). When Pai stayed in a university dormitory, many of her friends shared that their mothers cooked their favorite meals during home visit weekends. Their mothers even had them bring food back to the dormitory. In comparison to her friends, Pai's mother never prepared special food for her, and she did not even call Pai to have dinner when she was at home. Pai felt "very sad (好傷心)" and she experienced some aversive reactions to food such as vomiting while eating. She described herself as having an "eating disorder (厭食症)" and had to force food down. She saw unfairness in her mother in preparing food for her brother. For instance, her mother always saved some good food for her brothers when they had to come home late. In contrast, Pai had to eat leftovers when she was late for family dinner. She recalled an incident during mid-autumn festival when she was working as a journalist. As a tradition, family members get together to celebrate the harvest and family unity on mid-autumn day. Pai had work on that day and asked her mother to wait for her so that she could join the family dinner. She went home earlier than usual. However, when she arrived home, she saw empty dishes and some leftovers on the table. She was very upset and confronted her mother:

It's no longer the time like when I was in university and I came home once a week. I did not dare to demand (then) because I didn't bring home any income. I gave the family all of my income, and only kept expenses for food and travel now. There was no reason for me to come home to cold and leftover food. If you don't want to save me food, I will eat outside before coming home.

Since that day, Pai started to eat out until her father knew of the quarrel and intervened. He saved food for her and went to wait for her at the bus stop when she had to come home late. She knew that her father loved her because of his concern about her feelings and attentiveness to her meals.

Wendy, 44, a married mother of one and the third child of four children, told a similar story related to food:

I was very unhappy (不开心) that day and I can still remember it now. I arrived at home and there was almost no food left. (There was) only a little pork and some vegetables left. I was angry (嬾) . She (my mother) couldn't even save me some food. I (confronted her) and asked her why she did that.

Her mother did not respond to her, and her siblings were surprised that she confronted her mother because it had been the practice all along. She recalled her mother always saved her two brothers' favorite food and kept it nicely. She eventually gave up on requesting equal treatment to her brothers as related to both food and other areas.

Female participants expressed a sense of loss and sadness over their mothers' son preference attitude and practices. They were angry with their mothers for not loving them or not loving them the same as their brothers. In a cross-cultural study about intergenerational relationships, Nauck (2002) found that Chinese mothers and daughters

were commonly detached from, and unaffectionate toward, each other. Bowlby (1969,1973, 1982) stated that attachment needs and behaviors are biologically rooted. Therefore, when the attachment figure is neglecting or rejecting the child's needs and wishes, the child naturally gets angry and disappointed (Merz et al., 2007). Moreover, Ainsworth (1984) suggested that the attachment between parents and children is an "affectional bond" which lasts a life-time. In the cases of most of the female participants in this study, the negative side of ambivalence was generated when they realized that their mother's rejection and lack of attention and care to them caused them feelings of loss, sadness, anger and disappointment.

Son preference leads to unfairness in resource allocation.

While parental rejection is related to the mental and emotional aspects of living, resource allocation contributes to the material aspect of living. The amount of resource parents invest in their children when they are young highly influenced children's educational and professional attainment in their later life stages. As described in Chapter Four, the living conditions of most families were harsh in the 1950s and 60s in Hong Kong. Parents of the participants were mostly immigrants from the Chinese Mainland. They had no or very limited education and they worked as laborers or low-skilled workers. The participants' biological families had an average of 5.5 children. The reality was that parents did not have enough resources to support all the children's advancement. The primary factor in considering whether or not to devote resources for a child to pursue education was gender. Sons were encouraged to seek education and daughters were persuaded to work in factories to generate additional income for the family.

Ming, 48, a nurse and a married mother of three, comes from a family of four children. She was distressed and troubled at our first interview because her parents had just moved out of her apartment after staying with her and her family for four months. For the previous several years, her mother's health was declining, and it had become difficult for her father to care for her. Viewing that, Ming and her husband decided to invite her parents to come to live with them so that she could take care of her mother. Unfortunately, the living arrangement did not work out the way they had planned. Ming found it very frustrating that her mother simply would not listen to her health related advice. On the other hand, her mother felt pressured and found the arrangement unbearable. The tension between the two of them triggered years of repressed and unresolved emotions in Ming. One of the key issues was her mother's lifelong son preference:

Both of my parents are from Chiu Chow (a region in the Guangdong province that is known for its son preference customs) but my father doesn't have a son preference attitude (重男輕女). This is an important characteristic of our family. My mother, however, prefers sons (鍾意仔). This causes me hatred (仇恨) and resentment (憎) toward my mother. This is very important.

The main source of struggle was Ming's perception of her mother's unfairness in investing in her and her brother's education. Although her brother was older than her, he did not have to work part-time like Ming to help out with the family income. Ming started to work as a factory worker when she was eleven. Her mother tried to stop her schooling completely after primary school. But she fought for her right to continue in secondary school with the support from her father. When her two younger sisters were older, they

started to help out in the house as well. In contrast, her brother got to go out and play with his friends. What aggravated Ming the most was that her brother did not even like to study when he was young, and her mother hired a tutor to teach him even when the family was struggling financially:

We did not even have enough rice in our rice jug, but my mother hired a very expensive tutor to help with my brother's study. So I was very angry (好嬲) . I now realize that I started to be angry (嬲) at my mother when I was little. I felt (she was) unfair (不公平) .

With her father's support, Ming continued her three-year lower level secondary education by working part-time. She received a scholarship for her outstanding academic performance in the last two years. She then planned to go on to a two-year higher-level secondary school. However, her mother objected again:

I was angry (嬲) . I was thinking back then that I had to continue my education. I told her (my mother) that if you don't let me go to day school, I will finish form five by attending night school... I believe this is why the other day I told her that I hate (憎) her. I think I was at the point I couldn't control myself. I couldn't explain to her in words (why I felt so emotional). Then I became angry (嬲) at myself for treating her that way. I wanted to take care of her, but instead, I made her very unhappy. I blame (責怪) myself. My emotions are tangled and complicated (抖纏不清的複雜) .

With her determination and diligence, Ming finished form five (secondary school) and then went to nursing school. After working as a nurse for several years, she went

back to school part-time to complete a degree program. As a mother of three teenagers she was recommended by her work department to pursue a master's degree during the time of the interviews. Her negative emotions were mainly the result of her mother's unfair treatment between her and her brother. She felt she should not have had to fight for the right to education while her brother had all the family's resources for his advancement.

Jessica, the eldest daughter who had to give up her schooling to support her younger siblings' (especially her brothers') development, indicated that her mother even planned for her brothers' future using her marriage arrangement:

My mother forced me to see matchmakers to find an overseas husband when I was very young. In her plan, if my brothers did not have the ability to complete higher education, I could provide them with another prospect if I married abroad. She was only concerned about my brothers and never gave thought to my welfare.

Jessica's contribution to her biological family did not stop after she was married. In her opinion, her mother spoiled her brothers. The four older sisters shouldered all of the housework and financial burden and the younger brothers were given all the family resources. Consequently, her brothers were never taught to be responsible. They were kicked out of secondary school and became financially irresponsible. Not only had their mother used up all her savings, the older sisters also helped to pay off their brothers' debts. Jessica and her sisters resented their mother's unfairness in resource investment in their brothers; nonetheless, they were loyal to their mother. This relationship dynamic generated much negative feeling in Jessica.

Seung, the neglected youngest daughter, told stories of how her mother worked hard to support her two older brothers to study overseas. She felt sorry for her oldest sister who had to give up her education to help her mother to bring home income for their brothers' education. Even when the children were adults, her mother still gave all her resources to her sons, such as providing down payments for their properties.

Salaff (1981) studied the life experiences of twenty-eight young working girls in Hong Kong between 1970 and 1975 and reported very similar stories in her research. Many of her participants were elder daughters, and they were sent to work owing to their gender and birth order. "The family's undoubted need for cash, coupled with norms limiting women's education, together with the ease of factory employment for young girls, made inevitable the sacrifice of their further education in favor of the family's economic needs" (p. 54). She further concluded that "this sacrifice of the daughter's long-range chances in favor of short-term gains for the family and especially the brothers typified the narrow range of opportunities of Hong Kong elder daughters" (p. 134).

Unfairness in resource allocation between sons and daughters is also reflected in inheritance because parents normally distribute their properties and other assets among sons. Despite their continuous contribution to their siblings and parents, daughters in this study are typically not included in inheritance distribution. Most of the participants' parents are not well-off and their biggest assets are properties. The majority of the female participants said that their parents have decided to leave their properties to their brothers:

My mother told me the properties under her name would be given to my brothers... I jokingly asked her "why only brothers, how about me and my sister?... How come we are not given anything?" Actually if you ask me if I want

it or not, I might not want it. But I want to understand why my mother is like that. Then she said to me, “You two have your husbands to take care of you. You don’t need my things.” (Wendy)

My parents have an apartment and they will pass it onto their sons. They also give other things to them. But I try to ignore that. (Fanny)

My parents’ property in China will be given to my brothers after my father has passed away. (Lai Ying)

Charlie, 49, the eldest of five children, is the only male participant who feels resentful toward his parents’ son preference practice in this study. Charlie’s parents are the only wealthy parents among the twenty participants. His parents made a fortune by investing in real estate using the money they made from their retail business established in the 1960s. They accumulated a number of commercial and residential properties, which are worth millions. In their will, they divided their properties and assets for their four sons and one daughter. According to Charlie, the distribution was rather unfair. Charlie’s sister was only given one residential property. She was angry with her parents and stopped communicating with them. Charlie is the eldest son; traditionally, he should be the one to inherit the biggest portion of the assets. However, because he and his wife only have two daughters, he is given the least among the four brothers. His parents have also been providing ongoing support to his other brothers and he perceives this as “unfair (不公平)”. His struggles and ambivalence comes from two opposing beliefs. The first is that he believes his parents should be fair in asset distribution among the five children-including his sister. The second is that his parents have the right to decide how to allocate

their own assets. He tried to negotiate with his parents a few times, but it seemed like his parents did not agree with his logic of fairness.

Studies have shown that children actively form explanations for their parents' differing treatment of their children. These explanations contribute to children's perception of whether their parents' unequal treatment of their children is fair or justifiable. When children perceive their parents' differential treatment to be generally fair, they tend to have relatively positive sibling and parent-child relationships (A. K. Kowal, Krull, & Kramer, 2004; A. Kowal & Kramer, 1997; McHale, Updegraff, Jackson-Newsom, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000). In contrast, when children perceive their parents' differential treatment as unfair, unjust and illegitimate, they may experience resentment and feel less close to their parents. The perception of fairness is a strong predictor of relationship quality between children and their parents (Bedford, 1992; A. K. Kowal et al., 2004).

The female participants in this study feel a strong sense of unfairness about their parents' (especially regarding their mothers') attitude and practice of son preference. To them, it is unfair and unjust that their brothers received most of the family resources in their development while daughters were demanded to contribute continuously throughout different stages of their lives. Traditionally, women were not expected to support their own parents after they were married to their husbands because they were omitted from their biological family link. Nevertheless, the female participants in this study grew up in a changing economic and social environment, from a traditional and agricultural mode to a modern and industrial mode. As a result, they have kept close ties with their parents after they were married. Inevitably, they continue to support their parents and their

biological families, while their parents keep the traditional practice of son preference. This intensified daughters' resentment toward the unfair treatment. Participants feel ambivalent because on one hand, they accept their responsibility as a filial daughter to contribute to their biological families; on the other hand, they believe they are treated unfairly by their parents.

2. Parental Psychological Control

Steinberg (1990) categorized parental control into psychological and behavioral control. Psychological control restricts children's expressions of autonomy and self-determining behaviors; behavioral control emphasizes using rules and regulations in teaching children. According to Steinberg, whereas psychological control is negative for child development, behavioral control is a necessary and positive parental measure to monitor and set limits for child behavior. Similarly, Barber (1996) differentiated psychological control as parental behaviors that "intrude into the psychological and emotional development of the child" (p. 1122) and behavioral control as "attempts to manage or control the child's behavior" (p. 1122). Hence, the concept of parental control in this study focuses on psychological control and it is interpreted as controlling children by "placing paramount value on compliance, pressuring children toward specific outcomes, and discouraging verbal give-and-take and discussion" (Grolnick, 2003, p. 9). Children feel controlled when they experience strong pressure during their parents' coercive attempts to make them comply or behave. In addition, they feel that they lose control over initiating their own actions in the course of life (Grolnick, 2003).

Psychological control affects not only children's psychological and emotional wellbeing, it also limits children's positive development, which enhances their material aspects of living in their adult lives. Fanny, 47, a single mother with two teenage children, is probably the most distressed participant in this study. She started weeping almost right in the beginning of our conversation. Of all of the challenges and sadness she has been through in life, the way her mother treated her and other family members stand out as the most bothersome. When she was a little girl, her mother had very specific requirements for every aspect of her life. For instance, her mother did not like her to write Chinese words big when she first learned handwriting. She scolded her and even showed her writing to their neighbors. Fanny loved to draw when she was in primary school, but her mother said drawing was useless and forbade her to continue. Later on, Fanny found interest in singing and dancing but her mother wanted her to focus on studying instead. She was very unhappy growing up and she is also distressed as an adult. In addition, Fanny made the connection between her mothers' controlling behaviors and her current living condition:

I feel that my mother not letting me learn skills (when I was young) made me unable to perform well now. I am not happy because I don't have any talents and I feel useless (有用)...Skills can nurture one's confidence. Therefore, I have no confidence (有自信) at all... I feel very timid at work and I am not self-assured...Because of the way my mother treated me, I often think about the things I don't know and things I am not unable to do. I have difficulties in learning new things, and I am so much behind others.

Fanny's lack of confidence created challenges at work and it caused her to miss opportunities for career advancement. She was laid off several times due to company downsizing. As a single mother, all of her and her children's livelihood depends on her income. The inability to break away from the limitations of her personality makes her angry with her mother. She revealed, "I blame her for making me like this."

When asked if her mother had changed over the years, Fanny said "not a bit". Fanny has been trying to help her mother to see her own destructive ways of relating to family members for the past several years:

She wants people to do what she thinks is right. I told my mother not to (impose her own ideas on others) because it is very difficult for my youngest brother and my father who are living with her. She often loses her temper and scolds those around her. (The situation is) very troublesome... (My mother) even controls the color of clothes my brother wears. I think my brother has emotional problems and he sometimes walks out of the apartment and stands in the street and cries.

Fanny's youngest brother is in his early forties, single, and still lives with his parents. I asked Fanny what meaning she made out of her mother's behavior. She said she believed her mother was truly concerned about her and the whole family. The problem is that her mother does not know how to run the household in a way that family members can be happy and at ease. As a result, everyone in the family suffers. She wants her mother to be gentler and more accepting, and she feels very frustrated that her mother simply does not listen to her. They often end up arguing when they are together.

Jessica, the oldest daughter who was forced out of school into factories to support her family, gave her account of her mother's controlling behavior from her childhood into adulthood:

My mother knows how to control (控制) us. (Because) she knew I loved my father, she used my father's situation to talk me into (令我屈服) (giving up my schooling). She said you saw your father had so much hardship...if you start working, your father doesn't have to toil.

In her adulthood, her mother continued to exert psychological control over her children's lives:

My mother knows how to manipulate (操控) us.... She wants everything to be the way she plans including (things that are done by her) children, children's spouses, grandchildren and even relatives. She thinks this is for your own good; I want you to do it and just follow. Sometimes I think if everyone obeys her words, she will think she is all right... However, if I talk back to her, she will say, "I cannot eat and sleep well. I haven't been eating and sleeping well for several days." She often uses this to scare my brothers and sisters, and they are afraid (my mom) will get ill... After a while, this has become the reason why I don't want to pick up her calls now. I am afraid she will scold me... or she will say "I am a recovered patient, and I came back from the dead. You should not make me angry."

Jessica explained that it was not that her mother forced her to work that made her angry, because she knew many people were in the same situation during that time. Rather it was that her mother is still trying to influence her and her siblings (including how she should set her own sofa and how they should raise their children) that aggravates her. She

said that it seems like she can never escape her mother's "evil palm (魔掌)". When Jessica was younger, she used to bite her arms when she was frustrated and angry at her mother's behavior. She felt she could not express her anger toward her mother in any other way.

Forward, 49, a part-time counselor, retired nurse and married mother of one teenage daughter, complained that her father had had very specific rules for communicating and describing things since she was little. Her father has many taboo words, such as "old (老)" "die (死)" and he has demanded them to rephrase and polish those negative words into natural or even positive words. If they do not, or forget to, comply with her father's requests, her father will scold or lecture them even now when she and her siblings are in their forties and fifties. Forward's father came from Shanghai to Macau during the civil war and he had to leave his wife and two daughters back in Shanghai for several years. Forward believed her father witnessed ruthless war devastation on the way to Macau. After her father settled, her mother brought two daughters to Macau to join her father. They then moved to Hong Kong before Forward and her younger brother were born. Forward's mother passed away a few months after giving birth to her brother when Forward was only four years old. Forward found out as an adult that her mother had committed suicide.

Forward believes that as the result of her father's rules, she and her siblings have not learned to communicate freely and she feels there are walls dividing all of them even though they care for each other dearly:

I know absolutely that he (my father) loves me. But I feel regretful (遺憾) that (even though) we have a lot of love toward each other, we never express it. When

we are in need, we know we care for each other. However, why is it so strange that it is like we each have built a fort (to separate us from each other)? There are no expressions of affection toward each other.

Forward started to reflect on death and dying when she was working as a nurse in a hospital. Reflection led to series of quests into her family history that triggered years of repressed emotions. She attempted to explain her father's insistence on seemingly peculiar rules and taboos by her mother's tragic death and his experiences during the war.

Interestingly, other than Forward who did not have memories of her mother, all excerpts under the theme of psychological control involve the participants' interactions with their mothers. In the feedback session, the participants explained that their parents had a clear division of labor and their mothers were assigned the responsibility to take care of the household and to make decisions with regard to their children's daily arrangements. Inevitably, the styles and decisions of their mothers sometimes came into conflict with their own personalities and preferences. When their mothers exercised excessive control over them, some participants suffered emotionally and mentally. They made the connection between their negative emotional experiences and their mothers' psychological control. In addition, some of them also identified their mothers being unsupportive of their own life choices as the reason for their current material aspects of life. For instance, they believed that if their mothers were more respectful of their choices, they would have a better life including better career and financial status. Consequently, the negative side of ambivalence emerged.

Luescher and Pillemer (1998) concluded that the tension between dependence and autonomy is a salient source of ambivalence. They proposed that inherent in the

parent-child relationship, internal and interpersonal conflicts occur when adult children and parents have needs and desires for support and nurturance and, at the same time, experience longings for freedom from control and dependence. With their conclusion, drawn from existing literature which focused on tangible and emotional exchanges between two generations, they did not stress the continuous nature and psychological aspect of dependence and autonomy in parent-child relationships throughout the life course. Some researchers found that conflicts between children and parents quite often center around issues of autonomy and control in various life stages (Baltes, Neumann, & Zank, 1994; Montemayor, 1983).

3. Parental Marital Discordance

Marriage partners were generally introduced by friends, relatives or matchmakers back in 1950s Hong Kong. Parents of the participants got married without spending much time getting to know each other or “falling in love”. The stress of raising many children in poverty took its toll on the couples’ marriages. Money or financial difficulty was frequently the main source of conflict within the marital dyad. Only six participants in this study indicated that their parents’ marital relationships were good. Most of them thought that their parents had a less than satisfying marriage. They believed that their parents stayed together because divorce was generally not accepted by society during the time they were growing up. In addition, their parents were responsible and they believed that keeping the family intact was the best for their children’s well-being. Although the marriage was not satisfying for both partners, the couples were committed to their unions. Many of them slept in separate beds, but none of them got a divorce. Only one out of

twenty sets of parents decided to live separately in their fifties. Unfortunately, couples carried their early conflicts throughout their life course, leaving some children feeling worried, helpless and distressed and as such their mental and emotional aspects of living were affected.

From the stories of the participants, I found that there are three factors that contribute to the participants' negative side of ambivalence due to their parents' marital discordance. The first is the severity of discordance. The more volatile and prolonged the conflicts between the parents the more likely children are troubled by them. The second factor is if their parents, one or both of them, tried to triangulate children into their conflicts. The third is if the participants perceived mistreatment of one parent by the other. They might be angry with the parent who is seen as the perpetrator and support the parent is seen as the victim. In addition, female participants seem to be more troubled by their parents' poor relationships than male participants.

Volatile and prolonged discordance.

Priscilla, a housewife with one son, lives close to her parents. She goes to her parents' place three times a week just to check up on them. She normally goes with her son and her husband joins them occasionally. She spends two to three hours at her parents' and has dinner there. She wept when she talked about her parents' long lasting conflicts:

They have been arguing since I was little and it has never changed. I know I can't change them. I frequently ask them not to argue. But my mother is an explosive type, and she bawls out with rage whenever she doesn't like something. My father

is rather gentle, and he usually doesn't express himself. But sometimes when he gets really angry, they argue fiercely.

She thinks the main source of her parents' conflicts is money. Her father and mother have very different styles of spending. Her father is prudent and her mother is a careless spender. Her mother was dissatisfied with her father's earnings and she urged him to work harder when they were young. But her father preferred to rest when he was tired. Priscilla said that she never saw her parents arguing about money directly and it was always something trivial that started their argument. When she was young, she hated her parents' arguments but she felt helpless about how to help them to stop. She started to interfere when she was in her thirties. She is troubled by their fighting:

Why do they have to fight? They even fight over a plastic bag. There are so many plastic bags. (My dad) used that one, and my mother scolded him for it. She scolded him in a way that showed a lot of hatred (恨) ... I feel very unhappy when I see them fighting...I don't usually tell others about my parents' (relationship) because I get very unhappy talking about (the fights)... I get unhappy and cry... I worry about (擔心) them.

Priscilla's brother migrated to Canada and is almost completely cut off from the family. Consequently Priscilla feels even more responsible for her parents' well-being. She cares for her parents but at the same time feels very helpless and frustrated about their troublesome marriage.

Fanny's parents have had a very conflict-ridden relationship with each other throughout the years. Fanny recalled her parents "fought all the time (成日鬧交)". She recalled childhood memories of her father throwing things out of the apartment when

he got angry with her mother. When describing the issues that her parents argued about, she highlighted that her father had many ideas about investment and business, but her mother did not support his ideas. The conflicts have been the result of their differences and their inability to compromise. Her parents have been sleeping in different rooms in the same apartment, and they have been cooking their own meals and eating separately for the past few decades. They cannot stand to even eat at the same table, so therefore, if Fanny wants to treat them to a nice meal, she has to take them out one at a time even if it is to the same restaurant.

Fanny described her parents' only form of communication as arguing and said they are at the point of "hating (憎)" each other. Although there is no sign of reconciliation, Fanny still hopes that her parents "relationship could be better (關係可以好些)" and they can "treat each other nicer (對對方好些)". Like Priscilla, Fanny is troubled mentally and emotionally by her parents' ongoing conflicts because not only is the family atmosphere toxic to her and her siblings, but she feels helpless in trying to help her parents to have a better marriage.

Triangling into parental conflicts.

Mr. Kwok, the eldest son who feels ambivalent toward both of his parents, has recognized his mother's effort to have her children take sides:

When we were little, my mother frequently told us that our father would hit and scold us if we didn't behave. When were a bit older, she started to tells us how awful my father was, and how badly he treated her. She tried to drive a wedge between us and our father. (She) hopes all the children will only stand on her side,

not on my father's side... She wanted to isolate (孤立) my father. However, it turned out that we were divided into two war camps (戰營).

Mr. Kwok said that he only started to be aware of her mother's intentions after he left home and had his own family. He is angry with his mother for dividing the family because all of the parent-child and sibling relationships are affected. He tries to avoid his mother because he gets emotional, angry and negative when he comes to contact with his mother. However, he also acknowledged that he was her mother's favorite child growing up. He believed his mother's side of the story and felt very sympathetic to her suffering. When he started to see the other side of the story, he felt angry with his mother. In the meantime, he felt guilty about keeping a distance from his mother.

Jessica who described her mother as "controlling" and "manipulative" also has a problem with her mother's bad mouthing of her father who worked as a contractor before being diagnosed with a terminal illness and dying seventeen years ago:

She said my father had another woman and she also claimed that my father did not bring all his income home... But to my knowledge, my father sometimes slept in the construction site just to save traffic fees... Actually, many relatives and friends know that my father was not like (how my mother claims).

Jessica loved and respected her father because he never scolded his children and devoted all he had to the family. Jessica is angry with her mother for trying to ruin her father's reputation after his death. Like Mr. Kwok, she also avoids her mother by not picking up her calls and not chatting with her during family get-togethers.

In Bowen's intergenerational theory, he described parents' effort in eliciting support from their children when parents are struggling with conflicts as triangling. He

proposed that the triangle is the smallest stable unit of relationships because when triangling a third party into a problematic relationship, the tension can be defused at least temporarily. However, marital partners do not get to discuss and resolve things between themselves (Bowen, 1978, 1980; Nichols & Schwartz, 2008). From the participants' descriptions about their parents who had dissatisfying relationships, I noticed that their parents hardly had any together time to resolve their differences and conflicts because of the demands and stresses of supporting a big family. Moreover, as traditional couples, the parents did not seem to communicate openly with each other. Sadly, they carried their early interactional patterns throughout their marriage.

Mistreatments of One Parent by the Other.

Ms. Cheung, 50, a married mother of one daughter, is the only participant in this study who co-resides with her parent (mother) in this study. According to her, her mother is a virtuous traditional woman who was devoted to her family all her life. Her mother was her father's second wife. The first wife left her father and four children when the children were still young. Ms. Cheung's mother had to take care of these four children and her own five daughters. Her life became even harder when Ms. Cheung's father was diagnosed with cancer and lost the ability to work in his thirties. Ms. Cheung and her sisters were angry with her father because he did not show appreciation for their mother's devotion to the family and instead was often short fused with her. Although her mother never complained and was very accommodating to her husband, Ms. Cheung and her sisters stood up for their mother:

(He) was mean, and he yelled and scolded my mother regularly. I didn't like it at all... We helped our mother especially when we were a bit older... We would tell him off, "Why do you always scold mum?"... My mother was very accommodating to my father. I felt that she was too accommodating to him.

Ms. Cheung felt angry with her father when she was in her twenties and thirties, and became more accepting of him when he became mellower in his old age. Moreover, her mother started to stand up for herself by telling her father off when he was being unreasonable. Ms. Cheung said that when she saw that she felt "okay".

Chi-wai, 48, a married father of two children, also stood on his mother's side in parental conflicts, without his mother's effort in eliciting his support. He said that his parents were "forced to keep their marriage (被逼一起)" because of the five children. He remembers his mother hitting his father with slippers a few times. His parents would then stop communicating for several months after the incident. He said that the conflicts were triggered by his father's suspicion of his mother's infidelity. When asked how he and his siblings reacted to his parents' conflicts, he stated:

I believed we thought our father was wrong, and (we tended to) side with our mother. Perhaps (it was because) we knew our mother had no (affairs)... We thought our father was wrong... Moreover, my father had habits like smoking and drinking. He sometimes got drunk and would provoke my mother to start a fight. Our impression then was that our father was on the wrong side.

Chi Wai was angry and distant from his father when he was young as the result of the conflict between his parents. His parents started to live in different apartments in their fifties and Chi Wai supported this arrangement. He believed that it was better for his

parents and for his relationship with his father. He rebuilt his relationship with his father before his death to a certain extent because he understood more of his father's struggles when he himself became a husband and father.

Gender.

Women are usually the connecting links in family relationships and they take more responsibility in maintaining kinship (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). In this study, many female participants showed concerns about their parents' problematic relationships whereas male participants situated themselves more distantly from their parents' conflicts. Ming, the eldest daughter who resented her mother for her son-preference practice, claimed that her mother harbors resentment, disappointment and anger toward her father. Ming described her parents as very distant from each other partly because they are very different people. Both immigrants from China, her father came from a well-off family that lost their wealth in war. He is educated and can write beautiful calligraphy. Her mother is from a peasant family and is illiterate. Both of them came to Hong Kong when they were teenagers. Her mother was hired by a wealthy family to work as a live-in maid. Her father worked in a store after finishing lower secondary and did not have enough money to continue his education. They were introduced by their employers. After they got married, Ming's father continued to work as a store-keeper. He had long working hours and only had one three-day annual leave during Chinese New Year. Her mother was left to raise five children almost completely on her own. Besides, her mother also took care of other people's children at home to help with the family income. Ming's father at one point decided to open his own store in hope of increasing his income.

