

# 行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫 成果報告

## 加拿大台灣移民太空人家庭中女性之調適過程中的角色及 地方認同之研究 (II) 研究成果報告(精簡版)

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加拿大台灣移民太空人家庭中女性之調適過程中的角色  
及地方認同之研究 (II)  
(Immigrant Taiwanese women in the process of adapting to life in Canada:  
Interaction between women's roles and their sense of place)

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**Background**

In the past twenty years, large numbers of Taiwanese citizens have immigrated to the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, and Latin America.

Reasons for out-migration/emigration of middle-class families: Rapid economic growth in the 1980's, fear of political instability, an increase in personal income, and relaxation of travel restrictions in 1989.

Introduction of economic business migration programs by various countries – “capital-linked migration”. Children's education, lifestyle and cross-Strait tension are most frequently mentioned in surveys.

‘Circulatory movements’ predominate rather than permanent migration, as in earlier migration waves.

*I wo fung* (moving like a swarm of bees, on the bandwagon)

Total number of Taiwan-born: 45,930 (64.1%) and 15,570 (22.0%) in Vancouver and Toronto respectively, as recorded in 2001 Census.

Low sex ratio (more females than males among immigrants from Taiwan to Canada). The largest age groups are 15-24 (more males than females) and 35-54 (more females than males).

Prevalence of transnational families, whereby wives and children live in the countries of immigration, while husbands work in different parts of the world (Chee 2005).

**Review of pertinent literature**

‘Astronaut husbands’: A term first used to refer to immigrants from Hong Kong, who kept their jobs and businesses in Hong Kong while their families lived in Australia and Canada. The development of ‘astronaut households’, where one family member returns to East Asia to maximize their earnings while the rest of the family remain in Canada, has a range of implications that go well beyond a narrowly defined economic strategy. (Ley and Waters 2004)

“Transnationalism’ is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic, and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement...many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton 1994: 6).

Transnational community: Participants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both [places].” (Portes 1997: 812). Chiang coined the term ‘*dan qi ma ma*’ (單棲媽媽) for women’s roles in Australasia. (2004, 2006). It aims to reconstruct and illuminate the roles and experiences of migrant women who have been ‘hidden’ as dependents of male migrants through qualitative studies.

Previous studies on transnational practice have ignored the role that gender plays in different cultural contexts, which should include the home and host societies.

## **Methodology**

Sensitive micro-level field research, with multi-method methodologies in destination (gateway) cities, using census statistics and surveys as background.

Fieldwork is given an ethnographic interpretation with participant observation allowing the researcher to share the ‘emotions, experiences, and significance’ of migration.

Formulating new research emphasis in the field...

Part I: In-depth interviews with 30 women in Toronto and Vancouver in summer 2005 and spring 2006, respectively.

Part II: 3 repeat interviews and 5 first interviews in Toronto; 2 repeat interviews and 20 first interviews in Vancouver in summer 2006. (30 in all)

Total number of Interviews and interviewees: 55 respondents constitute the sample of Part I and Part II studies.

Taiwanese associations in Canada: Dove Intercultural Society. Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society; Greater Vancouver Taiwanese-Canadian Association; Formosa Cultural Foundation; *Tzu-chi* Foundation. Snowball sampling used for these organisations.

## **Research questions**

Part I: Impact of transnationalism on family relations and gender roles.

Thirty women from ‘astronaut’ families were interviewed in Toronto and Vancouver, using a semi-structured questionnaire, ethnographic interviews and participant observation methods. It was found that migration has not only liberated them from traditional familial roles in Taiwan, but has enabled them to build new social networks that play an important role in their new lives.

Part II: Civic participation issues: reasons for volunteering and nature of volunteering work; meaning of women's civic participation for Taiwanese & host society. Relation of volunteer work to self (joys and pains) and sense of belonging to the host society.

### **Profile of respondents**

55 respondents, aged between 40 and 62; arrived between 1969 and 2006, immigrated directly or indirectly from Taiwan. All have been married. Now four divorced, one widowed. 39 (70%) were '*Dan qi ma ma*' at the time of interview or earlier. Most had two to three children. Half were university-educated; two with Master's degree. Most (47, 85%) worked full-time before immigration.

### **Reasons for migration**

#### ***Children's education comes first?***

Flexibility and choice in education offered in Taiwan does not compare to the Canadian system. Various bad experiences in their own high schools. Indifference of teachers towards students. Bad experiences in their high schools:

"My daughter noticed unfair treatment by the teacher and did not dare speak up in class." (Madam Li, Toronto)

"The teacher only paid attention to first rate students. My son was allocated to the lower grade class, and had no hope of entering a university until we moved to Canada." (Madam Peng, Toronto)

Unable to get into an accredited university in Taiwan. Global education available for children in Canada.

#### ***A better environment for children's health?***

There were cases where children often got sick in Taiwan, but became much healthier after immigrating to Canada. "It was purely accidental that we came to Canada. We had never been abroad before, and did not even know where Vancouver was. We just heard from people that the environment was clean and the education system was good here. We had neither friends nor relatives when we first came. We have never been worried about the cross-Strait political tension like many of our friends here were. We just made the decision to come without thinking about it much." (Mr. and Mrs. Yau, Vancouver)

#### ***Other complex reasons***

Deteriorating social and physical environment in Taiwan.

"Chaotic political environment".

To find a turning point in one's career.

To avoid military service in Taiwan.

Family reasons; future retirement.

'God's will', 'destiny' (因緣).

Chain migration generated by children who first came as visa students.

The age of schooling for children in Canada is an important factor for deciding when to move. (Easier to move when children are young; have sufficient Chinese education before immigrating)

### **Commonly not in the labour force**

Jobs are hard to find for various reasons:

Lack of proficiency in English

Inexperience in the Canadian context

Lack of incentive to find work because of one's own economic background

Unwillingness to pay high tax

Unwillingness to accept jobs not commensurate with one's education level.

Some women cannot get 'approval' from husband to work.

Difficult to find childcare.

"...while many were ambivalent about their spouse working, some [Chinese men] believed that because of the feminist movement and the changing economic climate, there had been changes in the tradition of males being the sole providers." (Hibbins 2006: 149)

Like in the case of Southern California (Chee 2005), New Zealand (Ho 2002) and Australasia (Chiang 2004), the consequences of migration are similar in that transnational family life has made it difficult for most of the women to retain their established professional paths, as it would have to go hand-in-hand with their domestic responsibilities, like their previous lives in Taiwan.

"Seven or eight out of ten Taiwan women do not go to work here. It does not pay to work in Canada... About half of what you earn is gone as tax. Income tax in Canada is very high ('加拿大萬萬稅'), and the pay you get is not high enough to pay for childcare. If you do the same amount of work in Taiwan, you retain more after tax deduction, and thus you save more." (Madame Yu, Toronto)

### ***A few exceptions...***

"It's really God's gift for me to have a full-time job in the bank here in Toronto." (Mrs. Peng, Toronto)

“I passed my dentistry examination and stayed in Vancouver; but my husband could not practise as a pediatrician and returned to Taiwan.” (Mrs. Lin, Vancouver)

“I am lucky to have the qualifications necessary to be an accountant here, but my husband cannot find a job.” (Mrs. Yen, Vancouver)

### **Relation with Husband and Children**

“Absence makes the heart feel fonder.”

“My husband had a busy life in Taipei and often travelled to other cities in Asia, and had no time for the family even when I was back in Taiwan. In Toronto, I feel that my relationship with my husband has become closer, and he shows more care towards me when I go back to Taiwan...I now feel close to my son after we immigrated because I had little time for him when I was taking care of our business in Taipei.” (Madam Lin, Toronto)

“My work begins each day at 3:00 p.m. when the kids are out of school”

“I have decided to spend my four years here happily, right from the start.”

“I am much happier here (Vancouver) than in Taiwan, since I don’t need to please my mother-in-law.”

There are sad stories like:

“When the family first came to Canada, the husband visited his household in Canada often. However, the number of visits reduced over the years, and he stopped sending money. Later, the husband got a girlfriend in Taiwan or Mainland China, and wanted a divorce.” (Madam Lin, Toronto)

“It is not fair for the children to stay with one parent at a time” (Madam Huang, Toronto)

“I can no longer leave my child with the home stay, and I decided to stay behind after visiting him, even though I lost some money by taking early retirement.” (Madam Peng, Toronto)

“I think our ESL teacher is used to hearing that some of us need to ask for leaves of absence when our husbands are visiting from Taiwan.”

“When my husband comes back to us in Canada, he wants to make sure that the house is in good shape, and that the children are well taken care of.”

“When I go back home to Taiwan, I feel like an ‘intruder’ in my own family [in Kaohsiung].”

“I feel guilty for not taking care of my husband when he was ill in Taiwan.”

Several women in Vancouver mentioned: “My husband sleeps all the time for the first few days to get over jetlag.”

“I still love him and I have no hatred towards him; but he is no longer sending me money.” (Madam Chiang, divorced, Toronto)

Immigrant women were stoic and persevering in all kinds of situations – learning to drive, acquiring a new language, shovelling snow in winter, volunteering in religious organisations, taking care of young children, taking their children to maths, piano and language classes, and teaching Mandarin on the weekends.