Ming's mother borrowed a significant amount of money to help her husband to start the business. Unfortunately, the store did not last long and they were left with huge debts. Ming's father went back to work for his old boss and her mother had to work harder to pay off the debt. According to Ming, her mother is angry with her father because she has not felt cared for and supported by her husband:

My mother told me many times "Not only didn't your father help me, but also he left debts for me to pay" ... "What was the use of his education? Our family solely depended on my hard work. How many (other people's) kids did I raise day and night? Did he ever help?"

As the oldest daughter, Ming was the one her mother confided in the most growing up. Ming and her siblings are close and they regularly get together to talk about how to help their parents:

We often say we feel bad for our father. Even my husband said to me one time, "Actually I am very sympathetic to your father for having a wife like your mother." Then I said to him, "It depends on your position and perspective. Sometimes I feel bad for my father if I see it from his perspective. Other times, when I see it from my mother's perspective, I feel bad for her. It is very ambivalent (矛盾).

Ming's parents never fought openly. Her father, being a very polite person, tries to tolerate and avoid his wife. Her mother never criticizes her father outside of the household. In fact, Ming has heard her mother praise her father to other people. Ming tried to help her parents to be closer to each other at old age, but her efforts did not work. She respects her father, but at the same time feels sympathetic to her mother. Similar to Ming, Priscilla and Fanny also seemed to harbor a wish that their parents will eventually

reconcile and will enjoy a better relationship toward the end of their lives. Unfortunately, their attempts failed and they felt helpless, sad and angry.

The negative consequence of parental conflicts on children's mental health, social function and academic performance is well established in the literature (Coiro & Emery, 1998; Davies, Winter, & Cicchetti, 2006; R. Repetti, Flook, & Sperling, 2011). Marital disturbance may interrupt parent-child relationships because parents may use similar aggression when reacting to child misbehaviors. Negative exchanges between parent and child increase the general atmosphere of anger and aggression in the home (Buehler & Gerard, 2002). Jaycox (1993) asserted that a general emotional atmosphere of anger and aggression in the family is toxic for child development. Parental conflicts do not only affect children when they are young and dependent on their parents, they also have negative effects on the mental and physical health of adult children long after they have left their parents' homes (R. L. Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002). Having witnessed parental discordance also increases the possibility of ambivalence felt by adult children (van Gaalen et al., 2010). This study showed very similar results. Adult children, especially daughters, are still influenced by their parents' on-going conflicts. They somehow feel a responsibility to mend their parents' relationships. When they fail to do so, they feel helpless, worried and sad. In addition, adult children are troubled and feel angry when their parents try to have them take sides. Furthermore, they tend to feel more negative toward the parent who is perceived to be the perpetrator or the main source of conflict in the marriage.

4. Moderate to Severe Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is defined as “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child’s behavior” (Straus, 1994, p. 9). Fanny, the distressed single mother, described some dreadful corporal punishment her parents inflicted on her. In her memory, her mother punished her for reasons that were not justified. For example, when she was in kindergarten, she was hit and then forced to stand naked in the public hallway outside their apartment because she raised her head when her mother was washing her hair. She used “violence (暴力)” to refer to her mother’s hitting and slapping. Sadly, according to Fanny, her father also had a bad temper and he sometimes hit Fanny and her siblings even harder than their mother did. The physical punishment only ended when she started Form Two at about age thirteen. She wept and still felt sad and distressed when she talked about those experiences almost thirty years later.

Aon, age 45, a divorced father of one teenage daughter and living with his second wife, said that he was resentful when he was young because he was the one who received the most corporal punishment among the eight children in his family. He admitted that he was also the most disobedient child among his siblings. His parents hit him with a piece of withe made of rattan, which was commonly used by parents to discipline children in Hong Kong. Differing from Fanny, he thought, looking back, that his parents hit him for legitimate reasons. For example, he got punished for fighting with other boys in the neighborhood, breaking valuable items in the house and running away from school to gamble. Nevertheless, he believed that hitting and caning did not help him to improve nor

made him want to be better. To the contrary, it only made him angry with his parents and he became even more defiant.

Corporal punishment is an accepted child-rearing practice in many cultures. Based on an interview of 1,662 Hong Kong Chinese parents, 57.5% of parents reported to using corporal punishment on their children (Tang, 2006). Although corporal punishment does not cause injury, it is possible that some of the same negative outcomes associated with violence that result in injury might be shown by children who received corporal punishment (Turner & Muller, 2004). Various measures and degrees of corporal punishment were reported in the participants' stories. Even though physical punishment was a common practice in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s, the participants felt aversive to their experiences. They talked mostly about their fathers' hitting and slapping in the first two interviews, and I got the impression that their mothers did not use corporal punishment. However, in the feedback session, they said that their mothers also used physical punishment but it was mild. Our conclusion was that most likely that moderate to severe physical punishment is a source of ambivalence in their cases. The memories of corporal punishment, especially severe measures such as in Fanny's case, generated long lasting distress and other complicated emotions in children (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991; Straus, 1994; Straus & Mouradian, 1998; Turner & Muller, 2004). The long-term effect of corporal punishment on the parent-child relationship was also investigated. Willson et al. (2003) found parental rejection and hostility in early childhood as strong predictors of ambivalence in later life. Corporal punishment is one form of parental rejection and hostility: children feel unloved by their parents when being hit or slapped and their mental and emotional aspects of life are negatively affected.

5. Parental Dependence

Smelser (1998)'s theory of sociological ambivalence addresses the significance of dependence in producing ambivalence in interpersonal relationships. He explained that dependence on others take different forms, such as physical, financial, or psychological. Dependence limits choices, demands commitment, and creates a sense of entrapment in relationships. He concluded that "dependent situations breed ambivalence" (Smelser, 1998, p. 8). The availability of exit options and having the ability to take the available options are important in reducing intergenerational ambivalence (van Gaalen et al., 2010). van Gaalen and colleagues (2010) proposed that adult children's exit options depend on (a) personal ability to see exits, (b) the availability of exits, (c) the normative barriers against exits, and (d) the blockage of exits.

In addition to parents' dependence on adult children, dependence on children when they are young was also observed in this study. The cases that stand out the most are Jessica and Ming, both the oldest daughters. As described earlier, both of them had to start working in factories to support their families when they were aged eleven. I described their ambivalence toward their mothers' objection to their pursuit of education. In our interviews, both of them expressed their anger and resentment about having to shoulder their parents', especially their mothers', responsibilities at an early age. Jessica said that her mother went to work in a factory after her younger brothers were older. After about a month of working, her mother came home one day complained that some workers were not fair to her and cried:

I was angry when I heard her (complaining). I started working before I turned twelve. Do you think I was not mistreated? I didn't come home and cry about it. I was of course bullied because I was so young.

Jessica's mother stopped working after that incident. Now at age fifty, Jessica compares how hard she has worked for the past forty years and how little outside work her mother has had to do in her life. She feels angry and resentful. In addition, Jessica also protected her sisters from dropping out of school when they were young by negotiation with her mother and by giving most of her income to the family. When her younger twin brothers were kicked out of school, she was the one who took them to find alternative schools. Even now, her siblings still call her rather than her mother for their problems. She recounted one incident when her youngest brother called her when he was injured at work, and she had to tell him to go to the hospital immediately. Jessica thinks that she has shouldered much of her mother's responsibilities. Therefore, she became especially angry when her mother complained about having had a difficult life filled with hardship.

In reflection, Ming explained that because she was the oldest daughter, she internalized a significant amount of stress from her mother and the family in general because her mother confided in her:

When we had financial difficulties and there was no rice in the rice jar, my mother would tell me. I was thinking I was so young and I didn't know (how to help). I carried a lot of worries and anxieties from my family.

To support her family, she started working when she was eleven while going to school fulltime. She carried on with this work and school arrangement throughout secondary school. In addition, Ming's mother also confided in her about her resentment toward her

father. Ming feels that it is her responsibility to help her parents to reconcile even when they are now in their late seventies. Therefore, she spent six month preparing a big party for her parents' 50th anniversary. Moreover, she has had several talks with her father, persuading him to show his love toward her mother. However, their parents are still not affectionate toward each other. Ming said several times in our interviews that her feelings were very tangled (抖纏不清). She loves her mother and feels very appreciative of her devotion to the family especially in terms of bringing her and her siblings to a Christian church. Nonetheless, she realized that she harbors intensive anger and even hatred toward her mother.

When applying van Gaalen et al. (2010)'s conclusion about adult children's exit options to young children who were depended upon by their parents, the potential ambivalence could be even more intense, because young children have no personal ability to see exits, and there is no availability of exits, and there are plenty of normative barriers and blockage of exits.

Consistent with past research, parental dependence on adult children was also found in this study. Nevertheless, most parents of the participants are still physically able and are independent in looking after themselves. Even those few who are less able live in elderly homes. Hillcoat-Nalletamby (2010) suggested that parents do not demand support from their adult children when they are motivated by an altruistic intent of not wanting to burden their children and by a personal preference for autonomy. Many participants expressed appreciation toward their parents' understanding of their demanding life conditions by being independent and undemanding. In addition, most participants are from large families, and parental needs are shared by several children. Therefore, having

more siblings presents more exit options (van Gaalen et al., 2010). Of the three participants who feel the strain of parental dependence, two of them are the only supporting child for their parents and one experienced her mother's dependence and demands as unreasonable.

Tak Shen spent a significant amount of our interview time talking about his relationship with his mother and his mother's dependence on him. Tak Shen's only brother was killed in a car accident in 2002 and his father died of cancer in the same year. Losing two family members within a short period devastated everyone in the family, especially Tak Shen's mother. His mother's life was preoccupied by her husband and his illness and she lost her focus after his passing. She then turned to Tak Shen and his family for emotional and psychological support. His mother became very involved with raising Tak Shen's three young children. High contact frequency between parents and adult children increases the likelihood of intergenerational ambivalence (Fingerman, 2001; R. I. van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006). This was exactly what happened to Tak Shen and his mother. His mother found fault with his wife and complained to him frequently. Tak Shen was very troubled by his mother's behavior because he saw his wife as reasonable and respectful of his mother:

It was a very difficult time in the beginning. I handled relationship issues at work and it was very distressing. I didn't want my family to be the same. I told my mother not to ask me to deal with her and Chi Lan (wife)'s relationship... My mother is very nagging and she thinks too much... She can call me three or four times if I don't pick up her call. I get frustrated when I am busy and I lose my temper in front of her.

Tak Shen lived in a private housing near her mother's public housing apartment for the first several years after his father passed away. Then he and his wife decided to move to another district for their children's schooling and to provide a better living environment. His mother reacted strongly and she hinted that her life had no meaning if she did not live close to her son and grandchildren. In view of that, Tak Shen applied to the government Housing Department to transfer his mother to an apartment that was close to their new place. Tak Shen does not think that he has any exit options because he is the only person his mother can rely on. He also emphasized that he is rather traditional in terms of family values and feels it is his responsibility to have his mother enjoy a comfortable life in her old age. Consequently, he feels it is emotionally and psychologically draining to handle his relationship with his mother. Through the years he has tried many different ways to manage his relationship with his mother in order to balance the needs of both his mother and himself. The process and strategies he described provide great insights into ambivalence management, which I will present in the next chapter.

Similar to Tak Shen's situation, Priscilla is also the only child who looks after her aging parents. Her brother lives in Canada and does not provide any form of support to their parents. Without much support from other sources, her parents are financially and psychologically dependent on her alone. Priscilla wept during both the first and second interviews, and she was concerned about her parents' relationship and their declining health. In our feedback session, while most participants said that they did not feel strained financially to support their parents because all their siblings contributed to their parents' expenses, Priscilla said that supporting her parents financially was demanding for her and

her family. However, Priscilla does not think she has any option to do otherwise because she feels responsible for her parents' well-being. In the meantime, she feels negatively about her parents' dependence and is distressed emotionally and mentally.

During our feedback session, Jessica, the dutiful eldest sister, revealed that her mother had been diagnosed with cancer. Studies showed that when parents are in poor health, adult children experience more ambivalence because of the dependence parents may have on them (Fingerman et al., 2006). Already demanding before the illness, Jessica's mother requests her daughters to take turns to look after her, including walking with her at three o'clock in the morning. Jessica's second younger sister was assigned that shift and she has to go to work after the walks. Jessica has to cook for her mother after a long day of work. She and her sisters feel resentful of her mother's unreasonable demands but do not know how to object to her mothers' requests. She does not feel that they have a choice. Wendy, whose mother also suffered from illness and was in the same feedback group as Jessica, shared Jessica her and her siblings' experiences of working together to gang up against her mother's unreasonable demands. Hence, in very similar situations that can produce ambivalence, the ability of adult children to see and take exit options varies.

In general, participants believed that they have a filial responsibility to support their parents financially, instrumentally and emotionally. They also agreed that they are influenced by the concept of filial piety to a certain extent. In most cases, they do not report their parents being dependent because their parents try to be autonomous and their parents' needs were shared by numerous children. However, ambivalence heightened when parents' demands and dependence are greater than their adult children can meet and

when adult children do not have or see exit options. In those cases, the mental and emotional aspects of life and sometimes also their material aspect of life are affected, and they feel negatively toward their dependent parents and the situation. Studies found that intergenerational ambivalence increases in situations of dependence (van Gaalen et al., 2010; Willson et al., 2003). Parental dependence increases the obligations felt by adult children to meet the various needs of their parents and they may not have exit options (van Gaalen et al., 2010).

6. Parental Selfishness

The concept of filial piety in Chinese culture prescribes the reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship. Reciprocity creates bonds between parent and child, starting with the parents' devotion to their children's early lives (Chao & Tseng, 2002; C. Wu, 2007). Chinese children perceive their parents' devotion as love and grow up with a sense of obligation and responsibility to their parents (Chao & Tseng, 2002; C. Wu, 2007). Most of the participants described their parents as very devoted to their families. Even female participants agreed that although their parents, especially their mothers, might not have been loving and fair to them, they sacrificed for the family as a whole. They were also aware of the positive outcome of their parents' investment in them and their siblings. The participants used their parents' tremendous devotion as the main reason for them to forgive whatever hurts they felt in their interactions. Only a small number of participants described their parents, usually their fathers, as selfish. And the selfishness was usually manifested in withholding resources such as money from their wives and children. The withholding of resources and lack of investment in children was seen as a sign of being

unloving and it limited children's educational attainment and professional possibilities. Some participants considered that as having a negative impact on their current material aspects of living condition.

Fanny described her father as “selfish (自私)”, and said, “he did not love (愛) us much. The person he loves the most is himself.”. In her view, her father's first priority has been money. Her father wanted her to drop out of school and to work in a factory when she was only a primary student. Her mother insisted on her continued education until Form Five. Fanny did not see her father investing much resource in her or her siblings. In addition, her father was swindled in a few small business investments, and those experiences became a source of parental conflict and family stress. Fanny was annoyed with her father's comparison of them to their uncle's children:

My father was stingy (孤寒) with his money. (Unlike him), his brother focused on family relationships and children's education. All three of his children graduated from universities: one was in the U.S., one was in Australia, and one was in Hong Kong. My father envies his brother. Why did his brother's children turn out so well? But he (father) didn't invest (投資) in us. He didn't see this point and only complained to others about our low achievement.

It is obvious from Fanny's description that she felt her father did not love them enough to invest in their development. He was “selfish (自私)” and withheld resources from his children. When her father retired, he expected the four children to give him monthly payments. Fanny also believes it is her filial responsibility to support her parents, but she feels irritated by her father's inconsideration of his children's financial difficulties. Fanny's older brother has completely stopped contact with the whole family.

Fanny suspects that it is because her brother does not want to support his parents due to his own financial struggles.

Similar to Fanny, Tom, 51, a married father of one son, also described his father as “selfish (自私)” with regard to money. He believes his father has money because he has kept a significant portion of his income to himself throughout the years. Nevertheless, his father still expects Tom and his siblings to give him monetary support. Tom was annoyed when his father had his mother remind him to give him money while he himself had difficulties in making ends meet. He also resents his father for withholding money from his mother. He and his siblings pay their parents separately so that his mother can have some pocket money for herself.

Tom said his father values his older sister the most because she is the one who gives him the most amount of money. He believes his father is disappointed in him because he does not make a significant income working as an insurance agent. When talking about his professional development, he expressed regret about not studying hard enough; meanwhile, he perceived that his father did not invest enough in his education:

I was not promoted to Form Five in the same school. I asked my parents if I could continue my study in another school. But my father said, “No, if you want to study, you need to support yourself.” Then I (had to) work and went to night school.

Tom raised this incident as an example of parents being unreasonable when we talked about ambivalent feelings toward parents.

The perception of unreasonableness leads to both Fanny and Tom’s negative feelings. They perceive that their fathers have not shown love and devotion by investing what they had in his children and family. Consequently, their current material aspect of

living conditions is affected due to low educational attainment. It is not reasonable for their fathers to claim entitlement to support. Nevertheless, both Fanny and Tom believe that it is their responsibility to support their aging parents. Although not completely willing, they still support their fathers when they are able.

In addition to the reciprocal nature of the concept of filial piety, social exchange theory also sheds light on adult children's reactions to their parents' selfishness. It indicates that intergenerational relationships are governed by the principle of reciprocity – the expectation that parents' devotion and investment in children will be repaid (Molm & Cook, 1995; Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002). However, when parents violate norms of devotion early in the children's lives, children may feel less duty-bound to support their aging parents (Bedford, 1992). Silverstein et al. (2002) studied intergenerational exchanges over a 27-year period to identify the effect of early parental devotion of affection, time and money on the tendency of their children's reciprocal support of them when the parents are old. They found that parents who invested more of their resources in their young children received higher levels of support from their adult children later in life. The return gained by parents relative to their early investment verifies the reciprocal nature between generations. Fanny and Tom perceive that their fathers violated the principle of reciprocity because they did not invest in their children's early life stages yet expected support later. Nonetheless, they still believe that they need to support their fathers, based on the traditional practice of filial piety. This has created tension in their relationships with their parents and psychological ambivalence within themselves.

Sources of Ambivalence: The Positives and the Barriers against Exits

The six parental behaviors were identified as sources of adult children's negative sentiments and the participants' ambivalent experiences. When asked about their rationale and reasons of staying close to their parents despite harboring negative sentiments, three major and general reasons were given to support their decisions to keep regular contacts with their parents. The first is the traditional concept of filial piety, the second is respect and appreciation for their parents' sacrifice for the family and the third is their religious beliefs.

Respect and Appreciation for Their Parents' Devotion and Sacrifice

The majority of the participants admitted that their parents were fully devoted to their families. Even female participants conveyed that although their parents might not have been fair to them, they sacrificed for the family as a whole. They expressed respect for their parents' determination and resourcefulness in raising a big family in the harsh economic conditions. Wilson, who was angry at his parents' harsh corporal punishment when he was young and later learned to appreciate his parents' devotion, described a typical picture of parental devotion:

When we were young, our parents devoted all their energy and money to the family. They didn't neglect the family due to personal interests or issues. They worked day and night making more money to support the family...I have a very high regard for my parents because of their tremendous devotion.

He then recalled the times that their parents had to borrow rice and money from relatives to feed eight children. He sometimes wonders how his parents did it because it is

challenging for him to raise even one child now. He believes that his parents “have devoted all they had” and they “didn’t even sleep enough”.

Chi Wai, who was angry with his father for his parents’ marital discordance, stated:

He was very unreasonable to ventilate his emotions on his wife... on the other hand we also respected him because he worked long hours and he seldom took days off.

Mathew recalled and described the can-do spirit of his parents’ generation:

Their hard working spirit is stronger than our generation. Because they could only earn a very little amount of income, they worked overtime or even worked two jobs. I remember my mother brought sewing jobs home and worked until late at night.

Ming recounted her and her siblings’ appreciation to her mother’s devotion to the family:

From the bottom of our hearts, all four of us are very thankful to our mother for raising us assiduously. My mother chose to have a home-based day care because she didn’t want to work outside and to leave the four of us at home. She felt the only way to earn a good income was to be a nanny and to take care of children from the neighborhood in our home. Her earnings were a big source of income for the household.

Seung, who was unhappy about her mother’s son-preference practice, stated that her mother worked at several jobs to support her brothers’ education. All five children witnessed her years of toil. Seung particularly respects her mother’s strong-mindedness for never have complained about her hard life:

I have learned to appreciate her hard work and devotion even though it was not to me. I know she has done so much for our family...Because I have my own children, I have started to understand how toilsome she was.

When talking about the positive lesson she learned from her parents, Pai, who feels distant from her mother, stated:

We were so poor. We had eight siblings. My parents were not educated. In reflection, I need to learn from them how they gritted their teeth and raised us under such harsh conditions. Their examples showed me how to be a responsible person.

Other female participants also mentioned in one way or another their mothers' sacrifice to their families.

Filial Piety

Filial piety, in a traditional form, commands the younger generation to continue to relegate oneself to the expectations, authority, and presumed wisdom of one's parents (Kwan, 2000b). The concept of filial piety was mainly brought up by me in the interviews due to the significance of it proposed by the existing literature. The participants normally agreed immediately that the concept was an important element in guiding their parent-child relationships. In our feedback session, the participants explained that they did not mention filial piety in the interviews because the concept was ingrained in their everyday life and it did not occur to them as significant until they were asked.

When I asked Mr. Kwok, who was troubled by his parents marital discordances, about his continuous financial support to his parents even when he was unemployed, he

stated:

Because I feel they are my parents after all, and they loved and cared for me when I was young (養育之恩). It is filial piety (孝) . Although there are many things I don't like about my parents, I feel that it is my basic responsibility (基本的責任) (to care for and support them).

Similarly, Chi Wai extended the concept of “obedience” along with “filial” in the concept of filial piety and how it reflected in his attitude toward his parents:

Other than the meaning of “piety” (孝) , there is also the meaning of obedience (順) in the Chinese term filial piety. I feel that even though sometimes I don't agree with the things my parents say, I try to be obedient to their ideas. I try to forget about my parents' wrong doings. She (my mother) is seventy something already. I don't have many years left to show my filial piety.

From the very beginning of our interview, Billy, who felt negatively about his father's corporal punishment when he was young and her mother's dependence on him now, emphasized that he was a very traditional Chinese (很傳統的中國人) and family values were very important in his life:

I value family bonds (親情)... If my mother is not happy, it will be a reason for me to be unhappy... If I can make her happy, I will be happy too. I think this is very important.

Ming, who invited her parents to come to live with them to show her filial piety, said:

When they first moved in with us, I told them, “Thank you for your willingness to come to live with us. Actually I feel that it is our good fortune to be able to pay our filial piety to you in your later years.”

Matthew, 45, married with three children, revealed that he regularly felt annoyed and lost his temper owing to his mother's unsolicited advice and illogical worries about family members' well-being when he was younger. He started to reflect on his mother's motives behind her seeming overreactions. When talking about his experience with filial piety, he compared the Chinese parent-child relationship with his foreigner friends:

We learned idioms about filial piety when we were in school. More or less, we are influenced by these idioms. My foreigner clients and friends are not like that. For example, some of my friends got married in other states, and their parents had to pay for their own tickets to attend their weddings. I think it is very strange. In our case, we will pay for all of our parents' expenses because we invite them.

Matthew lived overseas for a few years, and consequently the differences between cultures with regards to filial responsibility has helped him to be more aware of his own beliefs.

Some participants expressed that although they do not feel close to their parents emotionally, they feel the need to be a responsible child:

Pai: There is not any affection (between me and my mother), but there is responsibility (on my part).

Me: What makes you to stick to (your responsibility) despite your mother's treatment of you?

Pai: I have always been a responsible person. I feel that as a daughter, I should give her money if I could.

Me: Does it have anything to do with the Chinese concept of filial piety?

Pai: Yes, of course it does. I feel this is my way to pay my filial piety.

Jessica, the responsible eldest sister who harbors years of resentment toward her mother, said that she would take care of her mother when she is unable to take care of herself. But she said that it would be very different from taking care of her father whom she felt affectionate toward. I asked her if her behavior had anything to do with filial piety, she answered:

Yes, it is. It is something handed down from traditional Chinese culture. Because she (my mother) always taught us to respect the elderly in the family... I do listen to her. I even pay (respect) to random elderly people in the street.

Charlie, who is resentful of his parents' unfairness in inherited wealth distribution, described his relationship with his parents as distant because he and his younger sister were raised by his maternal grandparents growing up. Nonetheless, he feels the responsibility to show his respect and care to his parents:

Me: You said although you and your parents do not have a strong emotional bond, you are softhearted toward them. What is the reason behind your actions?

Charlie: It is because they are my parents after all.

Me: Do you think it is filial piety or simply responsibility?

Charlie: It is filial piety.

The distressed Fanny explained her frequent contacts with her parents despite a troubled past and ongoing conflict:

Fanny: They are my parents after all. Moreover, there aren't many days left for me to see them... They are my parents, I must see them.

Me: So you feel it is necessary and it is your responsibility.

Fanny: Yes.

Me: Is it anything to do with filial piety?

Fanny: I feel that I am not paying enough filial piety...It is important to see them.

They might not expect much and a meal with them is what they want. They sometimes call me to chat or call my kids. I can sense that they want us to go visit.

Me: Other than being responsible, do you enjoy the time when you are with them?

Fanny: Not really. My daughter sometimes asks me why I am not holding my mom's hand while we are out. I don't feel like holding (her hand). There is no intimacy or bonding leading to that closeness. I just can't do it.

Although filial piety remains a respected value today, the social interpretation of what constitutes appropriate behavior toward elderly parents has changed significantly over time (A. C. Y. Ng et al., 2002). For instance, filial care illustrated in this study is given mostly to fulfill the needs of the parents when they are not able to support themselves, in comparison to traditional practice that parental obedience is absolute and filial care is supposed to demonstrate how devoted the children are to the parents (Cheng & Chan, 2006). Nevertheless, all twenty participants believe strongly in their responsibility to their parents, especially their parents' financial and tangible needs. No matter how difficult their relationships have been, how harsh their parents have been to them, and how much they perceive their lives have been negatively impacted, they are still willing to support their parents when they are needed by them.

Religious Beliefs

Six participants in this study, two males and four females, are devoted Christians, and they addressed the importance of their religious beliefs in their lives. Christianity has

influenced them in various aspects of their relationships with their parents. For example, the values of respecting and loving your parents in Christianity reinforced the participants' barriers for exiting from the ambivalent relationships. In addition, different concepts in the religion have helped them to heal and find ways to reconcile with their parents. When I asked Seung if filial piety has anything to do with her efforts in trying to keep up her relationship with her mother with whom she felt ignored and distant, she replied that her religion has more to do with her attitude:

Seung: If it was only Chinese tradition, I would have gone a long time ago.

Me: Why?

Seung: Because I feel very toilsome, and I don't like my family at all.

Me: How does your religion keep you from leaving?

Seung: My religion tells me if you have parents, no matter how bad your parents are, you have to love them.

Me: Is it difficult that on one side your religion tells you to love your mother and on the other side you feel angry with her?

Seung: Yes.

Along the same line, Fanny feels troubled by her inability to demonstrate Christ-like love to her mother:

Fanny: I think I have changed (in the ways I feel about my parents). But I think my change is not enough to be a Christian... I don't feel like a Christian because I argue with them (my parents), and I lose my temper and yell.

From Seung and Fanny's description, it seems like they are striving to meet the perceived standard of their religion, but, they feel guilty and inadequate when they are not able to

show the type of love to their parents described in their religious practice. Their ambivalence is intensified by this struggle.

Billy expressed his gratitude about how his religious beliefs helped in his relationships with his parents:

I am thankful that my religion changed me, so that I had more motivation to make changes in my relationships with my parents... For the ten years before my father passed away, I started to make changes after I made a commitment to Jesus. I then rebuilt my relationships with them by devoting effort and time in the process.

Religious beliefs act as barriers against adult children exiting the ambivalent relationships with their parents, and add to the ambivalent experiences when participants feel that they are not living up to the Christian standards. Nonetheless, they also motivate adult children to seek ways to mend their broken relationships with their parents.

The availability of exit options and having the ability to take the available options are important in reducing intergenerational ambivalence. van Gaalen et al. (2010) proposed that lack of exit options increases the likelihood of ambivalence. Moreover, adult children's exit options depend on a) personal ability to see exits, (b) the availability of exits, (c) the normative barriers against exits, and (d) the blockage of exits. From the stories of the participants in this study, the traditional teaching of filial piety, appreciation for parents' sacrifice, and religious beliefs are three barriers against them taking the exit options in this study. Therefore, feelings of respect, appreciation and love are the positive emotions in the ambivalent experiences.

Summary

The definition of intergenerational ambivalence in this study mainly followed Luescher and Pillemer (1998)'s formulation, as individuals experience contrasting emotions simultaneously, resulting from contradictory expectations about their behaviors. Their definition emphasized both a sociological and a psychological level of ambivalence. The conceptualization of ambivalence in this study was based on participants' direct descriptions of experiencing conflicting emotions and attitudes simultaneously. More than half of the participants felt ambivalent toward their parents at some points during their lifetime. Almost all of their narratives of ambivalence are historical in nature and they reflect continuous relational patterns over their life course. In addition, both sociological dimensions and psychological dimensions are shown in the narrative of ambivalence. Specifically a sociological dimension is expressed through the significance of gender, power in the family, and societal norms such as filial piety whereas a psychological dimension is expressed through internal feelings of lack of love and attention from parents or being controlled and not respected for their own autonomy.

Six parental behaviors and attitudes were identified as sources of the participants' negative sentiments in the ambivalent experience in this study. They are: son preference and parental unfairness, parental psychological control, parental marital discordance, moderate to severe corporal punishment, parental dependence and parental selfishness. Moreover, it was also found that these six parental behaviors and attitudes do not generate ambivalence unless adult children identify the connection between their negative and undesirable living experiences with these parental behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, the participants' living experiences were expressed in two distinctive

aspects: psychological/emotional and material. In addition, three major reasons to stay close to their parents or three barriers against exiting the relationships despite harboring negative sentiments were revealed in the interviews. The first is the traditional concept of filial piety, the second is respect and appreciation for their parents' sacrifice for the family and the third is their religious beliefs.

The participants expressed their conflicting feelings and contradictory thoughts with various degrees of intensity during the interviews. I found that the intensity of the ambivalence largely depends on the number of parental behaviors and attitudes that are identified as sources of the negative side of intergenerational ambivalence in their family life. For example, in the case of Fanny, who might be the most distressed participant in the study, all six sources were reported in her relationship with her parents. In the case of Jessica and Mr. Kwok, five out of six sources were identified in their stories. All of three of them expressed unresolved and intensive ambivalence during the time of interviews.

Chapter Six

PROCESS AND STRATEGIES OF INTERGENERATIONAL AMBIVALENCE MANAGEMENT

The definition of intergenerational ambivalence refers to the simultaneous presence of contradictory feelings and thoughts in a relationship between parents and adult children at a moment in time, created both by the inherent nature of and the unique interaction patterns in the parent-child relationships and by structural conditions in the sets of social relationships within which parents and children are situated across the life course (Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Curran, 2002; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998; Schenk & Dykstra, 2012). As stressed in Chapter Two, most studies investigating the concept of ambivalence treated the construct as a static frame of the relationship dynamics between parents and their adult children. What such studies provide is a snapshot of the interactions between adult children and their aging parents, and such a still-image approach does not capture the complicated and changing dynamics of the parent-child relationship (Schenk & Dykstra, 2012). Connidis and McMullin (2002) emphasized a focus on the dynamics of negotiating changes between parents and children in different developmental stages. Consequently, one's ambivalent experiences are shaped and reshaped by a dynamic process within the development of family relationships (Elder & Johnson, 2003). The findings in this chapter are guided by the framework proposed by Connidis and McMullin (2002) in which the focus is on exploring "how ambivalence is negotiated and why negotiations result in either relatively harmonious or relatively

conflicted relationships in some cases and at some times” (p. 559). Connidis and McMullin (2002) argued that although individuals are under constraints of social rules imposed by social structures, as social actors they actively exercise individual agency in their attempts to design their own lives. Similarly, Finch (1993) proposed that kinship is a relational practice and family responsibilities and obligations are determined in a negotiation process. Therefore, family members have room to maneuver and change their situations, and ambivalence can be addressed or diminished in the process. This study’s strong emphasis on the life course perspective sheds light on the changing process on the part of adult children at different stages of their relationships with their parents.

The phrase “strategy” is commonly used in the existing research studying ambivalence management. I compared and contrasted the similarities and differences among the participants who expressed ambivalence toward their parents in order to identify similar and different strategies in the analysis process. While I was looking for strategies, I discerned a similar process that many of the participants went through in which they managed and resolved their internal struggles. I organized and named the stages in the process and presented it to the participants in the feedback session. The participants gave positive feedback about this process. Together, we explored in more depth their experiences of going through different stages. The process, which was derived from the participants’ stories, includes five stages: 1) Potential ambivalence and felt ambivalence, 2) confrontation and persuasion, 3) disappointment and anger, 4) compassion and respect, and 5) acceptance and self-agency. I will present this process by describing these five stages and will also illustrate strategies used by the participants in each of the stages. While many participants have gone through each stage of this process,

some participants seemed to skip one or two stages. For example, a few participants said that they did not confront nor try to persuade their parents to change because they were a little intimidated by their parents and knew that their parents would not listen to them. Moreover, the five stages did not always happen in sequential order. Participants sometimes went back and forth between stages in their ambivalent experiences.

1. Potential Ambivalence and Felt Ambivalence

Newby-Clark (2002) categorized ambivalence into potential and felt ambivalence. In the case of potential ambivalence, there are both positive and negative experiences in the parent-child relationships, and one or both parties may harbor contradictory emotions and thinking, but may not be aware of them. In contrast, in the situation of felt ambivalence, the person is aware of his/her conflicting feelings and thinking and may feel torn and uncomfortable. The transition from potential ambivalence to felt ambivalence accurately describes the experiences of the participants in this study. Interestingly, although many of the participants experienced negative events and emotions from a very early stage of their experiences in their families-of-origin, they only started to experience feelings of ambivalence during moments of awareness of how their unhappiness was connected to their parents' behavior. They used phrases like “jumping out (跳了出來)”, “waking up (醒了)” and “understand (明白了)” to describe moments of examining and reflecting their parents and the relationship dynamics between them. These moments of awareness always happened after they had left their parents' home when they were in their 20s, 30s or even 40s. Physical distance and/or being outside of their family system enabled them to see their families with a certain degree of clarity (Kerr, 1984).

Three preceding circumstances may trigger the transition from potential ambivalence to felt ambivalence. The first is comparing one's own experiences with those of peers. For example, Pai said that her ambivalent feelings were triggered by comparing her situation with her friends in her university dormitory:

I (started to) experience (ambivalence) when I started to compare with others. For example, when I lived in the university dormitory, I remember it clearly and still feel emotional when I think about it now. The students usually went home on Saturdays and came back on Sundays. I constantly heard others share that their mothers were concerned that they didn't eat well living in the dormitory. Their mothers cooked soup and lots of dishes for them... I started to wonder why my mother never did the same for me.

Pai knew she was “feeling unhappy” seeing her mother treating her brothers better than her. But during the time when she was comparing her mother's and her friends' mothers' different behavior, her emotions became more intense and conflicted; a combination of yearning to be loved by her mother and anger at not receiving it. Later, she noticed herself having “a bit of an eating disorder (有點厭食症)”. She “felt like vomiting after every meal” in the university canteen. She had to “force food down” herself.

The second and most reported circumstance is when participants encountered difficulties in life that prompted them to find explanations and solutions. For instance, Seung and her ex-husband started to have problems when their two children were young. They believed in very different ideas and practices in raising their children, which became the main source of marital conflict. Their marriage fell apart when both of them

were unwilling to compromise and they eventually decided to separate. In the midst of sorrow, Seung began to scrutinize herself as a mother and wife. She started to notice her negativity toward her children, ex-husband and people around her. She also realized that she was negative and critical toward herself.

Seung: I felt that I jumped out (跳了出來). During the time my husband moved out and we were not formally divorced, I started to contemplate why I was like that. Actually I went to see a psychologist, but no one could tell me why. I think after all, it is my personality. My negativity influenced me the most.

She wondered where the negativity came from. Without difficulty, she found the connections between her personality and how she was treated as a child and her on-going relationship dynamic with her mother. “When I think of my mother, I think of a lot of criticism, physical punishment, and put-downs.”

In another case, Ming said that she was always the most obedient and respectful child to her parents until she encountered difficulties in her workplace in her 40s. As a diligent student and professional nurse, her academic and career path was “smooth (順利)” and she was “in control (控制)” of both her personal and professional life.

However, when she was promoted to an administrative position, she found that she did not possess the interpersonal skills, such as assertiveness and decisiveness, needed to manage a team and to deal with office politics. She experienced feelings of depression and anxiety when she could not find ways out of her predicament. In searching for an explanation of her challenge, she began to see her mother’s undesirable qualities, such as timidity, over politeness and feelings of unworthiness, in herself:

I always thought I was not like my mother. But at the end I am like her in many ways...I never thought the difficulties in my career would lead to this kind of reflection... One obvious point is that, the feelings of being unworthy of other people's love and respect... I realized my mother's attitude has influenced me in a subtle way (潛移默化). My colleagues think that I am such a nice person because I don't criticize others. Actually I don't dare and I don't even know how to challenge others. At work, I see people getting ahead by being aggressive and rude. But I just can't do it... I have been looking for way out (出路) for the past eight to ten years... That's why I feel angry and resentful of my mother. I think I really hurt my mother when I said to her the other day, "I am angry at myself because I am like you. I am angry at you." She didn't know what had happened within me for the past ten years. Before that, I praised and thanked her, but suddenly I have changed to not to like her and be angry with her.

Ming's mother's unfair treatment of her with regard to her pursuit of education also surfaced. Her anger and resentment toward her mother emerged alongside her ongoing appreciation and love toward her mother:

Even though my childhood experiences have been with me for several decades, I did not realize (my ambivalence). (It was) because I was in control of my life. I felt everything was okay. I felt that my mother was good to me and she did not hurt me in anyway. Recently I realized that my problems are somehow related to my mother. I feel that I am like my mother.

The third circumstance that may trigger ambivalence is situations in which the participants were required to examine and reflect on their past experiences. Both Tak

Shen and Forward were involved in learning programs that encouraged them to study their families and their relationships with their family members. Tak Shan was in a seminary and his feelings of “love and hate (又愛又恨)” toward his explosive father were intensified when he was invited to share his growing up experiences:

I presented to the group about how God guided me. To my surprise, after my presentation I realized that my life and my attitude had been very negative...I started to realize that individuals are influenced by their early life experiences.

Tak Shen started to reflect on his life experiences and his conflict-ridden relationship with his father and started to realize his “love and hate (又愛又恨)” toward his father. He admitted that he blamed (埋怨) his father during that time.

Likewise, Forward was invited to review her family history in a self-growth course. Her father refused to talk about the past and told her to make it up herself. She then asked her two sisters and continued to inquire into the unfortunate events that had happened to her family. In the process of learning about her family she started to question the way her father related to her and her siblings. Although feeling respect and love for her father, she started to feel angry at his controlling behavior and his refusal to talk to her about family history:

I started to be angry... There were other emotions along with anger. In addition, I was also angry with my mother (who committed suicide), but I could not talk about it. We never mentioned anything (about her). When my father refused to talk about our family history, I was angry...I felt that it was my right to know the history of our family... I was (also) angry because we couldn't say things that are in our hearts. I didn't understand why we couldn't express whatever that was in

our hearts... Actually what is in our hearts is different from the superficial and polite expressions we use. Sometimes when it was too polite, I would rather not talk.

These findings of the transition from potential ambivalence to felt ambivalence echo with studies that found that daughters' ambivalence peaked when they were in their 30s and 40s (Willson et al., 2003). Moreover, although there are conflicts between adolescents and their parents, adolescents do not report significant ambivalence toward their parents (Fingerman & Hay, 2004). It was explained that adolescents may lack social cognitive processes to experience ambivalence because they tend to focus on polarized views as good or bad in social ties (Labouviet-Vief, 1994). Furthermore, Troll (1996) found that middle-aged adults experience the greatest ambivalence toward their loved ones. Nevertheless, their ambivalence starts to decline in a linear fashion as time goes on. These findings are consistent with this study because the participants started to experience ambivalence when they were close to or at middle age and they gradually manage their internal struggles through a process that lasted between a few years to more than ten years. As time went on, many of them resolved their ambivalence toward their parents.

Additionally, the findings of this study support the suggestions that the indirect measures of ambivalence that only capture positive and negative elements and sentiments in the overall interaction between parents and children are not adequate measures because they do not distinguish potential and felt ambivalence. Consequently, direct measure of ambivalence is a preferred conceptualization because research shows that ambivalence is only experienced when the positive and negative components of emotions and attitudes

are simultaneously accessible and salient and when one is aware of one's contradictory feelings or thoughts (Newby-Clark, McGregor, & Zanna, 2002; Pillemer et al., 2007; Sutor, Gilligan, et al., 2011). Psychological and emotional discomfort generally follows the awareness of one's contradictions and the experience of felt ambivalence (van Harreveld, van der Pligt, & de Liver, 2009).

2. Confrontation and Persuasion

As “social actors”, the participants in this study have actively engaged in ways to resolve their internal conflicts after they made the internal connection between their living experiences and their parents' behaviors. Their first attempts to make changes were typically carried out with an aim to change their parents' behaviors, which were seen as sources of their negative side of their ambivalent experience. I presented the six parental behaviors that were identified as sources of the participants' negative side of ambivalence in the previous chapter. In other words, their goal in this stage is basically to decrease their negative feelings such as frustration, anger, resentment and sadness by eliminating the sources of their negative feelings and thoughts. Confrontation and persuasion are two general strategies identified in this stage.

Confrontation happened when the participants disclosed to their parents their feelings of hurt and discontent, and how these feelings were related to their parents' past or ongoing behaviors. Some confrontations were about specific events and some were about general relationship dynamics. It seems that confrontations about specific events expressed with a calm demeanor were better received by parents than confrontations about general relationship dynamics conveyed with strong emotions.

Wendy and her siblings felt irritated by their mother's controlling and interfering behavior in general. This dynamic was also manifested in her mother's dislike of Wendy's husband. Her mother commented regularly that she was concerned about Wendy's marriage because of her husband's irresponsible behavior. She even suggested to Wendy ways to make her husband change. Moreover, her mother reprimanded her husband directly because she felt Wendy did not comply with her advice. Wendy's husband was offended and then complained to Wendy. Wendy felt torn between her mother and her husband. She felt that her mother was at fault for scolding her husband, so she decided to confront her mother calmly:

I told my mother, "Don't tell me that you think I am unhappy because my husband treats me badly." I then told her that being happy or unhappy was a matter of my own feelings. If I don't say that I am not happy, that means I am not unhappy... So I told her, "If you want me to be happy, (you need to) stop saying things like that to me. When I do feel unhappy, I will tell you."

Wendy's mother was not pleased by the confrontation but she did not argue. Wendy said that her mother stopped complaining about her husband even though she continued to dislike him. This specific incident was partially resolved.

Unlike Wendy's experience, confronting parents about general relationship dynamics such as feelings of being unloved or treated unfairly may trigger negative reactions from parents and the relationship may worsen followed the confrontation. Pai's first confrontation with her mother with regard to unfair treatment related to food was described in the previous chapter. Her mother did not respond to her complaints and Pai decided to stop eating dinner at home. Although distant, Pai loved her mother and

respected her devotion to the family. She yearned for a closer relationship with her mother. Her second attempt to improve their relationship happened in her late 20s, when she was encouraged to challenge herself during a self-growth program by doing something to actively to improve her relationships with significant people. She chose her mother:

I was very candid with my mother about my feelings. However, my mother could not accept them at all. I cried and she cried too. She felt there was no reason for me to complain about her...I think our relationship even deteriorated.

Pai essentially told her mother how she felt she was being treated unfairly and as relatively unimportant compared to her other siblings, especially her brothers, throughout the years. Her mother was angry and stopped the discussion. Pai believed that her confrontation created a rift in their already distant relationship. She was left alone to resolve more feelings of rejection and ambivalence.

Ming confronted her mother by making complaint of her mother's treatment of her:

I realized that there were a lot of (unresolved issues) between her and I. We were fine on the surface. We didn't argue, but I was extremely troubled. At the end, I talked to my mother in private. I told her all the things that happened in the past twenty years. It was my complaints about her...My mother was puzzled. When I think about it now, I feel it was hurtful to my mother. I feel very regretful... I haven't overcome my guilty feelings until now.

Seung, the youngest and most timid child among her parents' five children, confronted her mother explosively during a family get-together at a restaurant. This

incident happened during the time period when Seung started to be aware of her mother's negative impact on how Seung was as an adult. She was preoccupied with anger and feelings of helplessness to break away from past restraints. She recalled her mother was harshly reprimanding her niece, daughter of her second brother, for some minor misbehavior in front of the whole family. This triggered Seung's memories of her mother's punitive behavior toward her and her siblings. She slapped on the table angrily and told her mother to stop scolding her niece. Everyone including her mother was astonished at her sudden emotional outburst. Her mother was outraged. Seung cried and walked out of the restaurant. One of her brothers ran after her and said to her, "you know she is like that. Just try to tolerate her." A few years later, Seung reflected:

It was not a matter of being tolerant; it was mainly because I could not manage my own emotions (at that time). That's why I confronted her. Not that I didn't know her personality and style, but I felt very uneasy internally.

Seung's mother ignored her for a long time after the confrontation. No one in the family brought up that incident again and Seung and her mother never attempted to talk things through and mend their relationship. Seung focused on her own internal struggles and worked hard to break away from her old way of seeing herself and relating to others. From both Pai and Seung's confrontations, it seems that both of their mothers were offended because they felt that they had tried their best to support the family and that there was not any reason for their children to complain about their devotion. They got offended if their children expressed their dissatisfaction.

Some participants described a combination of confrontation and persuasion in the hope of creating change in their parents. Fanny described her mother's controlling

behavior as bothersome, and she started to realize how much she and her siblings had been affected. She confronted her mother about how her mother's treatment of her hurt her confidence while she was encountering difficulties at work. Her mother did not respond to her during that incident. In her search for answers as to her mother's behaviors, she concluded that her mother simply did not know how to teach her and her siblings. She felt that she needed to "teach (教)" her mother how to relate to others. From then on, she continuously persuaded her mother to listen to her and to apply a gentler and more positive approach to life:

I understand that it was because she didn't know how to teach us and was not aware of her own personality. But I wanted her to be better. A lot of times I would point it out to her when I saw there were problems. It is like I am teaching her. But when I tell her, she doesn't really understand... She doesn't like it and then we will argue.

Things that Fanny persuaded her mother to change included her mother's "meanness" to her father and her "controlling (控制)" of her brother. However, her mother did not think that she needed to change; rather that it was her father's and brother's fault. They would end up arguing with each other during these interactions.

Ming and her husband invited her parents to come to live with them in hope of taking care of her mother who was suffering from chronic illness. As a nurse, she saw that her mother's lifestyle was affecting her health. For example, her mother complained about chronic back pain, but rather than sitting on a proper chair, she would sit on a low stool. Her mother suffered from stomach pain, but she put water in cooked rice and drank tap water that was not hygienic. Ming believed that through persuasion based on love and

patience, her mother would eventually change. To her frustration, her mother did not take any of her health advice and continued with the way she had lived all of her life. Ming was frustrated, angry and guilty, and her mother was unhappy and also feeling guilty. After six months of co-residency, her mother insisted on moving back to her old apartment. Several weeks after her parents moved away, Ming expressed:

My belief was that love can change another person. Now I know that I was under a lot of stress during that period of time. I was not able to truly love her unconditionally. I had resentment. I thought if I could serve her, tolerate her, and truly love her, I would move her and change her eventually.

Similar to Ming, Mr. Kwok said that he failed miserably in his attempts to confront and persuade his mother not to make up stories about his father and to think of herself as a victim:

(I told her) "Say no more. You drew your own conclusions behind closed doors. It is all your own prejudice. You don't tell the truth."...She would first deny, and then use tears against me.

After many failed attempts, Mr. Kwok concluded that one's personality cannot be changed. In explaining his confrontation and persuasion, he stated:

On the one hand, I was hoping she could think things through; on the other hand, it was an emotional expression on my part. (I was telling her), "Don't think that I believe what you say blindly like before." But now I realized whether it is my mother or others, you cannot change other people.

From confrontation of parents' wrong-doings to attempts to change parents through persuasion, this was the beginning stage of some participants' attempts to

manage their ambivalence. As illustrated above, most of these attempts failed. The very few somewhat successful cases happened under two conditions, as illustrated in Wendy's case. Firstly, the issues relate to parents' specific behaviors that may trigger negative emotions in the participants. Secondly, the confrontations had to be handled in a calm and controlled manner. Birditt (2009) suggested that the more intense the ambivalence level, the more likely parents and children are to use destructive strategies such as yelling and arguing in their confrontation attempts. Destructive strategies may perpetuate already poor quality relationships. Bowen, in his interview about defining a self in one's family of origin, advised to avoid confrontation with emotional reactivity. He stated, "confrontation probably says more about the immaturity of the accuser than it does about the personal deficit of the accused." He believed that the calmer people are, the more they can listen to what their parents are saying without reacting emotionally to it (Bowen, 1980). In the end, none of the participants was able to change their parents by confrontation and persuasion. Although some participants revealed that their parents had changed for the better over the years and such changes softened feelings of ambivalence, all the changes were a result of the initiative of the parents themselves.

3. Disappointment and Avoidance

In the previous stage of managing ambivalence, participants believed that in order to resolve their ambivalence, their parents had to change. When their efforts in telling their parents their feelings and complaints were received negatively and their persuasion of their parents to take up new behaviors was ignored, the participants felt frustrated and annoyed. However, they started to realize that changing their parents was not in their

control and their parents would probably never change. Thus, they felt disappointed, angry and helpless. To ease their intense emotions and the tension between them and their parents, participants normally chose to avoid their parents and their issues altogether (Birditt, Miller, et al., 2009). Avoidance is typically the strategy used in this stage. Other than avoidance, some participants also talked to other people, mostly family members such as spouses or siblings, in order to elicit emotional support to ease their internal turmoil. Eliciting emotional support from trusted ones is another strategy used.

Mr. Kwok said that it was easy for him to be emotional when he realized that his mother had told many lies to him and his siblings especially when he felt that his mother was playing the victim role (受害者的角色). In order to avoid feelings of frustration and anger, he chose to keep a distance between him and his mother especially when he was unemployed:

I think the best way to deal with my mother is not to get in touch with her. She is very negative. I am afraid I don't have enough positive energy to deal with her... I told myself, if there is danger there, why do you still go there? (I don't want to) bring trouble to myself.

Although he was avoiding his mother, he felt guilty and hoped that he could have enough positive energy one day to face her:

I know that I need to respect my mother... If I am more capable (financially) in the future, I will provide her with a more enjoyable life. She went through hardship to raise me after all. She gave a lot. However, I can't even support myself now... Same as my father, I don't want to get in touch with him if I have a

choice. There is no affection between us, and I don't even know what to talk about when I see him.

He actively searched for ways to strengthen himself including meditation and Qi Gong. He said that he is calmer in dealing with his parents recently. He hopes that one day he can be positive enough not to be affected by his mother's negative energy when he sees her.

Jessica explained the reasons that she avoided her mother were because she felt annoyed and frustrated when she had conversations with her mother. Her mother wanted her to agree with everything she said:

Actually our mother controlled (操控) us and made us not to dare (不敢) to argue with her. No one dares to argue with her. At most, we just talk back one or two sentences. Not even the third sentence... I told her "I am busy with things and can't talk to you on the phone now" or "You could call my sister."

During family get-togethers, Jessica is the one who cooks all the dishes. She finds excuses to immerse herself in cooking. Her sisters pointed out her avoidance of her mother. Jessica explained to them that she is already trying her best to handle her mother. The main reason that she keeps her distance is because her interactions with her mother trigger intense emotions such as anger and unhappiness. "Sometimes when her words get on my nerves, I will get crazy and very unhappy. That is why I avoid (避開) her. If I avoid her, I will not be provoked (觸動)." Both Mr. Kwok and Jessica explained clearly that they avoid their mothers because their encounters with them provoked unpleasant emotions such as intense frustration and anger. Bowen called it "emotional reactivity" in his writing (Bowen, 1978).

Our conversations below described the relationship pattern between Fanny and her mother:

Fanny: Sometimes I point out to her (her problematic behaviors). But when it gets to a point where I feel we are quarreling (鬧緊交), I will walk away. I will leave my mother's place (because) I don't want to be troubled (不想煩).

Me: When you leave, you are aware of yourself...

Fanny: (I am thinking) I don't want to go back (to their place) and don't ever want to go back... But I will go back again after I feel calmer and feel like there is nothing (troublesome).

Me: When you leave, do you find a reason like "it's getting late" or just walk away?

Fanny: Not really. I just tell them I want to go home.

Me: Do they know that you leave because you are angry?

Fanny: They know, but they ignore me. They should know because I will stop going there for several weeks.

Me: You don't want to go back to face the situation. How do you calm yourself down? Does anything happen during this period?

Fanny: Time (時間) . Nothing happens. Time washes away (沖淡) my feelings. But I don't come up with ways to resolve the problems like you asked.

Me: Do you think of anything to comfort yourself? For example, tell yourself that your mother is like that and to accept her in order to calm yourself down.

Fanny: No...

This sequence of behavior repeatedly occurs in Fanny and her mother's relationship. It shows that when tension gets high to a point that is unbearable, they avoid each other for a period of time. Then they will get together again like nothing happened. Fanny expressed that she doesn't know how to break this cycle of arguing and avoiding with her mother.

After Ming's parents moved away, she was angry with her mother and did not feel like socializing with her. She asked her sisters to take her mother for the regular medical check-ups that were previously Ming's tasks. She explained:

I deliberately avoided (迴避) her and didn't want to see and talk to her. I didn't want to care about her...I didn't feel I could be nice to her in a genuine manner. At the same time, I didn't want to upset her by showing her my real feelings. It was better to avoid (each other) during that period of time. It was better for the both of us.

After Charlie failed to persuade his parents to be fair in distributing their wealth among their five children, he and his parents were in a "cold war (冷戰)" for more than a year. They did not contact each other during this time until one of his brothers arranged an occasion and invited everyone in the family to come. They started talking again and "pretended nothing had happened".

Tom, who sees his father as selfish, also dislikes his father's explosive temper:

Actually it is very difficult to change him. He is in his seventies and has already got used to his own ways... I feel a bit helpless because I can't change him but at the same time I really want him to change... Sometimes I want to talk to him, but I'm afraid might provoke him.

Tom's strategy is to keep a distance, "If he needs us, we will try our best to help him. But if he doesn't need help, we maintain some distance."

Bowen described avoidance as emotional cut-off. He observed that there are two basic types of emotional cut-off. The first type is when people stop seeing each other for a period of time. The second type is when a person emotionally distances himself or herself and avoids discussing the emotionally charged issues even when they are physically present (Kerr, 1984). Researchers found avoidance to be a common practice in managing tension and ambivalence in parent-child relationships (Beaton et al., 2003; Fingerman, 1998; Hagestad, 1987; Hay, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2007; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Avoidant behaviors during tensions in parent-child relationship are commonly described by participants in this study. Birditt (2009) found that avoidant strategies in managing ambivalence do not bring greater solidarity or lower ambivalence in parent-adult child relationships. On the contrary, avoidance predicts lower closeness and overall relationship satisfaction. People used avoidance to decrease their feelings of discomfort temporarily because then they did not have to face the source of ambivalence (van Harreveld et al., 2009). Bowen described low differentiation of self across generations as fusion (Bowen & Kerr, 1988). In high levels of intergenerational fusion or "ambivalent" fusion, both parents and children are emotionally reactive to each other. They deal with these intense and unpleasant emotions by overt conflict or cut-off. He believed that avoidance or emotional cut-off is the product of the emotional forces in the parent-child relationship system. In other words, avoidance is simply a way of managing the intensity and discomfort in family relationships (Kerr, 1984; Klever, 2003). He also argued that the lower the differentiation of self, the more likely people are to use avoidance to stabilize

relationships and achieve comfort, because they are caught in an emotional system and are not able to think objectively to counterbalance the force of emotional reactivity. As long as emotional intensity is high, there can't be solutions to the overall problems in the relationship system (Kerr, 1984; Bowen, 1978). Kerr (1984) asserted:

These actions and inactions often provide short-term relief for people, but the overall system problem remains unchanged. People play out the same scenarios day after day, month after month for years and nothing changes. Each time the scenario is played out, it is done in the name of making things better, correcting wrong, "helping" someone... it is a mindless process that is driven by anxiety and emotional reactivity (p. 16).