The wives and kids go to see the husbands more often than the husbands go to visit their family in Canada.

The women adapt to the host country well in general.

“My plans cannot catch up with changes.” (計劃趕不上變化)

“I have always told my friends that I have had a good immigration experience.”

“It is better not to immigrate because of the high price one pays.”

“I still don’t know if I have done the right thing...”

“I don’t know where I will live in the future...”

“Canada and Taiwan are both my homes...I feel that I have fallen in love with two men at the same time.”

Circular spouses.

### **Recreation and social activities**

Participation in various women’s associations.

Line dancing, choir, hiking, *mah-jong*.

Visits from other women who reside in Taiwan.

Learning English.

Meeting new friends from Canada and other Asian countries.

### **Volunteering work: Reasons and types**

Building Asian Solidarity: Asian Night Market (多倫多夜市).

Building a good name for the Taiwanese people.

Help raise visibility of Taiwanese: The Taiwanese Cultural Festival, attended by 70,000 people (*Canada Sun*), was awarded “best cultural event” in Canada for the sixth time in 2006.

Cultural preservation: Weekend Chinese Schools; flower arrangement.

Cultural preservation: Oral history project (Greater Vancouver Taiwanese-Canadian Association)

To practise and learn English.

Building self-esteem, to kill time, to meet new friends, for fun, finding meaning in one’s life.

To know more about Canadian society; to gain ‘Canadian experience’. ‘To become a

part of Canadian society’, ‘to give back to the society’.

To help the Canadian Government: fund-raising for schools, meals on wheels program, recycling, providing a ‘food bank’, homeless shelters and sign language ‘clubs’/get-togethers.

To help the Canadian Government: helping new immigrants from different nationalities, election campaigns, working for congressmen.

Helping other Taiwanese immigrants adapt upon arrival.

Helping other (Chinese) immigrants to adapt: “Formosa Evergreen Senior Citizen Centre, boy scouts, Green Club, *Chung-chiao* (中僑, Vancouver).

Religious reasons: preaching Christianity, Formosan Christian fellowship;

‘Home-grown’ organisations: Tzu-chi Foundation (慈濟), Buddhist Light (佛光山), Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山).

Helping immigrant women: Dove Cultural Society, Lifeline 6180 (樂於幫你, Toronto), church.

Professional reasons: Building a bridge between the Taiwan and Canadian Governments.

“Can you tell me what are the important qualities of a volunteer?”

”Have you encountered any difficulties in your volunteering work?”



**Voluntary Work: Joys, Pains and Politics (to be completed...)**

## Discussion and Conclusions

Chinese women were active and they were agents of change...value keepers and transformers [and] did not fit the stereotype of traditional Chinese women. (Djao, 2003; reviewed by L. H. Chiang)

Connection between 'old-timers' and 'new immigrants'.

Asian/Taiwanese Women became 'Culture shapers'.

Through volunteering, they have demonstrated a sense of self and belonging, and a will to be part of the Canadian society.

Most of their civic participation are characterised by social embeddedness among Taiwanese immigrants. Bonding with Canadians took place in more 'westernised' types of volunteering work; 'Outward-looking in' approach. Cosmopolitan experience through volunteering. Apart from not being able to find satisfactory employment, husbands generally cannot cope with all the challenges of settling into a new land as easily as their wives. Some of them did not stay long enough to acquire citizenship. They travel with their 'Maple Cards'.

With regards to their children, some married men felt "increasing status vulnerability" (Hibbins 2006: 151), since they were absent from their families for long periods of time, engaged in transnational business. In the future, there should be more studies of 'astronaut husbands', who are most likely living and working in Taiwan, while their wives and children stay in Canada, and '*dan qi pa pa*' (househusbands). There is also a need to know the needs of the '1.5 generation' and the second generation in the 'astronaut' households. Further studies needed on the role of social organisations on family lives. Return migration or circular mobility?

Comparisons with other diasporic Chinese communities in the last twenty years need to be made.

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From slides of a paper "Transnational Lives of Taiwanese Women in Canada: An Appraisal" presented at 21st Pacific Science Congress, June 13-17, 2007, Okinawa, Japan.