During the period of avoidance, many participants talked to their siblings or spouses to ventilate their intense internal conflicts and elicit emotional support. Fanny calls her sister after she and her mother have an argument. She said she tells her sister because her sister understands what is like to get along with their mother. She does not want to tell her friends to avoid being looked down on. Her sister normally listens and does not give much feedback. Mr. Kwok on the other hand is quite open about his struggles with her mother. Other than talking with his wife about it, he also tells his friends or even just people he meets. Ming has the best supporting network because her husband is highly supportive and she and her three siblings get together regularly to discuss family matters. Wendy and her siblings, especially she and her sister, communicate when one of them is annoyed by their mother. Charlie has support from his wife in handling his feelings of anger toward his parents' unfairness and longing to have a better relationship with them. The participants express their intergenerational

ambivalence to those who understand their situations and are generally empathetic toward their struggles. Nonetheless, emotional support is mostly what they are seeking from their supporting network in this stage.

4. Respect and Compassion

During the time when the participants are avoiding their parents, the process of emotional suppression or cognitive reappraisal may occur. Moreover, a social interactive process in which the participants initiate dialogue with their trusted ones continues to be important in this stage. The strategy of emotional suppression is illustrated in Fanny's scenario described earlier: she tries not to think about the arguments she had with her mother and it is usually the passing of time that calms her down. Even when she complains to her sister, it is a brief ventilation of the quarrels between her and her mother. Her sister does not call to follow up and the two sisters do not discuss alternative ways they can handle their parents. In contrast, after Ming's parents moved out of her place, she started to engage in a cognitive reappraisal process because she wanted to be "free (自由)" from her ambivalence and to feel genuine love for her mother. She talked to different people including her husband, siblings and friends. She actively attempted to find ways to understand her mother's behaviors and her own reactions after having dialogues with people she can trust. Social psychological research suggested that emotional suppression is maladaptive, whereas cognitive reappraisal is beneficial because compared with suppression, reappraisal is more adaptive for affect, relationships and individual well-being (Gross & John, 2003).

When participants use the strategy of cognitive reappraisal in this stage, the process typically leads to some understanding of their parents' difficult circumstances and their limitations. Through this understanding, respect for their parents' devotion and compassion toward their parents' suffering arise. From their stories, I drew two scenarios that generate understanding, respect and compassion toward parents. The first one is to examine their parents' circumstances directly, and the second one is prompted by their own roles and experiences as parents and spouses in their current family. Bowen argued that in order to gain a different perspective on one's family, one has to be somewhat detached from the emotional system (Bowen, 1978, 1980; Bowen & Kerr, 1988). Although avoidance is a passive and temporary solution to ambivalence, it gives space and time for detachment. Ming attempted to understand her mother by learning and analyzing her mother's childhood experiences:

I think it is related to her growing up. I know she lost her mother when she was very young. Therefore, there is understanding (體諒) (in me). Her mother passed away when she was eight. She was miserable (可憐) because her stepmother abused her and she had no food to eat.... Her grandmother could not bear to see her (suffering) and gave her two dollars to catch a vehicle to go find her relatives. So think about a ten-year old girl with only a few dollars in her hand... I can imagine how miserable (可憐) she was.

Likewise, Seung, who wanted her mother to be more positive toward others, realized after a process of learning about and analyzing her mother and her mother's upbringing that her urge for her mother to stop scolding and be positive was not realistic:

My maternal grandmother raised us and she was the same. She yelled at others all the time. My mother was dutiful to her, but she scolded my mother until the day she died...It is difficult (for my mother to change) because she has been like that for so many years...Actually I can accept (接受) that, and I understand (理解) why.

Forward, who blamed her father for creating an emotionally repressed atmosphere in the household, found information from different channels to explain her father's behavior. She suspected that the reason why her father did not allow them to use the word "die" or "old" was related to his experience with war. He ran away from his hometown after his brother was captured by the army and never returned home. He then witnessed the cruelty of the Chinese civil war on his way to Macau. To understand her father's experiences, Forward read a book describing the various battles in that historical period. She told her father about some details in that book and her father responded by saying that the description was nothing comparing to the real situation. It was shocking to Forward and she felt compassionate toward her father's tragic past. She explained:

I started to be empathetic to (體諒) his difficulty... I suspect my father and mother had not been able to express their emotions or feelings since they were little...More and more I understand his lack of expression was due to his inability to handle (emotions). He can't handle what is going to happen after he tells it. Then I started to be accepting (接納) (of him).

When asked how he was feeling about his father, Tom answered in our second interview:

Actually he was very pitiful. He came to Hong Kong by himself when he was very young. His father remarried another woman in Hong Kong and his mother was in China. He was like an orphan. He didn't have much education and supported a family of seven by himself. When I think about it, (I know) he has had a hard life. Perhaps, he won't admit his weakness due to his pride. My brother told me the other day that our father wept a bit when he was talking about his past. It is difficult to change his personality now.

Becoming parents and spouses themselves, participants started to understand and be empathetic to their parents. Pai, who felt that her mother ignored her, started to understand how hectic her mother's life was when she was managing her own household of four:

My mother was very busy. Perhaps it is similar to my role in my household now... I have too many tasks and don't have enough time...so I can understand (理解) the reason why my mother didn't have time to play with us... We were so poor and the eight kids' ages were close together, my mother must have been exhausted...Although I felt that my mother didn't pay much attention to me, I think I can't blame her (不可以怪她). She was constrained by circumstances (受環境所限).

Chi Wai, whose father accused his mother being unfaithful without evidence, said that he started to understand his father more after he became a husband and father himself:

(When) I started to have kids, I also started to understand (明白) a man's internal experience...When I understood (明白) more of a grown man's mentality, I understood and accepted (接納) him a bit more.

It is illustrated in the cases above that some participants attempt to reduce their ambivalence by understanding their parents through cognitive reappraisal. When they formulate different perspectives to explain their parents' seemingly hurtful behaviors, their emotions become less intense and they become more accepting of their parents. The ability of people to understand their parents as individuals with their own struggles and limitations depends on the intensity of the problems in the family (Bowen & Kerr, 1988), and the cognitive ability and resources of the individuals (van Harreveld et al., 2009). The more cognitive resources the person has, the more progress he or she can make in the process of resolving ambivalence. Similar to Bowen theory, Labouvie-Vief's developmental theory of cognitive-emotional complexity proposed that with increasing maturity, individuals integrate their emotional and cognitive experiences by acquiring more conscious insight and gain a clearer differentiation of self. He suggested that managing negative affect is related to cognitive functioning because processing negative experience is more cognitively demanding than processing positive experience (Labouvie-Vief, 2003).

Additionally, it is shown in this study that other than the strategy of cognitive reappraisal on an individual level, a social interactive process on a social level is also important in this stage. In reflection upon his process of searching for ways to feel at peace with his parents, Mr. Kwok stressed:

Other than straightening things out within yourself (自我開解), there have to be new outside elements (外來的新元素) ... The new elements come from continuous contacts with new information from sources such as books,

newspapers and communications with others. If I think something is useful, I will put it (in my process of reflection).

Ming and her sisters talk about their understanding of their mother regularly because her second youngest sister had become aware of her own ambivalence toward her mother several years ago. She had received counseling to resolve her internal conflicts. When Ming was going through her emotional turmoil after her parents moved out of her apartment, her sister shared her insights with her:

My sister frequently asks me “Do you understand why our mother is like that?” ... She said, “Mother always feels she does not deserve (good things in life) because of her background as a maid who had to serve others. She doesn’t feel that she deserves, so she always has to give. That’s why she is so generous to give away her money. She feels that when others give her a little, she has to give back a lot.”

Ming tried to understand her mother’s various behaviors that generated ambivalence in her. In our feedback session, she said that she felt compassionate toward her mother. Her internal struggles were a lot less intense than in our first interview:

I have felt a bit better for the past month or so. For example, I think my tone of voice when I talk to her shows my care. I think I am not as avoiding. I will take the initiative to show my concern for her.

Tak Shen who had counseling training in a seminary, decided to seek professional help when he was mourning the death of his father and was also encountering difficulties handling his son’s aggressive behaviors at both school and home:

Actually other than (my son's) ADHD symptoms, it may also be my inability to deal with my sorrow... In the process (of counseling), I learned to heal and accept my father. I could resolve it in the end.

Papadatou (1999) found that professional nurses provide both emotional and meaning-making support to each other in the process of grieving their young patients' death. Emotional support as described in the participants' experiences with their trusted ones in the previous stage, involves sharing vulnerable thoughts and feelings in a safe and compassionate atmosphere. Meaning-making support happens more in the process of cognitive reappraisal and it involves reflection on experiences and sharing of reflections. This process allows space and opportunities for meaning-making of one's experiences. Meaning-making support happens in the stage of the process when participants and the people whom they confide in have conversations about the participants' ambivalent thoughts and feelings with regard to their parents. Together, they examine the history of their relationship with their parents and analyze the participants' reaction and strategies in dealing with their dilemmas.

The participants' cognitive reappraisal increased understanding, instilled compassion and generated acceptance of their parents. Their ambivalence, which was manifested in intense conflicting emotions and thoughts, was diminished. Nevertheless, it was not resolved. In the feedback session, a few participants indicated that they were stuck in stage two to four. I refer to stages two to four as "the ambivalent loop" in which the participants go back and forth between getting angry with their parents and being compassionate toward them. The intensity of the participants' internal conflicts goes up and down depending on what stage they are in.

5. Acceptance and Self-agency

Participants who reported feelings of calmness and acceptance in their relationships with their parents went through a period of internal growth that enabled them to master their disappointment, anger and helplessness. They started to feel a sense of control over their own emotional experiences. Moreover, they have stopped blaming their parents for their material aspects of achievement and have accepted their own responsibility for their life condition. That is to say, they have delinked the connection between their emotional and material aspects of living and their parents' past and current behaviors and influences. They expressed a sense of control over their lives and a sense of freedom from past constraints. Seung said it best: "I have learned that I can actually control (控制) myself to choose the things I enjoy doing. The key is whether I will do it or not...I have grown up and can control (控制) myself more. I can be more positive (正面)." ."

Bowen described the ability to manage emotional reactivity as the expression of higher level of differentiation of self shown through increased awareness in a gradual learning process (Bowen, 1978; Bowen & Kerr, 1988). He postulated that this learning might occur at several levels. For example, at the "upper" levels, the learning includes the expansion of new perspectives of thinking about the emotional process inside oneself and as it connects to the environment (Kerr, 1984). At the "deeper" levels, it includes "a kind of deprogramming of one's emotional reactivity" (Kerr, 1984, p. 513). However, people who have been through this process of "deprogramming" found it difficult to explain in words the development of gaining control of their emotional reactivity. Kerr (1984) believed that this process was a crucial component of becoming more differentiated.

Differentiated individuals seem to be more capable of reflecting on, experiencing, and moderating their emotional reactivity. Lifespan theory argues that as people age, they become increasingly better at regulating their emotional evaluation of events, which leads to behavioral differences (Labouvie-Vief, Hakim-Larson, & Hobart, 1987).

Among the participants, learning to modulate their emotional reactivity for the most part did not happen during their interactions with their parents, but rather, learning happened through continuous reflection and application of different methods to manage their emotions in their relations with others and life in general. Tak Seng, whose father was emotionally explosive, was aware that he himself experienced similar struggles when he was a young adult. He began a process of reflection and learning to control himself and his ambivalent feelings toward his father while in seminary school where he was training to become a pastor. The process took some self-directed exploration and application of methods such as meditation. It was prolonged into his thirties. He recalled an incident in which he blamed his wife for forgetting to bring special food for his high cholesterol condition to a family dinner at his in-laws. His father-in-law scolded him for his unreasonable accusation of his wife in front of everyone, including his mother. Tak Seng got very offended and angry and stormed out of the door. He described what happened next:

I circled around downstairs (for a while) and then went back (to the apartment).

As a man, I felt quite humiliated. I didn't say anything after I went back. I asked

(my wife) to go into a room to talk. I controlled (控制). (We) finished our

discussion and prayed together... At that moment (when I was circling around

downstairs), I thought about what I needed to do. Firstly, I didn't want to scare

my children and didn't want them to see that I just walked away after throwing a temper tantrum. I would have harmed them for their whole life. Secondly, I cared about my mother. Thirdly, I respected my father-in-law... That was a very significant experience that I never had before... My relationship with my father-in-law improved... after that incident, I learned to control (控制) myself... I made huge progress after that incident... I learned to deal with myself (internally) first and then speak out.

Other than counseling and talking to his wife, Tak Shen relied on his religious practice such as “awareness examen (靈修)” in his healing process. He stated:

When you first interviewed me, my father had passed away already. I was then in a healing process and in ambivalence for ten years. He left us in 2002. Now I have respect for my father and there is no hatred. I feel very respectful and loving toward him. But this has been a process. My father had done lots harm to me and I tried to heal myself. I continued the healing process after he left. Fortunately, I have positive ways to help myself.

When I asked Seung how she managed to calm herself down in her relationship with her mother, she described her delinking of her current life condition with how her mother treated her negatively and harshly, through trying out different skills in life:

I don't know how I got to be so confident and to believe that I have the ability to do a lot of things. I will try so many things. I didn't know how to swim before, and now I can swim. I took my kids to learn windsurfing (when they were young). I later learned it myself. I also got a kayaking license. Lately, I joined a rope

course...I am more confident and find more opportunities to try. I tell myself to try it again if I fail.

Seung also devotes herself to helping others by applying her knowledge learned in the family therapy program she took. She feels confident in her ability to help others because of her experience of overcoming her own life challenges. She believes herself to be convincing when she shares her experiences with others.

All the participants who had come to this stage of managing their ambivalence reported awareness that they cannot and should not request or expect their parents to change. Rather, they have to focus on themselves to find the way out. Forward stated, “I didn’t think I could resolve (my ambivalence) within our family. I went outside to ask (for solutions). I took courses, participated in workshops, and talked to friends.” The courses she took required undertaking a series of processes to resolve her own issues. She described the process:

I know that just understanding (the issues) at a cognitive level may not be enough. For example, when there is anger and sadness, giving opportunities to express them is better than just analyzing the rational aspects.

She had gone through the emotional work herself by participating in demonstrations and sharing in different counseling courses. She said that the process was gradual and she dealt with her emotional reactivity “bit by bit”. When I asked her how she now calmed herself down when she felt annoyed by her father now, she responded:

I can be aware of my irritation quickly and it goes away fast. Nothing special I need to do...(whereas) before I didn’t even know I was annoyed and why I was

annoyed...Now I don't even have to calm myself because it is not easy for me to get annoyed.

Other than learning and growing through applying counseling concepts, some participants used religion and other practices such as Qi Gong as a means to master emotional reactivity. When I asked how she dealt with her anger toward her mother, Jessica said her belief in Christ helped her:

After I got baptized, my shoulders felt lighter. I felt very stressed about (dealing with) my mother and also my present family. After my baptism, I felt like Jesus had carried away (my burden). I felt a lot more relaxed.

She said she continues to pray for more wisdom to handle her internal conflicts and her relationship with her mother. She can, slowly, manage her reactivity better, calls her mother more often and tries to talk and listen to her.

Mr. Kwok indicated that it was important to add new elements and insight to the process of dealing with his ambivalence. His new elements included reading, talking to others and Qi Gong:

Through Qi Gong, one can cultivate and master himself (修身). (One) can first (learn) to calm (平靜) himself, and second (learn) to be considerate of others and try to see things through others' perspectives. Third is to think of the positive side (好的方面). Therefore, I say Qi Gong is a good tool (工具).

Mr. Kwok felt less angry with his parents through practicing Qi Gong:

Qi Gong is helpful because it emphasizes positivity (正面) no matter what circumstances you are in... This is good for you indirectly because when you are peaceful (靜), you won't say or do anything harmful out of impulse (衝動).

Mr. Kwok said that his ultimate goal is to feel peaceful and calm when he is with his parents and he believes he is on this path. This growth has also generalized to his other relationships. He realized that he used to be too emotional and direct to his colleagues at work. This emotional reactivity and directness caused strain in his working relationships. He learned to adjust. Several months after our feedback session, he told me that he was promoted to be the general manager of the factory he has worked at for only a year.

The focus of this study is on adult children's ambivalence toward their parents. It has been shown in this study that most of the participants did not learn to resolve their ambivalence through frequent contact with their parents. As described above, many of them worked through the process by learning, reflection and discussion with people they could trust. Additionally, they actively take control of their life experiences by various measures.

The only participant who managed her ambivalence with her mother by frequent contact and strategic planning was Wendy. I described how in the second stage she confronted her mother about her mother's attitude toward her husband. After her mother stopped criticizing her husband in front of her and her husband, Wendy went on with other measures. She and her siblings could get very annoyed by her mother's nagging, making up of stories and interfering in their lives. To avoid that happening, she decided her time spent with her mother should be outside of the house because there are more interesting attractions in the outside surroundings. She likes to take her mother to restaurants, shopping malls or walking in the streets. When they meet nowadays, she will normally let her mother nag or complain for a while. She will pretend that she is listening by nodding and responding in simple words. After a while, she will distract her mother by

drawing her attention to the things in the surroundings. If they are in the mall, she will point to a shop or an item in a shop. If they are in a restaurant, she will talk about the food. Her mother will then forget about whatever she was talking about and will go with Wendy's direction. Wendy keeps contacts with her mother short. Kerr (1984) suggested that frequent and brief contacts with parents generally contribute more to the differentiation process than infrequent and long visits.

Wendy and her siblings also discuss together about how to handle their mother. They believe that it does not work if they are too compliant with their mother. Instead, they work together to let their mother experience the consequences of her behavior. They will stop taking the initiative to call their mother when her mother puts unreasonable demands on one or all of them. Their mother typically calls them eventually. When her mother insists on complaining or telling her a made-up story, Wendy will pretend that she is listening. She reminds herself not to take her mother's stories too seriously. Her relationship with her mother has improved and she feels comfortable around her mother. But she also knows her limits. A three day and two night trip with her mother is not always easy. But she can handle it by not getting emotionally charged. Wendy's experience is consistent with the findings of the study of "emotional regulation" (Gross, 1998). Emotional regulation refers to "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Gross, 1998, p. 275).

When the participants felt that they could handle their emotions and control their life experiences, they also felt a sense of freedom. To describe her hope to resolve her ambivalence toward her mother, Ming described:

I believe when one is okay inside, the way she lives should be a natural flow (自然流暢的)... I was struggling and I felt constrained (束縛) and had no freedom (自由). I think life should not be this way. I long for freedom, a kind of freedom of soul (心靈的自由).

At the last stage of resolving and managing ambivalence, participants still reported being frustrated or annoyed by their parents on occasion. However, the intense emotional turmoil and helplessness they experienced in early stages was mostly gone. They accepted their unchangeable life history including how they were treated by their parents. They delinked both their emotional and material aspects of living from their parents' past and current behaviors and took responsibility for their own lives. They felt a sense of control over their emotional reactivity and how they could experience life including their on-going relationship with their parents. Ultimately, they experienced "a kind of freedom of soul." Anderson (1997) described one's control of his/her life experiences as self-agency:

Having self-agency or a sense of it means having the ability to behave, feel, think, and choose in a way that is liberating, that opens up new possibilities or simply allows us to see that new possibilities exist. Agency refers not only to making choices but also to participating in the creating of the expansion of possible choices (p. 231).

Summary

This study supported Connidis and McMullin (2002)'s argument that ambivalence is a natural experience in family relationships. In particular, ambivalence is embedded in

the inherent nature of the parent-child relationship (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). Nonetheless, as social actors, individuals, like the participants in this study, actively exercise self-agency in creating their own social experiences (Connidis & McMullin, 2002). For example, they tend to focus on alternating their psychological and internal experiences by learning to see the interrelatedness in relationship systems and by managing their emotional reactivity through conscientious effort in a gradual process (Bowen, 1980; Bowen & Kerr, 1988; Kerr, 1984).

Five stages were identified in analyzing participants' experiences in this study. The first stage is "potential ambivalence and felt ambivalence" in which participants started to experience intense conflicting feelings and thoughts toward their parents when they made connections between their negative life experiences and their parents' past and present behaviors and attitudes. This process always started after the participants left their parents' home for a period of time and the physical distance enabled them to see their parents and families in a different perspective. The second stage is "confrontation and persuasion" in which the participants were convinced that in order for them not to feel internal torn, their parents had to change. Consequently, they confronted their parents about their wrong-doings and their negative contribution to their lives. In addition, they persistently tried to persuade their parents to stop or change the behaviors that were seen as sources of the participants' ambivalence. However, their attempts were either ignored by their parents or created more tension and conflict in their relationships. The participants went on to stage three "disappointment and avoidance" when they started to realize that their parents might never change. They avoided communicating with their parents because their strong emotions were very unpleasant. They chose to ventilate to

the people they could trust and to elicit emotional support. In stage four, “respect and compassion”, in which participants experienced the process of cognitive reappraisal, they began to see the limitations of the circumstances their parents were in. They felt a sense of compassion and empathy toward their parents. In the last stage, “acceptance and self-agency”, the participants started to delink the connection between their current life experiences with their parents’ behaviors. They learned to master their own emotional reactivity and control their choices in life. Their ambivalence was resolved and they felt a sense of freedom in life.

Ambivalence management is a transformation process that occurs over time. Participants spent different lengths of time working through each stage with varied intensity. The five stages do not necessarily occur in order nor do the participants always go through every stage of the process. The findings suggest that ambivalence management is both an individual and a social-interactive process. Comparing those who are still struggling with intense ambivalence to those who have gone through all five stages, those who are still ambivalent in general have weaker supporting networks and reported less meaningful dialogues with people they can trust. They seem to be stuck between stages two and four that I refer to as “the ambivalent loop”. Only when participants started to actively engage in meaning-making conversations and to find measures to manage their emotional reactivity, could they embrace their self-agency.

Chapter Seven

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Adapting life history inquiry with a root in social constructionist theory, this study attempts to understand middle-aged Hong Kong Chinese individuals' experiences in their relationships within their family-of-origin, particularly with their parents, over the life course. Participants' descriptions of the complex and evolutionary nature of their relationships with their parents included both positive and negative sentiments and attitudes, and many of participants felt torn by their internal struggles. The intergenerational ambivalence model proposed by Luescher and Pillemer in 1998 was used to form the conceptualization of the participants' experiences. This working model includes contradiction on a psychological level as reflected in cognition, emotions and motivations, and on a sociological level as reflected in institutions and incompatible roles and norms. Connidis and McMullin (2002)'s elaboration, which emphasizes the sociological aspect of ambivalence that positions individuals in social structures in which social actors actively create their own social worlds was also used to construct the definition of intergenerational ambivalence used in this study. Curran (2002)'s working definition, which was formulated with a goal for easy application in empirical studies was adopted. Finally, the emphasis on historical and developmental patterns of parent-child relationships in attachment theory and the concept of differentiation in Bowen family systems theory shaped the direction of this life history inquiry. In sum, intergenerational ambivalence in this study refers to the simultaneous presence of contradictory feelings and thoughts in a relationship between parents and adult children at a moment in time,

created both by the inherent nature of and the unique interaction patterns in the parent-child relationship and by structural conditions in the sets of social relationships within which parents and children are situated across the life course.

Based on this definition, the key research questions were formulated as: 1) Do middle-aged individuals experience ambivalence in their relationships with their aging parents? If so, what is their description of the ambivalence in their relationships with their parents? 2) What are the pertinent sources of intergenerational ambivalence from the perspectives of middle-aged adults throughout their course of life? 3) What strategies do adult children use in processing their ambivalence toward their parents?

Summary and Integration of Research Findings

Ten male and ten female adult children who are middle-aged (40 to 53), ethnically Chinese, born and raised in Hong Kong, having at least one teenage child (age 12 to 18) and one or two living parents, participated in this study. The participants and I carried out two conversational interviews (ranging from one to two hours), with at least two months in between, for data collection. In addition, the participants also took part in a feedback session in which they gave comments on my initial analysis of the data.

The conceptualization of ambivalence in this study is the participants' direct descriptions of simultaneously experiencing conflicting emotions and thoughts and awareness of their internal contradictions. Only four participants reported experiencing no ambivalence at all toward either of their parents in their life course. The other 16 participants experienced ambivalence toward one or both of their parents at some point during their lifetime. The 16 participants reported experiencing ambivalence in 23 out of

40 parent-child dyads (father-child and mother-child, respectively) in this study. Almost all of the narratives on ambivalence are historical in nature as they reflect continuous relational patterns and themes since the early stages of the participants' parent-child relationship. In addition, both sociological dimensions and psychological dimensions are shown in the narrative of ambivalence. Specifically, the sociological dimension is expressed through the significance of gender, power in the family, and societal norms such as filial piety, whereas the psychological dimension is expressed through internal feelings of lack of love and attention from parents or being controlled and not respected for their own autonomy.

The Experience of Intergenerational Ambivalence

Sources of ambivalence: the negatives.

Going through an analysis process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), I identified six parental behaviors that may generate negative emotions such as anger, resentment, disappointment, sadness and a sense of loss in parent-child relationships: 1) son preference and parental unfairness, 2) parental psychological control, 3) parental marital discordance, 4) moderate to severe corporal punishment, 5) parental dependence and 6) parental selfishness. I also found that these six parental behaviors and attitudes do not contribute to ambivalence unless adult children identify a connection between their undesirable living experiences and those parental behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, the participants' living experiences were expressed in two distinctive aspects: psychological/emotional and material. The psychological and emotional aspect of living experiences refers to the participants' mental and emotional well-being. The material

aspect of life is about how adult children are living now with regard to their education, employment, financial status and lifestyle.

1. Son preference and parental unfairness.

The practice and attitude of son preference was the issue that triggered the most intense ambivalence in female participants. More mothers than fathers were reported to show son preference attitude and practice in this study. Therefore this theme especially influenced mother-daughter relationships. Son preference (重男輕女) has a origin in the Confucian patriarchal system in which maintaining the familial lineage is fundamental. Moreover, in a patrilineal society, productive assets are only passed through the male line. Equally important and guided by the principle of patrilocality, women have to live with men's families and they are omitted from the genealogies of their birth family after marriage. Consequently, aging parents normally rely on their sons for support (Das Gupta et al., 2003). In a patriarchal society, the social status of a mother can be enhanced by giving birth to a son; therefore, the value of sons to mothers is another force for mothers to prefer sons over daughters (Dien, 1992; K. Johnson, 1983). Mothers' son-preference attitude and practice is experienced as rejection by female participants. Parental rejection associated with son preference is expressed by the withdrawal of affection and warmth, and it is shown to be associated with children's resentment of their parents in the western culture (Rohner, 1975; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985). In Chinese culture, absence of parental devotion, investment and attention to daily care are perceived as parental rejection (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010; C. Wu, 2007).

Most female participants in this study expressed a sense of loss, sadness and anger over their mothers' son-preference practices. The examples they gave included mothers' lack of attention to their developmental needs such as emotional bonding and care. Food also appears to carry a significant symbolic meaning of mothers' love and acceptance (Martinson et al., 1999). Some female participants revealed that their mothers were more attentive to their brothers' diet than to theirs and their sisters'. They told of specific incidents about coming home late for dinner and finding almost no food left for them whereas their mothers always kept their brothers' favorite food aside if they had to be late for dinner. Food has significant relational meaning in Chinese societies (O. L. Wong, 2010). Chinese parents and grandparents use food to express love and concern and to provide nurturance to children (Du, 1996; Jiang, Xia, Greiner, Lian, & Rosenqvist, 2005). The intimate relationships between parents, mostly mothers, and children is established through preparing, serving and eating food (Martinson et al., 1999; O. L. Wong, 2010; Xie, 1996). Therefore, serving food on the side of the mother, and enjoying food on the side of children, establishes bonding in the mother-child relationship (O. L. Wong, 2010). In contrast, the ignoring or lack of concern for children's food intake disrupts bonding between parents and children.

Daughters also perceive their mothers and sometimes their fathers as unfair in resource allocation between them and their brothers. While parental rejection is related to the mental and emotional aspect of life, resource allocation contributes to participants' material aspects of life condition. The majority of the parents were refugees from rural areas in Mainland China during the 1950s. Supporting a family with an average of 5.5 children in a new city, parents of the participants in this study were struggling to provide

resources for all of their children's advancement. Boys were given opportunities for education and girls, especially eldest daughters, were required to work in factories to bring home additional income (Salaff, 1995). Many female participants encountered tension with their parents in expressing their desire for education when they were young. Moreover, unfairness in resource allocation is also reflected in inheritance because parents distribute their properties and assets among sons. The feeling of being treated unfairly came out strongly in the female participants' stories. Studies have shown that when children perceive their parents' differential treatment as unfair, unjust and illegitimate, they experience resentment toward their parents (Bedford, 1992; A. K. Kowal et al., 2004).

2. Parental psychological control.

Parental psychological control refers to parental behaviors that "place paramount value on compliance, pressuring children toward specific outcome, and discouraging verbal give-and-take and discussion" (Grolnick, 2003, p. 9). The participants told stories about their parents' controlling behaviors such as forbidding their choices of actions and activities when they were little. Those choices included participants' learning interests, extra-curricular activities and friends they spent time with. Parents generally used coercive means such as scolding, corporal punishment, and even humiliation to bring about compliance. When psychological control was a measure that parents used to manage children when children were young, it normally did not stop after children left their parents' homes. Parental psychological control was illustrated by attempting to influence adult children's lives through unsolicited advice on home-making tasks,

marriage partners, financial investment, parenting etc. Parents generally used affect-laden expressions, criticism, nagging and guilt to get adult children to conform. In many cases, although adult children knew that their parents' seemingly controlling behaviors were done out of love and concern for them, they were frustrated and annoyed. Psychological control affects not only children's mental and emotional wellbeing, it also hinders children's positive development (Barber, 1996). Consequently, some participants perceived that their material aspects of achievement were negatively affected by their parents' early controlling behaviors.

3. Parental marital discordance.

In traditional Chinese marriage, the husband provides for the by family working outside of the house while the wife manages the household (G. C. Chu, 1985; E. Lee, 1997). Additionally, couples tend to focus on their relationships with their children rather than with each other (Huang, 2005; E. Lee, 1997). Due to the lack of attention to the marital relationship and the stress brought on by poverty, only six out of the twenty participants described their parents' marriage as satisfying. However, not all of the rest of the fourteen participants described their parents' dissatisfying relationship as a source of their ambivalent experience. I identified three conditions in which marital discordance has generated persistent negative emotions in adult children. The three conditions are: 1) volatile and prolonged discordance, 2) triangling of children into marital conflicts and 3) mistreatment of one parent by the other. The negative consequence of parental discordance on children's mental health, social function and academic performance is well established in the literature (Coiro & Emery, 1998; Davies et al., 2006; R. Repetti et

al., 2011). Marital disturbance and negative exchanges between parents increase the general atmosphere of anger and aggression in the home. Distressed parents may also be aggressive to misbehaving children (Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Jaycox & Repetti, 1993).

Parental conflicts do not only affect children's development when they are young, they also have negative effects on the mental, emotional and physical health of adult children after they have long moved away from their parents' homes (Bowen & Kerr, 1988; Kelly, 2000; R. L. Repetti et al., 2002). Having witnessed parental discordance also increases the possibility of ambivalence felt by adult children (van Gaalen et al., 2010). This study showed very similar results: adult children, especially daughters, are still influenced by their parents' ongoing conflicts and overall marital dissatisfaction. They somehow feel a responsibility to mend their parents' relationships. When they fail, they feel helpless, worried and sad. Moreover, in this study, when adult children were triangling into marital conflicts, they were offended by their parents' attempts for them to show loyalty and were angry with their parents for dividing their families-of-origin. Furthermore, they tended to feel more negative toward the parent who is perceived to be the perpetrator or the main source of parental conflict.

4. Moderate to severe corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment is defined as "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behavior" (Straus, 1994, p. 4). Although no injury is caused, corporal punishment is associated with negative outcomes in child development and the parent-child relationship (Simons et al., 1991; Straus, 1994; Straus & Mouradian, 1998; Turner

& Muller, 2004). Various measures and degrees of corporal punishment were reported in the participants' stories. Their parents, mostly their fathers, hit, slapped, and pushed them when they were disobeying or misbehaving. Even though physical punishment is an accepted child-rearing practice in Hong Kong (Tang, 2006) and was more prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, the participants felt aversive about their experiences. Corporal punishment affected mostly father-child relationships because it was mostly fathers who used moderate to severe corporal punishment. Willson (2003) found that parental rejection and hostility in early childhood are strong predictors of ambivalence in adult children. Corporal punishment is one form of parental rejection and hostility, and children feel unloved by their parents when being hit or slapped, and their mental and emotional wellbeing is negatively affected (Straus, 1994).

5. Parental dependence.

Dependence on others can be emotional, financial and physical and it creates ambivalence for both parties in the relationship (Smelser, 1998). Parental dependence increases the obligations felt by children to meet the needs of their parents, and children might not see exit options (van Gaalen et al., 2010). In this study, parental dependence on children in both early and later life stages was identified. In traditional Chinese families, eldest sons received privilege whereas eldest daughters were required to help their mothers to manage the household and to look after the younger siblings (E. Lee, 1997). Two female participants, both eldest daughters, expressed their grievances about having had to shoulder their parents' responsibilities at a young age. As a result, they had to sacrifice their education and opportunities to enjoy activities with friends for the

advancement of their younger siblings, especially their brothers. Their mothers also confided in them about their stress over the family financial situation and unhappiness in their marital relationships. On reflection, they realized how helpless they felt about not being able to solve their parents' problems. They internalized much stress and anxiety at a young age.

Dependence of older and aging parents is the dominant topic in the existing parent-adult child relationship research, but only three participants in this study reported feelings of resentment and distress at their parents' dependence. I speculate that it is because most of the parents are still physically able and they are independently looking after themselves. Even when a few of them were less able, they were cared for by professionals in elderly homes. Additionally, the majority of the participants were from large families and parental needs were shared by several children. Therefore, having more siblings presents more exit options (van Gaalen et al., 2010). Parental dependence in old age is expressed through financial and emotional needs. When parents are in poor health, adult children experience more ambivalence because of the increasing dependence parents have on their adult children (Fingerman et al., 2006). In general, participants believe in their filial responsibility to support their parents' various needs. Their ambivalence is heightened when their parents' demands are greater than they can meet and when they do not have, or see, exit options. In those cases, the mental/emotional aspect of life and sometimes also their material aspect of living condition are affected.

6. Parental selfishness.

The practice of filial piety governs the reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship in Chinese culture. Reciprocity creates bonds between parent and child, starting with parents' devotion to their children in their early lives (Chao & Tseng, 2002; C. Wu, 2007). Most of the participants described their parents as devoted to their families. Only a small number of participants described their parents, typically their fathers, as selfish. Selfishness is manifested in withholding resources such as money from wives and children. The withholding of resources and lack of educational investment in children when they are young was seen as being unloving. In addition, it hinders children's educational attainment; consequently, adult children perceive their material aspect of living condition was affected.

Fathers who were described as selfish when their children were young also demand financial support from their children, which intensifies adult children's negative emotions. Although adult children believe that they have obligations to support their fathers, they see their fathers' sense of entitlement as unreasonable. In addition to the reciprocal nature of the concept of filial piety, social exchange theory also sheds light on adult children's reactions to their fathers' selfishness. When parents violate norms of devotion early in children's lives, children may feel less duty-bound to support their aging parents (Bedford, 1992). Silverstein (2002) found that parents who invested more of their resources in their young children received higher levels of support from their adult children later in life. Overall, the return gained by parents relative to their early investment verified the reciprocal nature between generations.

Sources of ambivalence: the positives and barriers against exits.

The availability of exit options and the ability to take such options are important in reducing ambivalence. Three barriers that blocked participants from exiting from their troublesome relationships with their parents were identified in the participants' ambivalent experiences. Participants also expressed positive emotions such as appreciation and respect for their parents. The simultaneous accessibility of both positive and negative emotions and thoughts is the key to defining intergenerational ambivalence. Three major and general reasons were expressed on the side of the participants in supporting their decision to keep regular contact with their parents. The first one was the traditional concept of filial piety, the second one was respect and appreciation for their parents' sacrifice for the family, and the third one was their religious beliefs.

Respect and appreciation for their parents' devotion and sacrifice.

Poverty is a significant contextual factor that contributed to the participants' early life experiences, including their family relationships. The majority of the participants admitted that their parents worked extremely hard to support their families in harsh economic conditions. Their parents sacrificed their own interests and personal freedom to show their complete devotion to their families. The participants also expressed their respect for their parents' can-do spirit and resourcefulness in overcoming poverty. Even though many female participants complained about their parents, especially their mothers' son-preference attitude and practice, they expressed their appreciation for their mothers' sacrifice for the family as a whole. They are aware most of the advancement in the family

was the result of their parents' devotion. Consequently, this awareness contributes to the ambivalent experiences by generating positive feelings.

Filial piety.

Filial piety, in a traditional form, commands children to relegate themselves to the expectations, authority, and presumed wisdom of their parents (Kwan, 2000a). Although filial piety remains a respected value today, the social interpretation of what constitutes appropriate behavior toward elderly parents has changed significantly over time (A. C. Y. Ng et al., 2002). For instance, filial care illustrated in this study is given mostly to fill the needs of the parents when they are not able to support themselves, in comparison to the traditional practice that parental obedience is absolute and filial care is supposed to demonstrate how devoted the children are to their parents (Cheng & Chan, 2006). Nevertheless, all twenty participants believe strongly in their responsibility to their parents, especially regarding their parents' financial and tangible needs in their old age. Participants agreed that the concept of filial piety is ingrained in their everyday thinking and living, and they do not question the relevancy in its guidance of intergenerational relationship. In addition, filial piety prescribes the reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship, and the participants believe that it is now their turn to repay their parents' devotion to them (C. Wu, 2007). Consequently, no matter how harsh their parents might have been to them, and how much they perceive their lives have been negatively impacted by their parents' unreasonable behavior, they are still willing to support parents who are in need. Nonetheless, the constraints of filial duty may become a source of unresolved conflict and ambivalent feelings (Back, 1997).

Religious beliefs.

Six participants in this study are devoted Christians and they addressed the importance of their religious beliefs in their lives. Christianity has influenced them in various aspects in their relationships with their parents. For example, the values of respecting and loving parents in Christianity reinforced the participants' barriers for exiting from the negative relationship with their parents. The participants strive to meet the perceived standard of their religion in governing the parent-child relationships. However, they feel guilty and inadequate when they are not able to show to their parents the type of love prescribed in Bible. Their ambivalence is intensified by this struggle. On the other hand, different religious concepts and practices such as prayers and spiritual devotion have helped them to heal and find ways to reconcile with their parents.

Process and Strategies of Intergenerational Ambivalence Management

Intergenerational ambivalence was found to be related to psychological distress (Fingerman, Pitzer, Lefkowitz, Birditt, & Mroczek, 2008; Katz, 2009; Kiecolt, Blieszner, & Savla, 2011). Parents and adult children in ambivalent relationships are generally motivated to make adjustments because of their desire to be rid of the distress they experience (Schenk & Dykstra, 2012; van Harreveld et al., 2009). As proposed by Connidis and McMullin (2002), the participants as social actors have attempted to manage their ambivalence through a series of actions and strategies. The participants' accounts of their experiences of dealing with their ambivalence toward their parents showed that ambivalence management is a process that unfolds over time. A progressive process of five stages was constructed based on the participants' stories: 1) potential

ambivalence and felt ambivalence, 2) confrontation and persuasion, 3) disappointment and avoidance, 4) respect and compassion, and 5) acceptance and self-agency.

Stage one: Potential ambivalence and felt ambivalence.

Newby-Clark (2002) categorized ambivalence into potential and felt ambivalence. In the case of potential ambivalence, the involved parties are not aware of their internal contradictory experiences even though they deal with both positive and negative aspects of the relationship on a daily basis. In comparison, in the situation of felt ambivalence, the involved parties are aware of their conflicting feelings and thinking and they feel torn and uncomfortable. The transition from potential ambivalence to felt ambivalence accurately describes the experiences of the participants in this study. They reported starting to feel ambivalent after they left their parents' homes for a period of time when they were in their 20s, 30s or even 40s. They described moments of awareness and realization of how their unhappiness was connected to their parents' negative behavior.

Three preceding circumstances seemed to trigger the transition from potential ambivalence to felt ambivalence. The first was comparing their own experiences with their peers. When they noticed others' experiences with parents were different from theirs, they started to examine their own situation. The second was when participants found themselves stuck in life predicaments in which they began to find explanations and solutions. Ambivalence was generated when they found their challenges to be directly related to their parents' wrong-doings in the past. The third was situations in which the participants were required to examine and reflect on their past experiences. The inquiry into the past led to the realization of the negative influence of their parents' behavior.

These findings support the suggestion that the direct measure of ambivalence is preferred in conceptualizing intergenerational ambivalence (Luescher, 2004; Pillemer et al., 2007; Sutor, Gilligan, et al., 2011). Ambivalence is only experienced when the positive and negative components of emotions and thoughts are simultaneously accessible and when one is aware of one's internal struggles (Newby-Clark et al., 2002; Pillemer et al., 2007; Sutor, Gilligan, et al., 2011). Psychological and emotional discomfort generally follows the awareness of one's contradictions (van Harreveld et al., 2009).

Stage two: Confrontation and persuasion.

As “social actors”, the participants have actively engaged in the process of resolving their internal conflicts after they made the connection between their undesirable living condition with their parents' past and current behavior. Their first attempts are commonly carried out with an aim to change their parents' behavior, which is seen as a source of their negative thoughts and emotions. Confrontation and persuasion are two strategies identified in this stage. Some confrontations are about specific events and some are about general relationship dynamics. It seems that confrontation in a calm manner about specific events was better received than confrontations about general relationship dynamics conveyed with strong emotion. Parents normally got offended when adult children disclosed their long-time hurt and resentment and how those feelings were related to their own past and/or ongoing behavior. Additionally, some participants used a combination of confrontation and persuasion in hope of creating change in their parents on a continuous basis. Unfortunately, most of the efforts in this stage failed. Birditt

(2009) argued that the more intense the ambivalence level, the more likely parents and children are to use emotion-laden strategies such as blaming and arguing in their confrontation attempts. These destructive strategies may perpetuate already poor relationships. Bowen advised adult children to avoid confrontation with emotional reactivity. He stated, “Confrontation probably says more about the immaturity of the accuser than it does about the personal deficit of the accused” (Bowen, 1980).

Stage three: Disappointment and avoidance.

The participants feel disappointed and frustrated when their confrontation was received negatively and their persuasion for their parents to take up new behaviors was ignored by their parents. They start to realize that their parents’ change was not in their control and that their parents will probably never change. To ease their intense emotions and the tension between them and their parents, they choose to avoid their parents and their issues altogether. These findings are consistent with past research (Beaton et al., 2003; Birditt, Miller, et al., 2009; Fingerman, 1998; Hay et al., 2007; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Avoidance, therefore, is a typical strategy in this stage. Other than avoidance, the participants also talked to people who understand them and the relationship dynamics between them and their parents. Siblings, spouses and long-term friends are commonly the choices of confidants. Thus, eliciting emotional support from significant others is another strategy used in this stage.

Bowen described avoidance as emotional cut-off. He proposed that there are two basic types of emotional cut-off. The first type is when people stop seeing each other for a period of time. The second type is when a person emotionally distances himself or

herself and avoids discussing emotionally-charged issues even when they are present (Kerr, 1984). Birditt (2009) found that avoidant strategies do not better parent-child relationship quality, but on the contrary, avoidance predicts lower closeness and overall relationship satisfaction. People used avoidance to decrease their feelings of discomfort temporarily because they did not have to face their sources of unresolved ambivalence (van Harreveld et al., 2009). Bowen believed that avoidance or emotional cut-off is the product of the emotional forces in the parent-child relationship system. In other words, avoidance is simply a way of managing the intensity and discomfort in family relationships. As long as emotional intensity is high, there can't be solutions to the overall problems in the relationship system (Bowen, 1980; Kerr, 1984; Klever, 2003).

During the period of avoidance, many participants ventilate their intense internal conflicts and elicit support from their trusted ones. After eliciting needed emotional support, some participants continue with their normal daily routine without reflection on the meaning behind their conflicts with their parents. They generally go back to their parents after they feel calmer. On the other hand, some participants choose to engage in a cognitive process to find ways out of their internal turmoil. Bowen suggested that in order to gain a different perspective on one's family, one has to somewhat detach from the emotional system (Bowen, 1978, 1980; Bowen & Kerr, 1988). Thus, although avoidance is a passive and temporary solution to ambivalence, it gives space and time for detachment from the emotional reactivity in the parent-adult child relationships.

Stage four: Respect and compassion.

Cognitive reappraisal is the strategy identified in this stage. The process of cognitive reappraisal is not solely an intrapersonal cognitive experience within the participants themselves; it is also an interpersonal/social interactive process in which the participants initiate dialogues with their significant others. These dialogues may generate new understandings about themselves, their parents and their relationships. The strategies of cognitive reappraisal along with dialogue with trusted ones were identified in this stage. These strategies generally lead to some understandings of their parents' difficult circumstance and limitations. Through this understanding, respect for their parents' devotion and compassion toward their parents' suffering arise. Two scenarios generate understanding, respect and compassion toward parents. The first is to examine their parents' harsh circumstances directly, and the second one is prompted by their own roles and experiences as parents and spouses in their procreated families.

It is illustrated in the participants' stories that the participants formulated different perspectives to explain their parents' seemingly hurtful behaviors through the process of cognitive reappraisal. Their negative emotions toward their parents, therefore, become less intense and they become more accepting of their parents. Bowen (1988) suggested that the ability of adult children to understand their parents as individuals with their own struggles and limitations is crucial in the participants' self-growth/self-differentiation process. Similar to Bowen's intergenerational family system's theory, Labouvie-Vief's developmental theory of cognitive-emotional complexity also proposed that with increasing maturity, individuals integrate their emotional and cognitive experiences by acquiring more conscious insight, and gain a clearer differentiation of self. He suggested

that managing negative affect is related to cognitive functioning because processing a negative experience is more cognitively demanding than processing a positive experience (Labouviet-Vief, 2003).

The intrapersonal/social interactive process was identified through meaning-making support, which involves the sharing and reflection between the participants and the people they share with. This process allows space and opportunities for meaning making by the participants of their parents' behaviors and experiences. Together, the participants and their trusted ones examined the history of their relationship with their parents and analyzed the participant's reactions and strategies in dealing with their dilemmas.

Although ambivalence is diminished when the participants reach this stage, it is not resolved. In the feedback session, when the initial formulation of the stages were presented to them, some participants indicated that they were stuck in between stages two to four, and they go back and forth between getting angry at their parents and being compassionate to them. I call this "the ambivalent loop".

Stage Five: Acceptance and self-agency.

Reaching this stage, the participants started to feel a sense of control over their own internal emotional and cognitive experience. Consequently, they stopped blaming their parents for their material aspect of achievement and accepted their own responsibilities for their life conditions. That is to say, they delinked the connection between their emotional and material aspects of living condition and their parents' past and current behaviors and influences. They delineated a sense of control over their lives

and a sense of freedom from past constraints. The ability to manage emotional reactivity, which is the expression of higher level of differentiation of self, is shown through increased awareness in a gradual and subtle learning process (Bowen, 1978; Bowen & Kerr, 1988). Bowen speculated that this learning process may occur at several levels. For example, at the “upper” levels, the learning includes the expansion of new perspectives of thinking about the emotional process inside oneself and how it connects to the environment (Kerr, 1984). At the “deeper” levels, it involves “ a kind of deprogramming of one’s emotional reactivity” (Kerr, 1984, p. 513). However, people who have been through the process of this “deprogramming” found it difficult to explain in words about the development of gaining control over their emotional experiences (Kerr, 1984).

Among the participants, learning to modulate their emotional reactivity for the most part happened through continuous interaction and reflection with others, and the application of different methods to manage their negative emotions in all areas of their lives. Strategies such as meditation, spiritual practices and physical exercises were mentioned. In addition, some participants also described increased awareness of how their internal experiences were related to their interactions with others and life events in general. They have learned to consciously manage their emotions in the midst of those emotion-provoking circumstances. Finally, some participants learned to control their tangible life experiences by actively designing life-enhancing experiences such as continuous education, vocational training and socializing with positive people.

At the last stage of resolving and managing ambivalence, the participants still felt frustrated or annoyed by their parents occasionally; nonetheless, the intense ambivalent emotional turmoil and helplessness they experienced in the early stages were mostly gone.

They accepted their unchangeable life history, including how they were treated by their parents in their early life stages. They delinked both their emotional and material aspects of living from their parents' past and current behaviors. When they have control over their internal emotional experiences, they become creative in finding strategies in dealing with their parents. Participants described various interesting strategies in dealing with their parents at this stage. The general goal of these strategies is not to be emotionally provoked during their interactions with their parents. They are also aware of their limits and plan ahead to deal with those limits strategically. Ultimately, they have obtained self-agency which allows them to “behave, feel, think, and choose in a way that is liberating, that opens up new possibilities” (Anderson, 1997, p. 231) or allows them to “see that new possibilities exist” (Anderson, 1997, p. 231).

The Contextual Factors of Intergenerational Ambivalence

Life history research, proposed by Cole (2001), emphasizes an in depth exploration and understanding of the individual life-in-context, which gives us insights into the complexities of the collective culture. Human behaviors can be better understood through inquiring into the complex interaction between life and history, self and context, as well as individuals in relationships. In this study, the participants' experiences with intergenerational ambivalence can be best understood in the contextual development of the city of Hong Kong since the 1950s. I have presented and discussed the contextual factors that contribute to parent-adult children relationships over the life course extensively in Chapter Four. I intend to highlight a few significant factors that needed to be considered in the interpretation of the findings in this study in this section. I will use

the two general sources of intergenerational ambivalence proposed by the definition used for this research. The first one is the “inherent nature and unique interaction patterns of the parent-child relationship” and the second one is the “structural conditions in the sets of social relationships within which parents and children are situated”.

Ambivalence Generated by the Inherent Nature of the Parent-child Relationship:

Autonomy vs. Dependence.

After reviewing existing studies on intergenerational relationships in later life stages, Luescher and Pillemer (1988) concluded that the tension between dependence and autonomy is a major source of ambivalence. They suggested that it is inherent in the parent-child relationship that both parents and children experience internal struggles when their needs for support and nurturance conflict with their desires for freedom from control and dependence. Consistently, researchers found the conflicts between children and parents regularly center on issues of autonomy and control in various life stages. Among the six repetitive parental behaviors that are sources of participants’ negative emotions, parental psychological control and parental dependence qualify to categorize autonomy and dependence struggles in parent-adult child relationships.

In the case of parental psychological control, I was surprised by the strong theme that emerged in this study that adult children resent their parents’ controlling behaviors. In contrast to psychological control, almost all participants who did not report ambivalence in their relationships with their parents expressed appreciation for their parents’ respect of their own life choices and personal space. My surprise in part was because research suggested that autonomy and noninterference in close ties is not

universal, but rather it is a Western value and practice (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). Parental control is an important and much researched dimension of parenting (Baumrind, 1971). Existing intercultural studies found parental control has very different meanings in Chinese and European American culture. American parents encourage independence when children are young and practice noninterference when children are grown in order to keep close parent-child ties (Fingerman, 2001). Almost to the contrary, Chinese culture encourages children to be obedient and deferential to parents throughout their lives under the principle of filial piety (Bond & Hwang, 1986). Parental control is typically regarded as caring and positive in Chinese culture (Chao, 1994). Sarri (1990) suggested that Chinese children tend to internalize feelings of affection and reverence along with parental discipline and control. Nonetheless, the participants in this study perceived their parents' controlling behaviors as negative and they were normally troubled by these behaviors. Although many of the studies comparing Chinese and Western parental control did not distinguish psychological control and behavioral control, Chinese parents showed significant higher controlling behaviors in general. Although most participants in this study have not reacted externally and created outward conflict with their parents, they harbor negative sentiments. On the surface, many of them have followed the culturally prescribed filial piety rules to be respectful to their parents, such as in the case of Jessica. Unfortunately, this might produce more ambivalence internally because they are not able to express their discontent to their parents for fear of violating the virtue of filial piety.

There are two explanations as to the importance of the "autonomy vs. dependence" theme in this study. The first is to see this tendency of striving for both autonomy and

dependence as universal and basic biological forces and is the inherent nature of parent-child relationship. Bowen suggested that “individuality and togetherness” are two counterbalancing life forces, based on his observation of human functioning, hence, they are “written in nature” (Kerr & Bowen, 1978). Individuality directs a person to follow his/her “own directives and to be an independent and distinct entity” (Kerr & Bowen, 1978, p. 64). On the other hand, togetherness drives a person to follow “the directives of others, to be a dependent, connected, and indistinct entity” (Kerr & Bowen, 1978, p. 65). Similarly, attachment theory also regards “human development as a function of relationships, and relationships as part of a system held together by opposing forces that are organic in nature” (van Ecke, Chope, & Emmelkamp, 2006, p. 82). Bowlby ascertained that human beings seek to maintain “a balance between the pull toward togetherness and the push toward separation” (van Ecke et al., 2006, p. 84).

Bowen argued that humans have innate biological and psychological systems that permit them to function as individuals and to follow their own pursuits while at the same time to function as part of a group and to follow the group’s compass. He also believed that although individuality and togetherness are part of every person’s biological processes, the extent to which each person’s individuality and intensity for togetherness are formed by learning from his/her environment (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Therefore, based on Bowen family systems and attachment theory, children in every culture have innate needs to be autonomous and at the same time experience an inherent force to be dependent or connected to their parents (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; J. Bowlby, 1988). However, cultural and environmental differences might define the extent of their preference for individuality and togetherness (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Chinese culture

gives high value to children's obedience of their parents; consequently, Chinese children may express a less intense need to be autonomous than their Western counterparts whose cultural values trend to more individuality. Nevertheless, the need for individuality is still within Chinese children. Children suffer mentally and emotionally when their parents exercise psychological control over them. Thus, the participants in this study resent their parents' controlling behaviors that do not allow enough space for individual development.

The second explanation is related to intergenerational discrepancies between children's and parents' endorsement of parental control. Studies found that parent-child discrepancies concerning family values and practices are linked to poorer well-being in children and overall family functioning (Crane, Ngai, Larsen, & Hafen, 2005; Juang, Lerner, von Eye, & McKinney, 1999; Juang, Syed, & Takagi, 2007; Sam & Virta, 2003). As stated in Chapter Four, most parents of the participants were immigrants and they brought along traditional Chinese familial practices, including filial piety, from their hometowns, where such customs were rigidly practiced. Their children, on the other hand, grew up in an era of rapid industrialization in which the values of individualism were greatly promoted. Inevitably, the discrepant views on a variety of issues (e.g. parental control, family obligations) between parents and children lead to family tension and individual members' discontentment. According to the participants, they were respectful of their parents at least on the surface because it was not acceptable to talk back to parents in their household and in society in general when they grew up. However, they preferred their parents to be more respectful and supportive of their own preferences and choices in life.

Another theme in parental behaviors that are associated with adult children's ambivalence is parental dependence. The relationship between intergenerational ambivalence and parental dependence is well established in the literature (Baltes et al., 1994; Bengtson et al., 1996; Birditt, Miller, et al., 2009; Blieszner & Raean, 1992; Blieszner & Shifflett, 1989; Cheng, Chan, & Philips, 2004; Fingerman et al., 2006; Fingerman et al., 2008). The specific contextual factor in this study that contributes to the expression of parental dependence in their old age is the practice of filial piety. Filial piety has been described as a "specific, complex syndrome or set of cognition, affects, intentions, and behaviors concerning being good or nice to one's parents" (Yang, 1997, p. 252). *Xiao shun* (孝順), the Chinese term for filial piety, instructs children to be respectful (i.e. *xiao*) and obedient (i.e. *shun*) to one's parents and other elderly family members (Ho, 1996; Yang, 1997; Yeh & Bedford, 2003). In addition, the concept of filial piety commands a reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship. Reciprocity creates bonds between parent and children starting with the parents' devotion to their children's early life. Chinese children perceive their parents' sacrifice as love and grow up with a sense of obligation and responsibility to their parents' well-being (Chao & Tseng, 2002; C. Wu, 2007). In addition, in the Chinese collective culture, individuals are considered and treated as mutually depending on each other, and this interdependence is the most basic psychological formation that connects individuals to families, and families to the society (Hsu, 1972). Consequently, parental dependence in old age on the participants in this study is natural and reasonable. Although the participants' ideas of filial piety are a modified modern form in which they might not show absolute respect and obedience to

their parents, they believe strongly their filial obligations to support their parents' needs, especially their tangible needs in their old age.

Almost all of the participants provided some form of financial support to their parents and were also involved in their parents' health and care related arrangements. Only two of them, who were the sole providers to their parents' financial and emotional needs, expressed ambivalence toward their parents' emotional dependence during the interviews. In comparison with existing literature in the Western culture, parental dependence seems to generate less ambivalence in this group of participants. My assumption is that the deeply ingrained filial piety attitude and practice contributes to Chinese adult children's acceptance and tolerance of their parents' dependence. Ambivalence only arises when their parents' dependence is much stronger than they could support.

Ambivalence Fostered by Structural Conditions: Gender and Cultural Practices in a Time of Poverty.

Among the six parental behaviors that contribute to the participants' negative side of ambivalent experience, the attitude and practice of son preference is the only parental behavior that has not been identified in the existing intergenerational ambivalence literature. This specific parental behavior is culturally and contextually specific to this study. Traditional Chinese society can be defined as patrilineal and patrilocal. Patrilineality is the system in which the family's main productive assets are passed only through the male line, while females may be given some movable goods in the form of dowry. Consequently, women are not able to sustain their economic level without being

attached to men. Patrilocality is a term referring to the arrangement of married couples residing with the husband's family. Patrilocality goes hand in hand with inheritance in the patrilineal system because land and property are often the main productive assets in the traditional peasant society (Das Gupta et al., 2003). The logic of patrilineality has been rigidly practiced in Chinese societies, and therefore the strong son preference attitude manifested in every aspect of the family life (Das Gupta et al., 2003). Aging mothers' autonomy depends on having the support of grown sons. This is an important force for mothers' preference for sons. Mothers ensured the loyalty of their sons by raising them attentively (W. H. Yu & Su, 2006).

The practice of son preference triggered intensive negative emotions in the female participants in this study. This concept especially influenced mother-daughter relationships because more mothers than fathers were perceived to show a son-preference attitude in this study. Female participants expressed a sense of loss and sadness over their mothers' son-preference attitude and practice. They were angry with their mothers for not loving them or not loving them the same as their brothers. They felt rejected and uncared for by their mothers (Hill, 2009; Krause & Haverkamp, 1996; Merz et al., 2007). Parental rejection is characterized in Western culture as the lack or withdrawal of affection and warmth (Rohner & Pettengill, 1985). Parents who reject their children often show dislike, disapproval, or resentment toward their children. They might view them as a burden and they often compare them unfavorably with other children. Parental rejection is shown either through hostility or neglect. The rejected children are apt to become resentful of, or angry at, their parents (Rohner, 1975; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985).

Moreover, the female participants also felt resentment toward their parents, especially their mothers' unfairness in resource allocation when they were growing up. Lack of resource investment is perceived as the cause of their less than satisfying material aspect of attainment in later life stages. In a study of working daughters in the 1970s, Salaff (1995) used the term "centripetal" proposed by Farber (1975) to describe the regime of families in Hong Kong. She explained:

In the centripetal form, the family becomes a power base to manipulate other institutions. Families consequently stratify the community while endeavoring to develop their own power and wealth. A centripetal family gathers in its forces by demanding the primary loyalty of its members and mobilizing their labor power, political, and psychological allegiances on behalf of kinsmen (p.8).

From this framework, the mothers of the participants were simply adhering to the norm of the society in striving to advance the family status through their sons' attainment in education and career development because sons were the ones who carry the family names and build upon family capital (Salaff, 1995). In a centripetal system, families allocate more resources to sons at the expense of daughters in times of poverty.

Accordingly, parents invest less in their daughters' education as was found in this study (Behrman, 1988; Das Gupta et al., 2003; Mu & Zhang, 2011; W. H. Yu & Su, 2006). Yu (2006) investigated the relationship between sibling characteristics and educational attainment in Taiwan among a sibling sample of 12,715 from 3,001 families. They found that the influence of son preference on intrafamily educational inequality is conditional on family resources. They also found that parental investment strategies due to the limit of resources depended on the child's gender, because of their conscious assessment of

sons' and daughters' relative opportunities in the society in the future. Therefore, the lower return on education for women led to daughters' inferior education opportunities and attainment relative to sons' in Chinese culture.

Similar to Salaff (1995) and the current study, Yu (2006) found that firstborn daughters' schooling suffered the most when the family had a tight budget. They were expected to care for younger siblings or went to work at a young age to support the family. All of the fathers of the participants were working-class men and their earnings were not enough to support their big families. The mothers were occupied with many small children and household chores. If they had grandparents, usually grandmothers looked after the children at home while mothers worked outside the home to bring additional income. When parents still couldn't support their many children financially, they had to depend on elder children, usually the oldest daughters, to bring in more wages for survival and eventually to raise family living standards.

In a cross-cultural study about intergenerational relationships, Nauck (2002) found that Chinese mothers and daughters were commonly detached from, and unaffectionate toward, each other. Ainsworth (1984) suggested that the attachment between parents and children is an "affectional bond" which lasts a life time. The affectional bond formed as early as a child's infancy (Ainsworth, 1984; Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1979; Merz et al., 2007). Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1982) stated that attachment needs and behaviors are biologically rooted. Therefore, when the attachment figure is neglecting or rejecting the child's needs and wishes, the child naturally gets angry and disappointed (Merz et al., 2007). In the cases of most of the female participants in this study, ambivalence was generated when they realized that their mother's rejection

and lack of attention and care caused them feelings of loss, sadness, anger and disappointment. Besides, their love for their mothers and empathy toward their mother's hardship intensified their felt ambivalence.

This echoes with the findings of the greatest ambivalent feelings between mothers and daughters among all parent-child gender combinations (Troll & Fingerman, 1996); Fingerman, 2001; Nauck, 2012; Willson et al., 2003). Feminist scholars asserted that mother-daughter ties are an essential part of women's identity development (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). Women were raised to invest more in relationships than men and therefore mothers and daughters share a common perspective on their relationship, which involves a conscious effort to keep in contact and to share mutual help. Accordingly, there are also more opportunities for both closeness and clashes (Sutor, Gilligan, et al., 2011). In addition, some researchers explained that adult daughters feel more ambivalent toward their parents and their relationships because they might feel obligated to support and care for their frail parents, and at the same time feel strained by such responsibility (Connidis & McMullin, 2002).

Even though the phenomena of adult children's ambivalence toward their parents in this study look similar to the findings in the West, cultural elements contribute to some different explanations for this seemingly similar outcome. For example, the stories of Pai and Seung described a distant and unaffectionate relationship between them and their mothers. This parallels with Nauck (2002)'s cross-cultural study in which was found commonly detached mother-daughter relationships in China. Traditionally, Chinese women played passive roles in the family system. Yet, they gained status when they bore sons. Many continued to build their influence in the family by raising their sons as

obedient and loyal to them. After the marriage of their sons and when their sons became influential in the family, women also gained authority as mothers-in-law (Dien, 1992; K. Johnson, 1983). Because of the enormously high value of male children to the mother, it led to extreme closeness between mother and son, as compared to with a daughter, who was more distant (Dien, 1992). Despite the differences in explanations, studies have shown that gender is a crucial frame for organizing family and social relations (Maccoby, 1990). This supports the sociological aspect of parent-child ambivalence.

The Perceived Connection between Own Living Conditions and Parental Behaviors in Intergenerational Ambivalence

This is the first study to highlight the criticality of adult children's perception of the connection between their negative and undesirable living experiences and their parents' negative and offensive behaviors in generating their ambivalent feelings toward their parents in Hong Kong. The existing literature on ambivalent emotions distinguishes potential ambivalence and felt ambivalence (Newby-Clark et al., 2002). In the case of potential ambivalence, there are both positive and negative experiences in the parent-child relationships and one or both parties may harbor contradictory emotions and thoughts but may not be aware of them (Luescher, 2004). In this study, although many of the participants experienced negative events and emotions from very early stages of their experiences in their families-of-origin, they only started to experience feelings of ambivalence during moments of awareness about how their unhappiness was connected to their parents' behaviors. These moments of awareness turned potential ambivalence into felt ambivalence when the participants started to be aware of their contradictory

emotions and attitudes in their interactions with their parents. Consequently, this study also settles the argument in the literature about the suitability of direct and indirect conceptualization and measurement of intergenerational ambivalence by supporting the direct measure of individuals' simultaneous access to contradictory thoughts and emotions. Therefore, ambivalence should be conceptualized as feeling conflicted or torn, and measures should be questions about contradictory and conflicting thoughts and emotions toward parents or children.

Clinical Implications

The Interplay of the Interpersonal Dialogue and Intrapersonal Effort in Ambivalence Management

Psychotherapists, in most cases, are aware of the ambivalent feelings and attitudes among family members. Research findings that only prove the existence of ambivalence and its sources have little clinical value. Only when researchers look closer and deeper into the process and strategies that adult children use in managing their ambivalence can they offer insights for clinical practice. To the best of my knowledge, this research is the first attempt to identify strategies adopted by adult children throughout the process of ambivalence management. While all the findings regarding ambivalence management contribute significantly to the clinical practice in working with parent-adult child relationships and family relationships in general, I want to highlight the importance of the interplay of interpersonal dialogue and intrapersonal effort in the process of ambivalence management.

Comparing the participants who have come to the last stage of the process to those who are stuck in “the ambivalent loop”, those who are at the last stage of the process have initiated more interpersonal dialogues with their significant others or trusted ones and they put more effort in internal emotional management when they are experiencing overwhelming negative emotions. In reviewing existing clinical literature, I found the social constructionism view on change best describes the changing nature of interpersonal dialogues:

From an interpretive, meaning-generating perspective, change is inherent in dialogue: Change is the telling and retelling of familiar stories; it is the redescriptions that accrue through conversation; it is the different meanings that are conferred on past, present, and imagined future events and experiences (Anderson, 1997, p. 233) .

Therefore, how a therapist initiates and carries on dialogues that are generative in nature becomes critical in the individuals’ changing process (Anderson, 1997). In addition, “change becomes developing future selves. What becomes important in therapy are the individuals’ first-person narratives” (Anderson, 1997, p. 233). Encouraging individuals to discuss their memories and thoughts on their relationships with their parents is also crucial to the therapeutic process because the participants reported having the understandings of their significant ones as helpful. In addition, the conversations they had with others also provided alternative perspectives on the issues they were struggling with.

In terms of the intrapersonal effort in emotional management, I found the description of the ability to manage emotional reactivity in Bowen’s concept of differentiation of self useful. Participants who reported feelings of calmness and

acceptance in their relationships with their parents went through a period of internal growth that enabled them to master their negative emotions effectively. They started to feel a sense of control of their own emotional experiences. Therefore, they delinked the connection between their emotional aspect of living conditions with their parents' past and current behaviors and influences. As described earlier, participants found it difficult to explain in words about what their learning of being aware and mastering their emotional reactivity came about. It seems as if they have learned to calm and soothe themselves better and they are more capable of reflection and self-talk in the midst of emotional turmoil. A few participants mentioned various forms of meditation such as Qi Gong (氣功) and spiritual devotion (靈修) as useful.

Culturally Sensitive Practice

According to Bowen and the followers of his ideas, in order to achieve a dialogic or more differentiated relationship with less ambivalence, adult children need to develop a sense of personal authority. Personal authority refers to a more “peer-like intimacy in interactions with all persons, including parents, while maintaining an individuated stance” (Harvey & Bray, 1991, p. 300). They suggested a renegotiation process in which adult children focus on a shift of the power structure in parent-adult child relationships, thus enabling a mutual, peer-like relationship to emerge (Williamson, 1981). While this strategy may be the description of the parent-child relationship in the Western society, this may not be suitable in the Chinese culture at least for the generations of the participants and their parents. The participants have accepted the hierarchical nature in

their parent-child relationship. They did not feel a need to achieve peer-like relationship with their parents in order to resolve their ambivalence.

Moreover, although many of the participants did not report ambivalent experiences with their parents, none of them described their relationship nature with their parents as intimate (親密) because they and their parents did not share deep and meaningful conversations growing up, due to various constraints such as time, parents' education and culture. Communicating about ambivalent experiences takes advanced communication skills best found in a relationship that has a history of deep and meaningful conversations. Unfortunately, the nature of the communication between the participants and their parents has remained on a functional level. Some participants expressed that their parents have started to reveal to them in old age their difficult life stories. In the process of resolving ambivalence, it is not advised that the participants disclose their negative emotions and attitudes to their parents because it seems that the participants' parents believed that they have tried their best to raise their families in the harsh condition. They feel very hurt and angry when they hear their children's complaints. The disclosure might be harmful to the relationship quality. What the adult children can do is to be curious about their parents' experiences in different life stages by asking questions and listening. The understanding of their parents' struggles and limitations raising a big family during a time of poverty will elicit compassion in them. Additionally, it will generate new perspectives and understanding about the meaning of their parents' behavior that they had perceived as negative and hurtful.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

This study has several limitations that are important to address here. Suggestions for future studies to overcome these limitations will be discussed adjacently. Firstly, this study started out exploring the general dynamics of intergenerational relationship due to its adherence to the life history approach, which favors an inductive research approach. The intergenerational ambivalence framework was adopted in conceptualizing the data only after the ambivalent experiences were shown repeatedly in participants' stories. 23 out of 40 relationship dyads that were shared by 16 participants were identified as fitting into this framework. The sample size drastically decreased when I started to focus on analyzing and presenting how the intergenerational ambivalence was experienced among the sixteen participants. Moreover, out of the 16 participants who experienced ambivalence toward their parents at some point in their lives, only 9 of them expressed that they have resolved their ambivalence. Thus, the number of participants I used to identify the stages of intergenerational ambivalence gradually decreased in the later stages of the ambivalence management process. Hopefully, this limitation on sample size has been minimized by the in-depth interviews, which provided full descriptions of the participants' life stories, especially their recounts of their relationships with their parents. Nonetheless, this study's findings need to be replicated with a larger and more diverse sample from different cultures. It will be interesting to compare research findings among different cultural groups using qualitative interviews. Moreover, since specific parent-child interactions that contribute to intergenerational ambivalence were identified in this study, quantitative studies that use questionnaires based on the sources of ambivalence in this study can be constructed and tested in larger and diverse populations.

Secondly, the intergenerational ambivalent experiences described in this study were only coming from one adult child from each family. The perspectives are missing from other family members and especially from the aging parents. It will be more complete if future studies can include several members of the same family in the examinations of the different perspectives from both the parent and child generations. Comparing experiences between siblings about their relationship dynamics with their parents will also contribute to more in-depth understandings about intergenerational ambivalence. The wealth of information gathered by studies including several family members will also identify how different individuals negotiate ambivalent dilemmas in the same family.

Thirdly, since this study used only face-to-face interviews, the information generated in the research conversations was the only data used for analysis. To advance related studies in the future, data collection methods can include site observations such as during regular and specific family get-togethers in order to collect diverse and complementary data for comparing and contrasting. Moreover, since ambivalence management is a process that lasts for an extensive period of time, longitudinal studies can be used to track changes and strategies along the process.

Fourthly, as stated earlier, the process of ambivalence management is a preliminary attempt to analyze the complexity of adult children's effort in resolving their ambivalence toward their parents. This process has significant clinical value for family therapists who are working with related issues. Therefore, more in-depth interviews need to be conducted to confirm, refute or modify the process of ambivalence management. The main focus should be on the final stage, acceptance and self-agency, in which the participants managed to master their emotional experiences in the midst of their interactions with their parents. It will be useful to look more closely into details of the strategies used in this stage. The findings will not only be useful for working with intergenerational ambivalent issues, but will also be

beneficial to individuals who are challenged by other life issues that involve emotional reactivity.

Lastly, filial piety, the core guiding principle of Chinese intergenerational relationships, was highly valued by the participants in this study. “*Xiao shun*”, the Chinese term for filial piety, commands children to respect (i.e. *xiao*) and to obey (i.e. *shun*) their parents (Ho, 1996; Kwan, 2000a; Yang, 1997). The obeying (*shun*) dimension is likely to associate with parental psychological control which is one of the sources of ambivalence between adult children and their parents identified in this study. It will be interesting for future studies to explore the relationship between parents’ teaching and demanding of filial piety and their exercising control over children’s behaviors and attitudes in different stages of the family life. On the other hand, the cultural practice and teaching of filial piety also has significant impact on how adult children view and value “*xiao*” and “*shun*”. Their beliefs and attitudes in this regard are likely to contribute to or dilute their ambivalent feelings toward their parents’ controlling behaviors and their dependence in old age. Studying these areas will contribute greatly to the understanding of the complexity of Chinese intergenerational relationships.

Concluding Remarks

This research aims to build upon existing studies that used the intergenerational ambivalent framework with the aim of filling some of the gaps of this prominent theoretical perspective. The findings have generated new insights into this understudied area – aging parent-adult child relationships during normative period with attention given to the relationship history over course of life. This study is the first life history research that has identified sources of ambivalence from the perspective of adult children in a Chinese society.

Moreover, this study presents the first attempt to conceptualize ambivalence management through a process of employing various strategies on the part of adult children. Ambivalence, therefore, is not a fixed relational quality; rather it implies an ongoing feature of the parent-child relationship that is negotiated in varying circumstances over one's life course.

Furthermore, this study addresses the role of gender and the larger cultural context in the process of adult-children's coping with intergenerational ambivalence. Consequently, this study suggests that exploring the influence of context is necessary in understanding parent-adult child relationships. Finally, this study points to some important new directions for future studies in intergenerational relationship between aging parents and adult children using the intergenerational ambivalence framework.

References:

- Abbott, K. A. (1970). *Harmony and individualism*. Taipei, Taiwan: Oriental Cultural Service.
- Abel, E. K., & Nelson, M. K. (1990). *Circles of care: Work and identity in women's lives*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Acker, J. (1988). Class, gender, and the relations of distribution. *Signs, 13*, 473-497.
- Acker, J., Barry, K., & Esseveld, J. (1983). Objectivity and truth: Problems in doing feminist research. *Women's Studies International Forum, 6*(4), 423-435.
- Ahuja, A., & Porter, N. (2010). *Are housing prices rising too fast in Hong Kong SAR?* Retrieved May 5th, 2012, from <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2010/wp10273.pdf>
- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1984). Attachment across the life span. *Psychiatry of the New York Academy of Medicine* (December), 792-812.
- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M., Waters, E., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Allen, K. R., Blieszner, R., & Roberto, K. A. (2000). Families in middle and later years: A review and critique of the literature. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*, 911-926.
- Amato, P., & Booth, A. (1997). *A generation at risk: Growing up in a era of family upheaval*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Anderson, H. (1997). *Conversation, language, and possibilities: A postmodern approach to therapy*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Anderson, H., & Goolishian, H. (1992). The client is the expert: A not-knowing approach to therapy. In S. McNamee & K. J. Gergen (Eds.), *Therapy as social construction* (pp. 25-39). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Aston, J. (2000). *Shaping their lives: Accommodating career and motherhood* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.
- Atkinson, L., & Zucker, K. J. (1997). *Attachment and psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Atkinson, M. P., Kivett, V. R., & Campbell, R. T. (1986). Intergenerational solidarity: An examination of a theoretical model. *Journal of Gerontology, 41*, 408-416.
- Back, A. (1997). Career counselling with Chinese students. In W. Patton & M. McMahon (Eds.), *Career development in practice: A systems theory perspective* (pp. 105-116). Sydney, Australia: New Hobsons Press.
- Back, A. (2002). Freedom and control - "Big Me and Little Me": A Chinese perspective for counsellors. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 12*(1), 63-73.
- Baltes, M. M., Neumann, E. M., & Zank, S. (1994). Maintenance and rehabilitation of independence in old age: An intervention program for staff. *Psychology and Aging, 9*, 179-188.
- Barber, B. K. (1996). Parental psychological control: Revisiting a neglected construct. *Child Development, 65*, 1120-1136.
- Barnett, R. C., Kibria, N., Baruch, G. K., & Pleck, J. H. (1991). Adult daughter-parent relationships and their associations with daughters' subjective well-being and psychological distress. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 53*, 29-42.

- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monographs*, 4, 1-103.
- Beaton, J. M., Norris, J. E., & Pratt, M. W. (2003). Unresolved issues in adult children's marital relationships involving intergenerational problems. *Family Relations*, 52, 143-153.
- Bedford, V. (1992). Memories of parental favoritism and quality of parent-child ties in adulthood. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 47, 149-155.
- Behrman, J. (1988). Intrahousehold allocation of nutrients in rural India: Are boys favored? Do parents exhibit inequality aversion? *Oxford Economic Papers*, 40, 32-54.
- Bengtson, V. L. (2001). Beyond the nuclear family: The increasing importance of multigenerational bonds. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 1-16.
- Bengtson, V. L., & Black, K. D. (1973). Intergenerational relations and continuities in socialization. In P. B. Baltes & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Life-span developmental psychology: Personality and socialization* (pp. 3-24). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Bengtson, V. L., Cutler, N. E., Mangen, D. J., & Marshall, V. W. (1985). Generations, cohorts, and relations between age groups. In R. H. Binstock & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (pp. 304-338). New York, NY: van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Bengtson, V. L., Giarrusso, R., Mabry, J. B., & Silverstein, M. (2002). Solidarity, conflict, and ambivalence: Complementary or competing perspectives on intergenerational relationships? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 568-576.
- Bengtson, V. L., & Mangen, D. J. (1988). Family intergenerational solidarity revisited. In D. J. Mangen, V. L. Bengtson & P. H. J. Landry (Eds.), *Measurement of intergenerational relations* (pp. 222-238). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bengtson, V. L., Mangen, D. J., & Landry, P. H. Jr. (1984). The multi-generation family: concepts and finding. In V. Garms-Homolova, E. M. Hoerning & D. Schaeffer (Eds.), *Intergenerational relationships* (pp. 63-79). New York, NY: C. J. Hogrefe.
- Bengtson, V. L., & Roberts, R. E. L. (1991). Intergenerational solidarity in aging families: An example of formal theory construction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 856-870.
- Bengtson, V. L., Rosenthal, C., & Burton, L. (1996). Paradoxes of families and aging. In R. H. Binstock & L. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (4th ed., pp. 254-282). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Birditt, K. S., Fingerman, K. L., & Zarit, S. H. (2010). Adult children's problems and successes: Implications for intergenerational ambivalence. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 65B(2), 145-153.
- Birditt, K. S., Miller, L. M., Fingerman, K. L., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2009). Tensions in the parent and adult child relationship: Links to solidarity and ambivalence. *Psychology and Aging*, 24(2), 287-295.
- Birditt, K. S., Rott, L. M., & Fingerman, K. L. (2009). "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all": Coping with interpersonal tensions in the parent-child relationship during adulthood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(6), 769-778.

- Blieszner, R., & Raeann, R. H. (1992). Filial responsibility: Attitudes, motivators, and behaviors. In J. Dwyer & R. Coward (Eds.), *Gender, families, and elder care* (pp. 105-109). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Blieszner, R., & Shifflett, P. A. (1989). Affection, communication, and commitment in adult-child caregiving for parents with Alzheimer's disease. In J. A. Mancini (Ed.), *Aging parents and adult children* (pp. 231-243). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Bloom, L., & Munro, P. (1995). Conflicts of selves: Nonunitary subjectivity in women administrators' life history narratives. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 99-112). London, England: The Falmer Press.
- Bond, M. H., & Hwang, K. K. (1986). The social psychology of Chinese people. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The psychology of the Chinese people* (pp. 213-266). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. New York, NY: Jason Aronson.
- Bowen, M. (1980). *Defining a self in one's family of origin* (Video). Washington, DC: Georgetown Family Center.
- Bowen, M., & Kerr, M. E. (1988). *Family evaluation*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Bowlby, J. (1979). *The making and breaking of affectional bonds*. London, England: Tavistock.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. New York, NY: Sage.
- Bradley, J. M., & Cafferty, T. P. (2001). Attachment among older adults: Current issues and directions for future research. *Attachment and Human Development, 3*, 200-221.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.
- Bray, J. H., Harvey, D. M., & Williamson, D. S. (1987). Intergenerational family relationships: An evaluation of theory and measurement. *Psychotherapy, 24*, 516-528.
- Bretherton, I., & Munholland, K. A. (1999). Internal working models in attachment relationships: A construct revisited. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachments: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 89-111). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Bruner, E. M. (1984). The opening up of anthropology. In E. M. Bruner (Ed.), *Text, play, and story: The construction and reconstruction of self and society* (pp. 1-18). Washington, DC: The American Ethnological Society.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Bucx, F., Van Wel, F., Knijn, T., & Hagendoorn, L. (2008). Intergenerational contact and the life course status of young adult children. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*, 144-156.
- Buehler, C., & Gerard, J. M. (2002). Marital conflict, ineffective parenting, and children's and adolescents' maladjustment. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*(1), 78-92.

- Butt, R., Raymond, D., McCue, G., & Yamagishi, L. (1992). Collaborative autobiography and the teacher's voice. In I. F. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers' lives* (pp. 51-98). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Carter, K. (1993). The place of study in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1), 5-12.
- Chan, C. K. (1996). *Colonial rule, Chinese welfare ideologies and reproduction of social policy- the case of Hong Kong social security* (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England.
- Chan, C. M. (1997). *Filial scale for Chinese elderly*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.
- Chan, H. L., Lee, S. K., & Woo, K. Y. (2001). Detecting rational bubbles in the residential housing markets of Hong Kong. *Economic Modelling*, 18, 61-73.
- Chan, K. W., Fong, Y. H., Fung, K. K., Hung, S. L., Ng, C. H., Pun, N., & Wong, M. W. (1995). The impact of industrial restructuring on women workers in Hong Kong. In H. O'Sullivan (Ed.), *Silk and steel : Asian women workers confront challenges of industrial restructuring : Research papers and consultation recommendations on the impact of industrial restructuring on women workers in Asia*. Hong Kong: Committee for Asian Women.
- Chao, R. K. (1994). Beyond parental control and authoritarian parenting style: Understanding Chinese parenting through the cultural notion of training. *Child Development*, 65, 1111-1120.
- Chao, R. K., & Kaeochinda, K. F. (2010). Parental sacrifice and acceptance as distinct dimensions of parental support among Chinese and Filipino American adolescents. In S. T. Russell, L. J. Crockett & R. K. Chao (Eds.), *Asian American parenting and parent-adolescent relationships* (pp. 61-77). New York, NY: Springer.
- Chao, R. K., & Tseng, V. (2002). Parenting of Asians. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 4: Social conditions and applied parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 59-93). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. New York, NY: Sage.
- Chau, L. C. (1994). Economic growth and income distribution in Hong Kong. In B. K. P. Leung & T. Y. C. Wong (Eds.), *25 years of social and economic development in Hong Kong* (pp. 489-532). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Cheng, S. T., Chan, A. C. M., & Philips, D. (2004). Quality of life in old age: An investigation of well older persons in Hong Kong. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 32(3), 309-326.
- Cheng, S. T., & Chan, C. M. (2006). Filial piety and psychological well-being in well older Chinese. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 61B(5), 262-269.
- Chiu, C. Y. (1990). Normative expectations of social behavior and concern for members of the collective in Chinese society. *The Journal of Psychology*, 124(1), 103-111.
- Chiu, R. L. H. (1994). Housing intervention in Hong Kong: From laissez faire to privatization. In B. K. P. Leung & T. Y. C. Wong (Eds.), *25 years of social and economic development in Hong Kong* (pp. 336-356). Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.

- Chiu, S. W. S. (1991). *The family care of Chinese old people: A study of the Chinese communities in London and Hong Kong*. (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Choi, P. K., & Lee, C. K. (1997). The hidden abode of domestic labor: The case of Hong Kong. In F. M. Cheung (Ed.), *Engendering Hong Kong society: A gender perspective of women's studies* (pp. 157-199). Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Chou, K. R. (1966). *The Hong Kong economy*. Hong Kong: Academic.
- Chow, N. W. S. (1992a). Family care of the elderly in Hong Kong. In J. I. Kosberg (Ed.), *Family care of the elderly: Social and cultural changes* (pp. 123-137). London, England: Sage.
- Chow, N. W. S. (1992b). Hong Kong: Community care for elderly people. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Aging in east and south east Asia* (pp. 65-76). London, England: Edward Arnold.
- Chow, N. W. S. (1997). *The policy implications of the changing role and status of the elderly in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Department of Social Work and Social Administration University of Hong Kong.
- Chow, N. W. S. (2001). The practice of filial piety among the Chinese in Hong Kong. In I. Chi, N. L. Chappel & J. Lubben (Eds.), *Elderly Chinese in Pacific Rim countries: Social support and integration* (pp. 126-136). Hong Kong: The Hong Kong University Press.
- Chu, G. C. (1985). The emergence of the new Chinese culture. In W. S. Tseng & D. Y. Wu (Eds.), *Chinese culture and mental health* (pp. 15-27). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Chu, P. Y. (1995). *Women in the middle: Informal care and economic relationship - an exploratory study on the economic disadvantages of family informal carers of Chinese old people in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist College.
- Clarke, E. J., Preston, M., Raksin, J., & Bengtson, V. L. (1999). Types of conflicts and tensions between older parents and adult children. *The Gerontological Society of America*, 39(3), 261-270.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Coiro, M. J., & Emery, R. E. (1998). Do marriage problems affect fathering more than mothering? A quantitative and qualitative review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1(1), 23-40.
- Cole, A. L., & Knowles, J. G. . (2001). *Lives in context: The art of life history research*. New York, NY: Altamira Press.
- Connidis, I. A. (1994). Growing up and old together: Some observations on families in later life. In V. Marshall & B. McPherson (Eds.), *Aging: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 195-205). Peterborough, Canada: Broadview Press.
- Connidis, I. A., & McMullin, J. A. (2002). Sociological ambivalence and family ties: A critical perspective. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64, 558-567.
- Coser, R. L. (1966). Role distance, sociological ambivalence, and transitional status systems. *American Journal of Sociology*, 72, 173-187.

- Cowan, C., & Cowan, P. (1992). *When partners become parents*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Crane, D. R., Ngai, S. W., Larsen, J. H., & Hafen, M., Jr. (2005). The influence of family functioning and parent-adolescent acculturation on North American Chinese adolescent outcomes. *Family Relations*, 54, 400-410.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. New York, NY: Sage.
- Curran, S. R. (2002). Agency, accountability, and embedded relations: "What's love got to do with it?". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(August), 577-584.
- Dahl, C. M., & Boss, P. (2005). The use of phenomenology for family therapy research. In D. H. Sprenkle & F. P. Piercy (Eds.), *Research methods in family therapy* (pp. 63-84). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Das Gupta, M., Jiang, Z., Li, B., Xie, Z., & Chung, W. (2003). Why is son preference so persistent in East and South Asia? A cross-country study of China, India and the Republic of Korea. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 40(2), 153-187.
- Davies, P. T., Winter, M. A., & Cicchetti, D. (2006). The implications of emotional security theory for understanding and treating childhood psychopathology. *Development and Psychopathology*, 18(3), 707-735.
- Denzin, N. K. (1991). *Images of postmodern society*. London, England: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K., Norman, K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1-28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DeVault, M. L. (1991). *Feeding the family*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Dhunpath, R., & Samuel, M. (2009). Life history research: Introduction. In R. Dhunpath & M. Samuel (Eds.), *Life history research: Epistemology, methodology and representation* (pp. vii-xix). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.
- Dien, D. S. F. (1992). Gender and individuation: China and the West. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 79(1), 105-119.
- Dillard, C. K., & Protinsky, H. O. (1985). Emotional cutoff: A comparative analysis of clinical versus nonclinical populations. *International Journal of Family Psychiatry*, 6(4), 339-349.
- Du, L. (1996). Chinese people's emotional expression in eating activities. In S. J. Li (Ed.), *Chinese dietary culture*. Beijing, China: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- Echevarria-Doan, S., & Tubbs, C. Y. (2005). Let's get grounded. In D. H. Sprenkle & F. P. Piercy (Eds.), *Research methods in family therapy* (pp. 41-62). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Economist Intelligence Unit. (2010). *Feeling the squeeze: Asia's sandwich generation*. Retrieved October 20th, 2011, from http://www.economistinsights.com/sites/default/files/Sandwich_main_Jul20_FIN_AL%20TO%20PRINT.pdf
- Edmunds, H. (1999). *The focus group research handbook*. Chicago, IL: NTC Business Books.

- Eggebeen, D. J. (1995). Patterns of support given by older Americans to their children. In S. A. Bass (Ed.), *Older and active: How Americans over 55 are contributing to society* (pp. 122-168). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Eichler, M. (1987). The relationship between sexist, non-sexist, woman-centered and feminist research in social sciences. In G. H. Nemiroff (Ed.), *Women and men: Interdisciplinary readings on gender* (pp. 178-215). Toronto, Canada: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
- Elder, G. H. Jr., & Caspi, A. (1990). Studying lives in a changing society: sociological and personological explorations. In A. I. Rabin, R. A. Zucker, R. A. Emmons & S. Frank (Eds.), *Studying persons and lives* (pp. 201-247). New York, NY: Springer.
- Elder, G. H. Jr., & Johnson, M. K. (2003). The life course and aging: Challenges, lessons, and new directions. In R. A. J. Settersten (Ed.), *Invitation to the life course: Toward new understanding of later life* (pp. 49-81). Amityville, NY: Baywood.
- Elder, G. H. Jr., Rudkin, L., & Conger, R. D. (1995). Intergenerational continuity and change in rural America. In V. L. Bengtson, K. W. Schaie & L. M. Burton (Eds.), *Adult intergenerational relations: Effects of societal change* (pp. 30-60). New York, NY: Springer.
- Endacott, G. B. (1973). *A history of Hong Kong* (2nd ed.). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Fagan-Pryor, E. C., & Haber, L. C. (1992). Codependency: Another name for Bowen's undifferentiated self. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 28(4), 24-28.
- Farber, B. (1975). Bilateral kinship: Centripetal and centrifugal types of organization. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 37(November), 871-879.
- Faulkner, A., & Thomas, P. (2002). User-led research and evidence-based medicine. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 180, 1-3.
- Ferree, M. M. (1990). Beyond separate spheres: Feminism and family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 866-884.
- Ferring, D., Michels, T., & Boll, T. (2009). Emotional relationship quality of adult children with aging parents: on solidarity, conflict and ambivalence. *European Journal of Aging*, 6, 253-265.
- Finch, J., & Mason, J. (1993). *Negotiating family responsibilities*. London, England: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Fingerman, K. L. (1998). Tight lips: Aging mothers' and their adult daughters' responses to interpersonal tensions in their relationship. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 121-138.
- Fingerman, K. L. (2001). *Aging mothers and their adult daughters: A study in mixed emotions*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Fingerman, K. L., Chen, P. C., Hay, E., Cichy, K. E., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2006). Ambivalent reactions in the parent and offspring relationship. *Journal of Gerontology: PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES*, 61B(3), 152-160.
- Fingerman, K. L., & Hay, E. L. (2004). Intergenerational ambivalence in the context of the larger social network. In K. Pillemer & K. Luescher (Eds.), *Intergenerational ambivalence: New perspectives on parent-child relations in later life* (pp. 133-150). New York, NY: Elsevier.
- Fingerman, K. L., Pitzer, L., Lefkowitz, E. S., Birditt, K. S., & Mroczek, D. (2008). Ambivalent relationship qualities between adults and their parents: Implications

- for the well-being of both parties. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 63B, 362-371.
- Finlay, L. (2012). Five lenses for the reflexive interviewer. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holsterin, A. B. Marvasti & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (2nd ed., pp. 317-333). London, England: Sage.
- Frankel, B. G., & Dewit, D. J. (1989). Geographic distance and intergenerational contact: An empirical examination of the relationship. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 3, 139-162.
- Freedman, M. (1966). *Chinese lineage and society: Fukien and Kwangtun*. London, England: Athlone Press.
- Gale, J. E. (1993). A field guide to qualitative inquiry and its clinical relevance. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 15, 73-91.
- Garbarino, J., Gaa, J. P., Swank, P., McPherson, R., & Gratch, L. V. (1995). Evaluation of an intergenerational theory of personal development: Family process determinants of psychological and health distress. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 5, 204-236.
- Gates, K., Church, K., & Crowe, C. (2001). Fidelity and ethical ideals. In A. L. Cole & J. Knowls (Eds.), *Lives in context: The art of life history research* (pp. 152-163). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gehart, D., Ratliff, D. A., & Lyle, R. R. (2001). Qualitative research in family therapy: A substantive and methodological review. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(2), 261-274.
- Gehart, D., Tarragona, M., & Bava, S. (2007). A collaborative approach to research and inquiry. In H. Anderson & D. Gehart (Eds.), *Collaborative therapy: Relationships and conversations that make a difference* (pp. 367-387). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The saturated self*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gergen, K. J. (1994). *Realities and relationships: Soundings in social constructionism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Giarrusso, R., Silverstein, M., Gans, D., & Bengtson, V. L. (2005). Aging parents and adult children: New perspectives on intergenerational relationships. In M. L. Johnson, V. L. Bengtson, P. G. Coleman & T. B. L. Kirkwood (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of age and aging* (pp. 413-421). London, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researcher: An introduction*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Global Property Guide. (2013). *World's most expensive cities*. Retrieved October 14th, 2013, from <http://www.globalpropertyguide.com/most-expensive-cities>
- Goodson, I. F. (1995). The story so far: Personal knowledge and the political. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 89-98). London, England: Falmer Press.

- Government of the Hong Kong SAR. (2009). *2008 economic background and 2009 prospects*. Retrieved October 14th, 2013, from http://www.hkeconomy.gov.hk/en/pdf/er_08q4.pdf
- Government Secretariat Hong Kong Government. (1981). *The Hong Kong Education System*. Retrieved February 20th, 2011, from http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/about-edb/publications-stat/major-reports/edsys_e.pdf
- Gray, I. (2004). Working with a couple after violence: Reflections on a differentiation-based approach. *ANZJFT*, 25(4), 206-211.
- Grolnick, W. S. (2003). *The psychology of parental control: How well-meant parenting backfires*. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotional regulation: An integrative review. *Annual Review of General Psychology*, 2, 271-299.
- Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotional regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(2), 348-362.
- Grumet, M. R. (1991). The politics of personal knowledge. In C. Witherell & N. Noddings (Eds.), *Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education* (pp. 67-77). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Guba, E. G. (Ed.). (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guo, M. (2011). *Intergenerational relations between Chinese rural elders and their adult children: A multifaceted perspective*. (Doctoral dissertation), University of Southern California, California.
- Haene, L. D. (2010). Beyond division: Convergences between postmodern qualitative research and family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 36(1), 1-12.
- Hagestad, G. O. (1987). Parent-child relations in later life: Trends and gaps in past research. In J. B. Lancaster, J. Altmann, A. S. Rossi & L. R. Sherrod (Eds.), *Parenting across the lifespan* (pp. 405-433). New York, NY: De Gruyter.
- Halpern, J. (1994). The sandwich generation: Conflicts between adult children and their aging parents. In D. D. Cahn (Ed.), *Conflicts in personal relationships* (pp. 143-160). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hamlyn, D. W. (1995). Epistemology, history of. In T. Honderich (Ed.), *The Oxford companion to philosophy* (pp. 793-794). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Hammarstrom, G. (2005). The construct of intergenerational solidarity in a lineage perspective: A discussion on underlying theoretical assumptions. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 19(1), 33-51.
- Harvey, D. M., & Bray, J. H. (1991). Evaluation of an intergenerational theory of personal development: Family process determinants of psychological and health distress. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 4(3), 298-325.
- Hatch, J. A., & Wisniewski, R. (1995). Life history and narrative: Questions, issues, and exemplary works. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 113-135). London, England: Falmer Press.

- Hay, E. L., Fingerman, K. L., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2007). The experience of worry in parent-adult child relationships. *Personal Relationships, 14*, 605-622.
- Heiden Rootes, K. M., Jankowski, P. J., & Sandage, S. J. (2010). Bowen family systems theory and spirituality: Exploring the relationship between triangulation and religious questing. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 32*(2), 89-101.
- Henwood, K. (2006). Grounded theory. In M. Slade & S. Priebe (Eds.), *Choosing methods in mental health research* (pp. 69-84). London, England: Routledge.
- Hill, E. W. (2009). Confronting anxiety in couple and family therapy supervision: A developmental supervisory model based on attachment theory. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 30*, 1-14.
- Hillcoat-Nalletamby, S. (2010). Exploring intergenerational relations in a multi-cultural context: The example of filial responsibility in Mauritius. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 25*, 71-86.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1994). Filial piety, authoritarian moralism, and cognitive conservatism in Chinese societies. *Genetic, Social and General Psychology Monographs, 120*, 349-365.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1996). Filial piety and its psychological consequences. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The handbook of Chinese psychology* (pp. 155-165). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1997). Filial piety and filicide in Chinese family relationships: The legend of Shun and other stories. In U. P. Gielen & A. L. Comunian (Eds.), *Family and family therapy in intergenerational perspective* (Vol.1, pp. 134-149). Milan, Italy: Marinelli Editrice.
- Ho, D. Y. F., Hong, Y. Y., & Chiu, C. Y. (Eds.). (1990). *Filial piety and family-matrimonial traditionalism*. Taipei, Taiwan: Chinese Culture University.
- Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1984). Hofstede's culture dimensions. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 15*, 417-433.
- Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department. (2011). *Hong Kong 2011 Population Census - Summary Results. 2013*, Retrieved September 2nd, 2012, from http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hong_kong_statistics/statistics_by_subject/index.jsp?subjectID=1&charsetID=1&displayMode=T
- Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department. (2012a). *Demographic Trend in Hong Kong 1981-2011*. Retrieved October 14th, 2013, from <http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B1120017032012XXXXB0100.pdf>
- Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department. (2012b). *Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics. April*. Retrieved October 10th, 2013, from http://www.census2011.gov.hk/pdf/Feature_articles/Trends_Pop_DH.pdf
- Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department. (2013). *Statistics by subject: National Income*. Retrieved September 26th, 2013, from <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp250.jsp?tableID=030&ID=0&productType=8>
- Hong Kong Government. (1991). *White paper on social welfare into the 1990s and Beyond*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.
- Hong Kong Government. (1995). *Estimate of gross domestic product 1961 to 1994*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

- Hong Kong Government. (2007). *The 2007–08 Policy address: A new direction for Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.
- Hong Kong Heritage Museum. (2013). *Memories of home: 50 years of public housing in Kong Kong*. Retrieved October 1st, 2013, from http://www.heritagemuseum.gov.hk/downloads/materials/Public_Housing-e.pdf
- Hong Kong Monetary Authority. (2001). The property market and the macro-economy. *Hong Kong Monetary Authority Quarterly Bulletin* (May).
- Hong Kong SAR Government. (2013). *Hong Kong: The facts*. Retrieved October 2nd, 2013, from http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/financial_services.pdf
- Hsiung, P. C. (2004). Sons and mothers: Demographic realities and the Chinese culture of Hsiao. In C. Farris, A. Lee & M. Rubinstein (Eds.), *Women in the new Taiwan: Gender roles and gender consciousness in a changing society* (pp. 14-40). New York, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Hsu, F. L. K. (1963). *Clan, caste and club: A comparative study of Chinese, Hindu, and American ways of life*. New York, NY: van Nostrand.
- Hsu, F. L. K. (1971). Filial piety in Japan and China: Borrowing, variation and significance. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 2, 67-74.
- Hsu, F. L. K. (1972). *Americans and Chinese: Reflections on two cultures and their people*. New York, NY: American Museum of Science Book.
- Huang, W. J. (2005). An Asian perspective on relationship and marriage education. *Family Process*, 44(2), 161-173.
- Huntsley, J. (1993). Research and family therapy: Exploring some hidden assumptions. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 12(1), 63-70.
- Hwang, K. K. (1999). Filial piety and loyalty: Two types of social identification in Confucianism. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2(1), 163-183.
- Ikkink, K. K., Tilburg, T. V., & Knipscheer, K. C. P. M. (1999). Perceived instrumental support exchanges in relationships between elderly parents and their adult children: Normative and structural explanations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 831-844.
- Ingersoll-Dayton, B., Dunkle, R. E., Chadiha, L., Lawrence-Jacobson, A., Li, L., Weir, E., & Satorius, J. (2011). Intergenerational ambivalence: Aging mothers whose adult daughters are mentally ill. *Family Sociology*, 92(1), 114-119.
- Jao, Y. C. (1994). The development of Hong Kong's financial sector 1967-92. In B. K. P. Leung & T. Y. C. Wong (Eds.), *25 years of social and economic development in Hong Kong* (pp. 560-601). Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.
- Jaycox, L. H., & Repetti, R. L. (1993). Conflict in families and the psychological adjustment of preadolescent children. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7, 344-355.
- Jiang, J. X., Xia, X. L., Greiner, T., Lian, G. L., & Rosenqvist, U. (2005). A two-year family-based behavior treatment for obese children. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 90, 1235-1238.
- Johnson, G. E. (1994). Hong Kong, from colony to territory: Economic and social implications of globalization. In B. K. P. Leung & T. Y. C. Wong (Eds.), *25 years of social and economic development in Hong Kong* (pp. 660-688). Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.

- Johnson, K. (1983). *Women, the family and peasant revolution in China*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Juang, L. P., Lerner, J., von Eye, A., & McKinney, J. (1999). The goodness of fit of autonomy expectations between Asian American late adolescents and their parents. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 23*(4), 1023-1048.
- Juang, L. P., Syed, M., & Takagi, M. (2007). Intergenerational discrepancies of parental control among Chinese American families: Links to family conflict and adolescent depressive symptoms. *Journal of Adolescence, 30*, 965-975.
- Kachadourian, L. K., Fincham, F., & Davila, J. (2004). The tendency to forgive in dating and married couples: The role of attachment and relationship satisfaction. *Personal Relationships, 11*, 373-393.
- Kagitcibasi, C. (1996). *Family and human development across cultures*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kam, P. K. (2000). Political disempowerment among older people in Hong Kong. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 15*, 307-329.
- Karl, R. E. (2010). *Mao Zedong and China in the twentieth-century world: A concise history*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Karpel, M. (1976). Individuation: From fusion to dialogue. *Family Process, 15*(1), 65-82.
- Katz, R. (2009). Intergenerational family relations and subjective well-being in old age: A cross-national study. *European Journal of Aging, 6*, 79-90.
- Katz, R., Lowenstein, A., Phillips, J., & Daatland, S. O. (2005). Theorizing intergenerational family relations: Solidarity, conflict, and ambivalence in cross-national contexts. In V. L. Bengtson, A. C. Acock, K. R. Allen, P. Dilworth-Anderson & D. M. Klein (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theory and research* (pp. 393-407). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kelle, U. (1997). Theory building in qualitative research and computer programs for the management of textual data. *Sociological Research Online, 2*(2).
- Kelly, J. B. (2000). Children's adjustment in conflicted marriage and divorce: A decade review of research. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 39*(8), 963-973.
- Kernberg, O. F., Selzer, M. A., Koenigsberg, H. W., Carr, A. C., & Appelbaum, A. H. (1989). *Psychodynamic psychotherapy for borderline patients*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Kerr, M. (1984). Theoretical base for differentiation of self in one's family of origin. *The Clinical Supervisor, 2*(2), 3-36.
- Kerr, M., & Bowen, M. (1988). *Family evaluation: An approach based on Bowen theory*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Kerr, M., & Bowen, M. (1978). *Family evaluation*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Kiecolt, K. J., Blieszner, R., & Savla, J. (2011). Long-term influence of intergenerational ambivalence on midlife parents' psychological well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 73*, 369-382.
- Kilbourn, B. (1998). *For the love of teaching*. London, Canada: Althouse Press.
- Kim, U. (1997). Asian collectivism: An indigenous perspective. In H. S. R. Kao & D. Sinha (Eds.), *Asian perspectives on psychology* (pp. 236-262). New Delhi, India: Sage.

- King, A. Y. C., & Bond, M. H. (1985). The Confucian paradigm of man: A sociological view. In W. S. Tseng & D. Y. Wu (Eds.), *Chinese culture and mental health* (pp. 29-45). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Klever, P. (2003). Intergenerational fusion and nuclear family functioning. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 25(4), 431-451.
- Klugman, J. (1977). Owning and disowning: The structural dimension. *Family Process*, 16(3), 353-355.
- Kobak, R. R., Cole, H. E., Ferenz-Gillies, R., Fleming, W. S., & Gamble, W. (1993). Attachment and emotion regulation during mother-teen problem solving: A control theory analysis. *Child Development*, 64, 231-245.
- Kowal, A. K., Krull, J. L., & Kramer, L. (2004). How the differential treatment of siblings is linked with parent-child relationship quality. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 18(4), 658-665.
- Kowal, A., & Kramer, L. (1997). Children's perceptions of parental differential treatment. *Child Development*, 68, 113-126.
- Krause, A. M., & Haverkamp, B. E. (1996). Attachment in adult child-older parent relationships: Research, theory, and practice. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 83-93.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kwan, Kwong-Liem Karl. (2000a). Counseling Chinese people: Perspectives of filial piety. *Asian Journal of Counselling*, 7(1), 23-41.
- Kwan, Kwong-Liem Karl. (2000b). The internal-external ethnic identity measure: Factor analytic structures among Chinese American immigrants. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 60(1), 142-152.
- Kwok, H. K. (2006). The son also acts as major caregiver to elderly parents. *Current Sociology*, 54, 257-272.
- Labouvie-Vief, G., Hakim-Larson, J., & Hobart, C. J. (1987). Age, ego level, and the life-span development of coping and defense processes. *Psychology and Aging*, 2, 286-294.
- Labouvie-Vief, G. (1994). *Psyche & eros: Mind and gender in the life course*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Labouvie-Vief, G. (2003). Dynamic integration: Affect, cognition, and the self in adulthood. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12, 201-205.
- Lam, C. M. (1997). A cultural perspective on the study of Chinese adolescent development. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 14(2), 95-113.
- Lan, P. C. (2002). Elder care in ethnic Chinese immigrant families in California. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(7), 812-835.
- Lang, F. R. (2004). The filial task in midlife: Ambivalence and the quality of adult children's relationships with their older parents. In K. Pillemer & K. Luescher (Eds.), *Intergenerational ambivalence: New perspectives on parent-child relations in later life* (pp. 183-206). Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Lau, S. K. (1981). Chinese familism in an urban-industrial setting: The case of Hong Kong. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 43, 977-992.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Hoffmann-Davis, J. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Lawrence, R. H., Bennett, J. M., & Markides, K. S. (1992). Perceived intergenerational solidarity and psychological distress among older Mexican-Americans. *Journal of Gerontology*, 47(2), S55-S65.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Lee, E. (1997). Chinese American families. In E. Lee (Ed.), *Working with Asian Americans: A guide for clinicians* (pp. 46-78). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Lee, G. R., Netzer, J. K., & Coward, R. (1994). Filial responsibility expectations and patterns of intergenerational assistance. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 559-565.
- Lemke, J. L. (1995). *Textual politics: Discourse and social dynamics*. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Leung, B. K. P. (1996). *Perspectives on Hong Kong society*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Leung, F., Chow, K., & Hang, G. (2008). Clustering analysis of property market indicators in Hong Kong. *Hong Kong Monetary Authority Quarterly Bulletin* (December).
- Levin, S. B. (2007). Hearing the unheard: Advice to professionals from women who have been battered. In H. Anderson & D. Gehart (Eds.), *Collaborative therapy: Relationships and conversations that make a difference* (pp. 109-127). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lin, H. Y. (1990). Confucian theory of human development. In R. M. Thomas (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of human development and education theory, research, and studies* (pp. 149-152). New York, NY: Pergamon Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. New York, NY: Sage.
- Liu, C. D. (1998). *Women's medical sociology (in Chinese)*. Taipei, Taiwan: Feminist Bookstore.
- Lorenz-Meyer, D. (2001). *The politics of ambivalence: Towards a conceptualization of structural ambivalence in intergenerational relations*. Gender Institute New Working Paper Series, 2.
- Lorenz-Meyer, D. (2004). The ambivalences of parental care among young German adults. In K. Pillemer & K. Luescher (Eds.), *Intergenerational ambivalence: New perspectives on parent-child relations in later life* (pp. 225-252). Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Lou, W. V., & Chi, I. (2008). Measuring grandparenthood stress and reward: Developing a scale based on perceptions by grandparents with adolescent grandchildren in Hong Kong. *Geriatrics & Gerontology International*, 8, 291-299.
- Luescher, K. (2002). Intergenerational ambivalence: Further steps in theory and research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 585-593.
- Luescher, K. (2004). Conceptualizing and uncovering intergenerational ambivalence. *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research*, 4, 23-62.
- Luescher, K. (2011). Ambivalence: A "sensitizing construct" for the study and practice of intergenerational relationships. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* (9), 191-206.

- Luescher, K. (2012a). Ambivalence and practice as emerging topics of contemporary contemporary family studies. In E. Scabini & G. Rossi (Eds.), *Family transitions and families in transition* (pp. 93-108). Milano: Vita e Pensiero.
- Luescher, K., & Hoff, A. (2013). Intergenerational ambivalence: Beyond solidarity and conflicts. In I. Albert & D. Ferring (Eds.), *Intergenerational relations: European perspectives on family and society* (pp. 39-63). Bristol, England: Policy Press.
- Luescher, K., & Lettke, F. (2000). *Dealing with ambivalence: Toward a new perspective for the study of intergenerational relations among adults*. Retrived September 25th, 2010, from <http://kops.ub.uni-konstanz.de/bitstream/handle/urn:nbn:de:bsz:352-opus-7929/AP36.pdf?sequence=1>
- Luescher, K., & Pillemer, K. (1998). Intergenerational ambivalence: A new research to the study of parent-child relations in later life. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 413-425.
- Lui, T. L. (2005). The psychology of the middle class. In S. K. Lau, M. K. W. Lee, P. S. & S. L. Wong (Eds.), *Indicators of social development: Hong Kong 2004* (pp. 179-200). Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Lye, D. N. (1996). Adult child-parent relationships. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 79-102.
- Lynott, P. P., & Roberts, R. E. L. (1997). The developmental stake hypothesis and changing perceptions of intergenerational relations, 1971-1985. *The Gerontologist*, 37(3), 394-405.
- Ma, J. L. C. (1991). Meeting the changing roles of women: A call for a new policy strategy in Hong Kong. *Social Development Issues*, 13, 126-137.
- Maccoby, E. (1990). Gender and relationships: A developmental account. *American Psychologist*, 45(4), 513-520.
- Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. In I. Bretherton & E. Waters (Eds.), *Growing points of attachment theory and research* (pp. 66-104). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mancini, J. A. , & Blieszner, R. (1989). Aging parents and adult children: Research themes in intergenerational relations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51(May), 275-290.
- Marek, J. C. (1990). Buddhist theory of human development. In R. M. Thomas (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of human development and education theory, research, and studies* (pp. 144-149). New York, NY: Pergamon Press.
- Markides, K. S., & Krause, N. (1985). Intergenerational solidarity and psychological well-being among older Mexican Americans: A three-generation study. *Journal of Gerontology*, 40, 506-511.
- Marshall, V. W., Matthews, S. H., & Rosenthal, C. J. (1993). Elusiveness of family life: A challenge for the sociology of aging. In G. L. Maddox & M. P. Lawton (Eds.), *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics*, (p. 39). New York, NY: Springer.
- Martinson, I. M., Leavitt, M., Liu, C. Y., Armstrong, V., Hornberger, L., Zhang, J. Q., & Han, X. P. (1999). Comparision of Chinese and Caucasian family's caregiving to children with cancer at home: Part I. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 14, 99-109.

- Marzano, M. (2012). Informed consent. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holsterin, A. B. Marvasti & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 443-456). London, England: Sage.
- Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Matheson, J. L. (2005). Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software. In D. H. Sprenkle & F. P. Piercy (Eds.), *Research methods in family therapy* (2nd ed., pp. 119-135). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Maunder, M. F., & Szczepanik, E. F. (1958). *Hong Kong housing survey, 1957*. Hong Kong: Special Committee on Housing.
- Maynard, M. (1994). Methods, practice and epistemology: The debate about feminism and research. In M. Maynard & J. Purvis (Eds.), *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective* (pp. 10-26). London, England: Taylor & Francis.
- McHale, S. M., Updegraff, K. A., Jackson-Newsom, J., Tucker, C. J., & Crouter, A. C. (2000). When does parents' differential treatment have negative implications for siblings? *Social Development, 9*, 149-172.
- Merton, R. K., & Barber, E. (1963). Sociological ambivalence. In E. Tiryakian (Ed.), *Sociological theory: Values and sociocultural change* (pp. 91-120). New York, NY: Free Press.
- Merz, E. M., Schuengel, C., & Schulze, H. J. (2007). Intergenerational solidarity: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Aging Studies, 21*, 175-186.
- Moen, P., & Wethington, E. (1999). Midlife development in a life course context. In S. L. Willis & J. D. Reid (Eds.), *Life in the middle* (pp. 3-23). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Molm, L. D., & Cook, K. S. (1995). Social exchange and exchange networks. In K. S. Cook, G. A. Fine & J. S. House (Eds.), *Sociological perspectives on social psychology* (pp. 209-235). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Montemayor, R. (1983). Parents and adolescents in conflict: All families some of the time and some families most of the time. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 3*, 83-103.
- Moon, S. M., Dillon, D. R., & Sprenkle, D. H. (1990). Family therapy and qualitative research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 16*(4), 357-373.
- Morgan, D. H. J. (1985). *The family, politics, and social theory*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mu, R., & Zhang, X. (2011). Why does the Great Chinese Famine affect the male and female survivors differently? Mortality selection versus son preference. *Economics and Human Biology, 9*, 92-105.
- Nauck, B. (2012). *Cross-cultural variations in intergenerational ambivalence. Affection and conflict in the relationship of women with their parents in sixteen areas in Asia, Africa, Europe and America*. Paper presented at the Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations, University of Konstanz, Germany.
- Nelson Goff, B. S., Reisbig, A. M. J., Bole, A., Scheer, T., Hayes, E., Archuleta, K. L., Smith, D. B. (2006). The effect of trauma on intimate relationships: A qualitative study with clinical couples. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 76*(4), 451-460.

- Newby-Clark, I. R., McGregor, I., & Zanna, M. P. (2002). Thinking and caring about cognitive inconsistency: When and for whom does attitudinal ambivalence feel uncomfortable? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *82*, 157-166.
- Ng, A. C. Y., Phillips, D., & Lee, W. K. M. (2002). Persistence and challenges to filial piety and informal support of older persons in a modern Chinese society: A case study in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong. *Journal of Aging Studies*, *16*, 135-153.
- Ng, C. H. (1994). Power, identity, and economic change - 25 years of family studies in Hong Kong. In B. K. P. Leung & T. Y. C. Wong (Eds.), *25 years of social and economic development in Hong Kong* (pp. 94-110). Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.
- Ng, S. H. (1998). Social psychology in an ageing world: Ageism and intergenerational relations. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *1*, 99-116.
- Nichols, M. P., & Schwartz, R. C. (2008). *Family therapy: Concepts and methods* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doing feminist research* (pp. 30-61). London, England: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Papadatou, D., Papazoglou, I., Petraki, D., & Bellali, T. (1999). Mutual support among nurses who provide care to dying children. *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, *7*(1), 37-48.
- Papero, D. V. (1990). *Bowen family systems theory*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Parker, R. (1995). *Mother love/mother hate: The power of maternal ambivalence*. London, England: Basic Books.
- Pearson, V., & Leung, B. K. P. (1995). Introduction: Perspectives on women's issues in Hong Kong. In V. Pearson & B. K. P. Leung (Eds.), *Women in Hong Kong* (pp. 22-46). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Peng, R., & Wheaton, W. C. (1994). Effects of restrictive land supply on housing in Hong Kong: An econometric analysis. *Journal of Housing Research*, *5*(2), 262-291.
- Personal Narratives Group. (1989). *Interpreting women's lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Phillips, D., & Yeh, A. G. O. (Eds.). (1999). *Environment and aging: Environmental policy, planning and design for elderly people in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Center of Urban Planning and Environmental Management.
- Pillay, M. (2009). Researchers engaging their privilege: Epistemological and methodological de-liberations. In R. Dhunpath & M. Samuel (Eds.), *Life history research: Epistemology, methodology and representation* (pp. 39-66). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.
- Pillemer, K. (2004). Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em: Older mothers' ambivalence toward their adult children. In K. Pillemer & K. Luescher (Eds.), *Intergenerational ambivalence: New perspectives on parent-child relations in later life* (pp. 135-151). New York, NY: Elsevier.
- Pillemer, K., Munsch, C. L., Fuller-Rowell, T., Riffin, C., & Sutor, J. J. (2012). Ambivalence toward adult children: Differences between mothers and fathers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *74*(October), 1-13.

- Pillemer, K., & Suitor, J. J. (1992). Violence and violent feelings: What causes them among family caregivers? *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 47(4), S165-S172.
- Pillemer, K., & Suitor, J. J. (2002). Explaining mother's ambivalence toward their adult children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 602-613.
- Pillemer, K., Suitor, J. J., Mock, S. E., Sabir, M., Pardo, T., & Sechrist, J. (2007). Capturing the complexity of intergenerational relations: Exploring ambivalence within later-life families. *Journal of Social Issues*, 63, 775-791.
- Plakans, A. (2004). Intergenerational ambivalence in the past: A social-historical assessment. In K. Pillemer & K. Luescher (Eds.), *Intergenerational ambivalence: New perspective on parent-child relations in later life* (pp. 63-82). Oxford, England: Elsevier.
- Plummer, K. (1993). *Document of life: An introduction to the problems and literature of a humanistic method*. London, England: Allen & Unwin.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Pruchno, R. A., Peters, N. D., Kleban, M. H., & Burant, C. J. (1994). Attachment among adult children and their institutionalized parents. *Journal of Gerontology*, 49, S209-S218.
- Pyke, K., & Bengtson, V. L. (1996). Caring more or less: Individualistic and collectivist systems of family elder care. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58(2), 379-392.
- Rabushka, A. (1979). *Hong Kong: A study in economic freedom*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Radelet, S., & Sachs, J. (2000). The onset of the East Asian financial crisis. *Currency Crises*(January), 105-162.
- Raiten, H. L. (1989). *Culture change, filial piety and life satisfaction among the elderly Chinese in Hong Kong*. Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr University.
- Repetti, R., Flook, L., & Sperling, J. (2011). Family influences on development across the life span. In K. L. Fingerman, C. A. Berg, J. Smith & T. C. Antonucci (Eds.), *Handbook of life-span development* (pp. 745-766). New York, NY: Springer.
- Repetti, R. L., Taylor, S. E., & Seeman, T. E. (2002). Risky families: Family social environments and the mental and physical health of offspring. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128(2), 330-366.
- Rich, A. (1986). Notes towards a politics of location. In A. Rich (Ed.), *Blood, bread, and poetry* (pp. 210-231). London, England: Virago Press.
- Riedel, J. (1973). *The Hong Kong model of industrialization*. Kiel, Germany: Kiel Institute of World.
- Ritchie, J., Spencer, L., & O'Connor, W. (2003). Carrying out qualitative analysis. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 219-262). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Roberts, R. E. L., & Bengtson, V. L. (1990). Is intergenerational solidarity a unidimensional construct? A second test of a formal model. *Journal of Gerontology*, 45(1), 12-20.
- Roberts, R. E. L., Richards, L. N., & Bengtson, V. L. (1991). Intergenerational solidarity in families: Untangling the ties that bind In S. K. Pfeifer & M. B. Sussman (Eds.),

- Families: Intergenerational and generational connections, Part One* (Vol. 16, pp. 11-46). Binghamton, NY: Haworth.
- Rohner, R. P. (1975). *They love me, they love me not: A worldwide study of the effects of parental acceptance and rejection*. New Haven, CT: Hraf Press.
- Rohner, R. P., & Pettengill, S. M. (1985). Perceived parental acceptance-rejection and parental control among Korean adolescents. *Child Development, 56*, 524-528.
- Rondini, A. (2010). *Managing ambivalence: Identity, low-income first generation college students and their parents*. Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Hilton Atlanta, Atlanta, GA. Retrieved January 16th, 2012, from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p409690_index.html
- Rosen, S. (1976). *Mei Foo Sun Chuen: Middle class Chinese families in transition*. Taipei, Taiwan: The Orient Cultural Service.
- Rosenwald, G. C. (1992). Reflections on narrative self-understanding. In G. C. Rosenwald & R. L. Ochberg (Eds.), *Storied lives: The cultural politics of self-understanding* (pp. 265-289). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rosenwald, G. C., & Ochberg, R. L. (1992). Introduction: Life stories, cultural politics, and self-understanding. In G. C. Rosenwald & R. L. Ochberg (Eds.), *Storied lives: The cultural politics of self-understanding* (pp. 1-19). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rossi, A. S., & Rossi, P. H. (1990). *Of human bonding: Parent-child relations across the life course*. New York, NY: Adline de Gruyter.
- Rossi, A. S., & Rossi, P. H. (1991). Normative obligations and parent-child help exchange across the life course. In K. Pillemer & K. McCartney (Eds.), *Parent-child relations throughout life* (pp. 201-223). New York, NY: Hillsdale.
- Rothbaum, F., Pott, M., Azuma, H., Miyake, K., & Weisz, J. (2000). The development of close relationships in Japan and the United States: Paths of symbiotic harmony and generative tension. *Child Development, 71*(5), 1121-1142.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, L. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Russell, A. (2007). *The top 10 of everything 2007*. London, England: Hamlyn.
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods, 15*, 85-109.
- Ryff, C. D., Lee, Y. H., Essex, M. J., & Schmutte, P. S. (1994). My children and me: Midlife evaluations of grown children and of self. *Psychology and Ageing, 8*, 195-205.
- Salaff, J. W. (1995). *Working daughters of Hong Kong: Filial piety or power in the family?* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Sam, L., & Virta, D. (2003). Intergenerational value discrepancies in immigrant and host-national families and their impact on psychological adaptation. *Journal of Adolescence, 26*(2), 213-231.
- Scabini, E., & Marta, E. (2006). Changing intergenerational relationship. *European Review, 14*(1), 81-98.
- Schenk, N., & Dykstra, P. A. (2012). Continuity and change in intergenerational family relationships: An examination of shifts in relationship type over a three-year period. *Advances in Life Course Research, 17*(2012), 121-132.

- Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 118-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schwartzman, J. (1984). Family theory and the scientific method. *Family Process*, 23, 223-236.
- Scott, I. (1989). *Political change and the crisis of legitimacy in Hong Kong*. London, England: Oxford University Press.
- Seale, C., & Rivas, C. (2012). Using software to analyze qualitative interviews. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holsterin, A. B. Marvasti & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (2nd ed.) (pp. 427-442). London, England: Sage.
- Sechrist, J. C. (2008). *Affection across generations: A within-family test of the intergenerational solidarity mode* (Doctoral dissertation), Purdue University, Indiana.
- Shae, W. C., & Wong, P. W. (2009). Familial ideology and family policy in Hong Kong. In K. B. Chan, A. S. Ku & Y. W. Chu (Eds.), *Doing families in Hong Kong* (pp. 159-185). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Shanas, E. (1979). Social myth as hypothesis: The case of family relations of old people. *The Gerontologist*, 19(1), 3-9.
- Shanas, E., Townsend, P., Wederburn, D., Friis, H., Milhoj, P., & Stehouver, J. (1968). *Old people in three industrial societies*. London, England: Routledge
- Shaver, P. R., & Mikulincer, M. (2004). Attachment in the later years. *Attachment and Human Development*, 6, 451-464.
- Shek, D. T. L., Tang, V. M. Y., & Han, X. Y. (2005). Evaluation of evaluation studies using qualitative research methods in the social work literature (1990-2003): Evidence that constitutes a wake-up call. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 15(3), 180-194.
- Shelton, B. (2011). *The making of Hong Kong: From vertical to volumetric*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Shemmings, D. (2005). Using adult attachment theory to differentiate adult children's internal working models of later life filial relationships. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 20, 177-191.
- Siedman, I. (2006). *Interview as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Silverstein, M., & Bengtson, V. L. (1997). Intergenerational solidarity and the structure of adult child-parent relationships in American families. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(2), 429-460.
- Silverstein, M., Conroy, S. J., Wang, H., Giarrusso, R., & Bengtson, V. L. (2002). Reciprocity in parent-child relations over the adult course. *Journal of Gerontology: SOCIAL SCIENCES*, 57B(1), s3-s13.
- Silverstein, M., Parrott, T. M., & Bengtson, V. L. (1995). Factors that predispose middle-aged sons and daughters to provide social support to older parents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57(465-475).
- Simons, R. L., Whitbeck, L. B., Conger, R. D., & Wu, C. (1991). Intergenerational transmission of harsh parenting. *Developmental Psychology*, 27, 159-171.

- Sincoff, J. B. (1990). The psychological characteristics of ambivalent people. *Clinical Psychology Review, 10*, 43-68.
- Sincoff, J. B. (1992). Ambivalence and defense: Effects of a repressive style on normal adolescents' and young adults' mixed feelings. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 101*, 251-256.
- Siu, A., & Wong, Y. C. R. (2004). Economic impact of SARS: The case of Hong Kong. *Asian Economic Papers, 3*(1), 62-83.
- Skowron, E. A., Holmes, S. E., & Sabatelli, R. M. (2003). Deconstructing differentiation: Self regulation, interdependent relating, and well-being in adulthood. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 25*(1), 111-129.
- Smelser, N. J. (1998). The relational and the ambivalent in the social sciences. *American Sociological Review, 63*, 1-16.
- Soares, I., & Silva, M. C. (1998). Attachment theory and research: A look at the intergenerational issues. In U. P. Gielen & A. L. Comunian (Eds.), *The family and family therapy in international perspective* (pp. 363-385). Trieste, Italy: Lint Publishing.
- Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., & O'Connor, W. (2003). Analysis: Practices, principles and processes. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 119-218). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sprenkle, D. H., & Piercy, F. P. (2005). Pluralism, diversity, and sophistication in family therapy research. In D. H. Sprenkle & F. P. Piercy (Eds.), *Research methods in family therapy* (pp. 3-18). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Stacey, J. (1990). *Brave new families: Stories of domestic upheaval in late twentieth century America*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Starrels, M. E., Ingersoll-Dayton, B., Neal, M. B., & Yamada, H. (1995). Intergenerational solidarity and the workplace: Employees and caregiving for their parents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57*, 751-762.
- Steinbach, A. (2008). Intergenerational solidarity and ambivalence: Types of relationships in German families. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (Winter), 115-127.
- Steinberg, L. (1990). Autonomy, conflict, and harmony in the family relationships. In S. Feldman & G. Elliot (Eds.), *At the threshold: The developing adolescent* (pp. 255-276). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Straus, M. A. (1994). *Beating the devil out of them: Corporal punishment in American families and its effect on children*. Boston, MA: Transaction.
- Straus, M. A., & Mouradian, V. E. (1998). Impulsive corporal punishment by mothers and antisocial behavior and impulsiveness of children. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 16*(353-374).
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strong, T. (2004). Meaningful moments as collaborative accomplishments: Research from within consultative dialogue. In D. A. Pare & G. Lerner (Eds.), *Collaborative practice in psychology and therapy* (pp. 213-228). New York, NY: Haworth Press.

- Suitor, J. J., Gilligan, M., & Pillemer, K. (2011). Conceptualizing and measuring intergenerational ambivalence in later life. *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 66(6), 769-781.
- Suitor, J. J., Pillemer, K., Keeton, S., & Robison, J. (1995). Aged parents and aging children: Determinants of relationship quality. In R. Blieszner & V. H. Bedford (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the family* (pp. 223-242). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Suitor, J. J., Sechrist, J., Gilligan, M., & Pillemer, K. (2011). Intergenerational relations in later-life families. In R. A. Settersten & J. L. Angel (Eds.), *Handbook of sociology of aging* (pp. 161-178). New York, NY: Springer.
- Szydluk, M. (2008). Intergenerational solidarity and conflict. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 39, 97-114.
- Tai, H. C. (1989). The Oriental alternative: A hypothesis on culture and economy. In H. C. Tai (Ed.), *Confucianism and economic development- an Oriental alternative?* (pp. 10-36). Washington, DC: The Washington Institute Press.
- Tang, C. S. K. (2006). Corporal punishment and physical maltreatment against children: A community study on Chinese parents in Hong Kong. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 893-907.
- The World Bank (Producer). (2013). *Fertility rate*. Retrieved January 14th, 2014, from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>
- Thompson, P. (2000). *The voice of the past: Oral history* (2nd ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Thorne, B. (1992). Feminism and the family: Two decades of thought. In B. Thorne & M. Yalom (Eds.), *Rethinking the family* (pp. 3-30). Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Troll, L., & Fingerman, K. L. (1996). Parent-child bonds in adulthood. In C. Malestesta-Magai & S. McFadden (Eds.), *Handbook of emotion, adult development and aging* (pp. 185-205). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Tsai, J. H. C. (1999). Meaning of filial piety in the Chinese parent-child relationship: Implications for culturally competent health care. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 6(1), 26-34.
- Turner, H. A., & Muller, P. A. (2004). Long-term effects of child corporal punishment on depressive symptoms in young adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(6), 761-782.
- van Ecke, Y., Chope, R. C., & Emmelkamp, P. M. (2006). Bowlby and Bowen: Attachment theory and family therapy. *Counseling and Clinical Psychology Journal*, 3(2), 81-108.
- van Gaalen, R. I., Dykstra, P. A., & Komter, A. E. (2010). Where is the exit? Intergenerational ambivalence and relationship quality in high contact ties. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 24, 105-144.
- van Gaalen, R. I., & Dykstra, P. A. (2006). Solidarity and conflict between adult children and parents: A latent class analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 947-960.
- van Harreveld, F., van der Pligt, J., & de Liver, Y. N. (2009). The agony of ambivalence and ways to resolve it: Introducing the MAID Model. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 13(1), 45-61.
- Vaupel, J. W. (2010). Biodemography of human ageing. *Nature*, 464, 536-542.

- von Foerster, H. (1991). Through the eyes of the other. In F. Steier (Ed.), *Research and reflexivity* (pp. 63-75). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wagner, M. (2001). Social differentiation, spousal family and solidarity within marriage. On the sociology of the family of Emile Durkheim. In J. Huinink, K. P. Strohmeier & M. Wagner (Eds.), *Solidarität in Partnerschaft und Familie (Solidarity in partnership and family)* (pp. 19-42). Würzburg, Germany: Ergon.
- Watkins, S. C., Manken, J. A., & Bongaarts, J. (1987). Demographic foundations of family change. *American Sociological Review*, 52, 346-358.
- Weigert, A. J. (1991). *Mixed emotions: Certain steps toward understanding ambivalence*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Williamson, D. S. (1981). Personal authority via termination of the intergenerational hierarchical boundary: A "new" stage in the family life cycle. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 7, 441-452.
- Willson, A. E., Shuey, K. M., & Elder, G. H. (2003). Ambivalence in the relationship of adult children to aging parents and in-laws. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 65, 1055-1072.
- Willson, A. E., Shuey, K. M., Elder, Jr, G. H., & Wickrama, K. A. S. (2006). Ambivalence in mother-adult child relations: A dyadic analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 69(3), 235-252.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. London, England: Sage.
- Wong, F. M. (1972). Modern ideology, industrialization, and conjugalism: The Hong Kong case. *International Journal of the Family* 2(September), 139-150.
- Wong, O. L. (2010). Meaning of food in childhood obesity: An exploratory study in a Chinese family context. *Social Work in Health Care*, 49, 362-377.
- Wong, O. M. H. (2009). Who should care? Perceptions of caregiving responsibility within the household. In K. B. Chan, A. S. Ku & Y. W. Chu (Eds.), *Doing families in Hong Kong* (pp. 17-56). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Wong, S. L. (1988). *Emigrant entrepreneurs*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Wong, T. Y. C. (1994). Hong Kong's manufacturing industries: Transformations and prospects. In B. K. P. Leung & T. Y. C. Wong (Eds.), *25 years of social and economic development in Hong Kong* (pp. 533-559). Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.
- Woronoff, J. (1986). *Hong Kong: Capitalist paradise*. Hong Kong: Heinemann.
- Wu, C. (2007). *Intergenerational cultural distance in parent-adolescent relationship among Chinese immigrants* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of California, California.
- Wu, Y. W. (1995). *Three-generations-stem family: the myth and trap*. Taipei, Taiwan: Jui Liu (in Chinese).
- Xie, G. A. (1996). Family diet and its culture. In S. J. Li (Ed.), *Chinese dietary culture*. Beijing, China: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- Yan, S. W. (2005). *Older mother's expectations of intergenerational relationships: The intergenerational ambivalence perspective* (Master's thesis). Lingnan University, Hong Kong.

- Yang, K. S. (1986). Chinese personality and its change. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The psychology of the Chinese people* (pp. 106-170). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Yang, K. S. (1996). The psychological transformation of the Chinese people as a result of societal modernization. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The handbook of Chinese psychology* (pp. 479-498). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Yang, K. S. (1997). Theories and research in Chinese personality: An indigenous approach. In H. S. R. Kao & D. Sinha (Eds.), *Asian perspectives on psychology* (pp. 236-262). New Delhi, India: Sage.
- Yang, K. S., & Yeh, K. H. (1991). Psychological studies on Chinese filial piety: Concepts, methods, and findings. In H. S. R. Kao & C. F. Yang (Eds.), *Chinese people, Chinese mind: Traditional perspectives* (pp. 193-260). Taipei, Taiwan: Yuan-Liu Publishing Co.
- Yeh, Kuang-Hui. (1999). *Parent-child conflicts and filial piety: A preliminary study in Taiwan*. Paper presented at the Third Conference of the Asian Association for Social Psychology, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Yeh, K. H. (2003). The beneficial and harmful effects of filial piety: An integrative analysis. In K. S. Yang, K. K. Hwang, P. B. Pedersen & I. Daibo (Eds.), *Progress in Asian social psychology* (pp. 67-82). London, England: Praeger.
- Yeh, K. H., & Bedford, Olwen. (2003). A test of the Dual Filial Piety model. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 6, 215-228.
- Yip, P. S. F., Law, C. K., & Law, Y. W. (2003). Suicide in Hong Kong: Epidemiological profile and burden analysis, 1981 to 2001. *Hong Kong Medical Journal*, 9(6), 419-426.
- Yu, S. W. K., & Chau, R. C. M. (1997). The sexual division of care in Mainland China and Hong Kong. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 21(4), 607-619.
- Yu, W. H., & Su, K. H. (2006). Gender, sibship structure, and educational inequality in Taiwan: Son preference revisited. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 1057-1068.
- Yuan, F. (1987). The status and role of the Chinese elderly in families and society. In J. H. Schulz & Davis-Friedmann (Eds.), *Aging China: family, economics, and government policies in transition* (pp. 36-46). Washington, DC: The Gerontological Society of America.
- Yue, X. D., & Ng, S. H. (1999). Filial obligations and expectations in China: Current views from young and old people in Beijing. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2, 215-226.
- Zarit, S. H., & Eggebeen, D. J. (2002). Parent-child relationships in adulthood and later years. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (pp. 135-161). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Zhang, Y., & Tong, S. Y. (2009). *Hong Kong's economy in the financial crisis*. Retrieved October 13th, 2012, from <http://www.eai.nus.edu.sg/BB448.pdf>



APPENDIX 1
Form of consent

參與研究同意書

香港中年人和父母關係的研究

博士研究論文

魏素華

本人_____同意參與由_____開展的上述研究。

本人知悉此研究所得的資料可能被用作日後的研究及發表，但本人的私隱權利將得以保留，即本人的個人資料不會被公開。

研究人員已向本人清楚解釋列在所附資料卡上的研究程序，本人明瞭當中涉及的利益及風險；本人自願參與研究項目。

本人知悉本人有權就程序的任何部分提出疑問，並有權隨時退出。

參與者姓名 _____

參與者簽署 _____

研究人員姓名 _____

研究人員簽署 _____

日期 _____

APPENDIX 2

Demographic Information Form



Department of Applied Social Sciences
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

香港中年人和父母關係的研究
博士研究論文
魏素華

參加者姓名: _____

年齡: _____

教育程度: _____

職業: _____

宗教信仰: _____

婚姻狀況: _____

個人收入: _____

家庭總收入: _____

平均每月供養父母費用:

(1. 婚前) HK\$ _____ 收入的 _____ %

(2. 婚後) HK\$ _____ 收入的 _____ %

(3. 現在) HK\$ _____ 收入的 _____ %

聯絡電話: _____

電郵地址: _____

聯絡地址: _____

核心家庭成員數目: _____

核心家庭成員角色及年齡: _____

原身家庭成員數目: _____

原身家庭成員角色及年齡: _____

父親教育程度: _____

(退休前)職業: _____

母親教育程度: _____

(退休前)職業: _____

家庭圖 Genogram: _____

APPENDIX 3

Guiding Interview Questions

To answer the main research questions, the following specific questions guided the interviews and the analysis process:

1. Do participants experience ambivalence in their relationship with their aged parent(s) ?
If so, how do they describe their ambivalence in their relationship dynamics?
2. Are there any critical stages or issues that contribute to their ambivalence toward their parents?
3. What role does the traditional concept of filial piety play in their relationships with their parents that might result in ambivalence?
4. If they have not experienced any significant ambivalent feelings toward their parents, what are the contributing factors to their seemingly peaceful interactions?
5. How has the ambivalence they experienced or not experienced impacted their relationship dynamics with their parents?
6. How do those who experience ambivalent feelings and thoughts in their relationships with their parents deal with the ambivalence at an intrapersonal level and how do they deal with it at an interpersonal level?
7. Do participants manage their ambivalent feelings differently throughout their life stages? Are the ways and strategies they are using now that are different from when they were younger?
8. Do males and females use different strategies to manage their ambivalence?
9. What are the culturally appropriate ways to manage their ambivalence both intrapersonally and interpersonally.
10. Are there any stages and process of managing ambivalence?

APPENDIX 4

Participants' Ambivalence Status

Name	Gender / Age	Education	Marital Status	Number of Children	Number of Children in FOO	Ambivalence toward Mother		Ambivalence toward Father	
						Yes/No	Resolved? Yes/No	Yes/No	Resolved?
Lai Ying	F/47	Diploma	Married	2	5	No	/	No	/
Priscilla	F/50	F3	Married	1	2	Yes	No	Yes	No
Pai	F/48	University	Married	2	8	Yes	Yes	No	/
Wendy	F/44	University	Married	1	4	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ms. Cheung	F/50	F3	Married	1	5	No	/	Yes	Yes
Seung	F/47	Master's Degree	Divorced	2	6	Yes	Yes	No	/
Forward	F/49	Nursing School	Married	1	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fanny	F/47	F3	Divorced	2	4	Yes	No	Yes	No
Ming	F/48	University	Married	3	4	Yes	No	No	/
Jessica	F/48	Primary	Married	2	6	Yes	No	No	/
Tak Shen	M/50	Master's Degree	Married	3	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Matthew	M/45	University	Married	2	3	Yes	Yes	No	/
Shing	M/47	F3	Widowed	1	7	No	/	No	/
Aon	M/45	University	Married	1	7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tom	M/51	Diploma	Married	1	5	No	/	Yes	No
Mr. Kwok	M/51	Diploma	Married	2	7	Yes	No	Yes	No
Fai	M/40	F5	Married	3	4	No	/	No	/
Charlie	M/49	F7	Married	2	5	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mr. Mak	M/53	Diploma	Married	2	3	No	/	No	/
Chi Wai	M/48	University	Married	2	5	No	/	Yes	Yes

* Among forty parent-child relationship dyads, ambivalence was reported by the participants in 23 dyads. Among the 23 ambivalent relationships, 12 were resolved.