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**Keywords: transnational lives, split household, Taiwanese women, civic participation, Canada**

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commonplace that it is often considered natural. The ‘masculinist’ notion of home has excluded women’s consideration of what an ideal home would be. By conducting interviews of ten middle-class women we found that second homes help release pressure from both outside and inside the home. On the other hand, second homes can also satisfy their images of the ideal/perfect home, and affirm their social status. A deep-seated and seemingly ‘natural’ association is still implicated in second home choice and management to fulfill family needs. The second home is not necessarily a place possessed by women, but just another traditional home. Through this qualitative study, the voices of women, who make an effort to be liberated through their endeavors to reconstruct personal space and to deal with constraints, are heard.

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# 加拿大台灣移民太空人家庭中女性之調適過程中的角色

## 及地方認同之研究

### **Immigrant Taiwanese women in the process of adapting to life in Canada: Interaction between women's roles and their sense of place**

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國外研究心得報告

(Field report)

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My fieldwork took place in Vancouver and Toronto, where Taiwanese immigrants are concentrated. Although Statistics Canada (2003) recorded populations of 45,390 (64.1%) and 15,570 (22.0%) Taiwan-born respectively in the two cities of Vancouver and Toronto, many have returned according to unofficial sources. Altogether fifty-five women were interviewed between 2005 and 2006. A semi-structured questionnaire was designed for carrying out in-depth interviews on various places and occasions, such as in their homes, places of worship, Taiwanese associations, the Chinese schools that their children attended, restaurants, and coffee shops. As I have been an immigrant and an 'astronaut' at different times of my life, it makes it easy for me to grasp the meanings of immigrant experience even in a relatively short period of time. Being a woman also helps, as I can spend time freely with the interviewees in various circumstances. I often felt welcome as a university professor from Taiwan, and found it easy to communicate with women who are well-educated. Several times, I found that knowing friends in common with the interviewee led to a trusting relationship, on top of their 'sympathy' towards me for making a long journey from Taiwan to visit immigrants for my research.

A questionnaire was drafted in Taiwan in the summer of 2005, and revised in Toronto,

after speaking informally to several women. First enquiries were made in Taiwanese associations such as the *Tzu-chi* Foundation, Dove Intercultural Society (Toronto), Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society (Vancouver), and Taiwanese churches. All the interviewed women headed their homes, usually living with their children, while the fathers live in Taiwan. In most cases, the children are still in school, either studying in universities, or in primary, junior or senior high schools. The analysis will be based on ethnographic interviews that look into the subjective experiences of the mothers of astronaut households from an insider's perspective, giving voice to the immigrants and focusing on the self-assessment of their adaptation process.

Tables 1 & 2 summarize the details of my respondents in Toronto and Vancouver. The women were between 40 and 62, and arrived between 1969 and 2006, directly from Taiwan. Most of them had lived in large cities such as Taipei, Kaohsiung, Keelung, and Chungli. They were all married at the time of the interview, but two were divorced; and all had a high level of education (the majority were university educated, with one holding a Degree from a Medical University and one with a Master's degree from the United States). Most had worked before coming to Canada, holding jobs ranging from professional and managerial work to entrepreneurs or helping in the husband's business. Most of them had two to three children. Depending on their years spent in Canada, their children's ages ranged from three to over twenty.

**Table 1: Details of respondents in Toronto and Vancouver  
August 14 to September 10, 2006**

VT: Volunteer in Toronto; VV: Volunteer in Vancouver

No.	Year of immigration	Age/Education	Occupation before and after immigration.	Nature of volunteer work	Remark
VT1	1984	40/College degree in social work	Social worker/bank clerk	Formosan Evergreen Senior Citizen Center	No questionnaire
VT2 (T1)	1990	55/University	Real estate business Manager	Dove Intercultural Society	Interviewed in 2005, 2006, no questionnaire
VT3	1985 from S.A.	55/Vocational school	Air Cargo clerk/housewife	(蓬來文教基金會)	Immigrated from S.A. (Dan Chi)
VT4		40/University degree in management, CCC	full-time Tzu-chi secretary	6180	Met in 2005; no questionnaire
VT5	1988	62/Teacher's training college	Teacher/flower grower; retired	Formosan Evergreen Senior Citizen Center	
VT6	1983	62/High school	Housewife/food preparation	Tzu-chi	(Dan Chi)
VT7 (T3)	1996	50/University	Entrepreneur/part-time entrepreneur	6180, Taiwan's women's organization, Tzu-chi	Interviewed in 2005
VT8 (T8)	40/1997	40/University degree	Social worker/housewife	Association for Cancer Patients/6180 life line (training and counseling)	Interviewed in 2005, 2006

No.	Year of immigration	Age/Education	Occupation before and after immigration.	Nature of volunteer work	Remark
VV1	1999	40~45/University, M.A.	System analyst/same	Boy scout ( <u>Helping other immigrants to adapt</u> )	Employed fulltime
VV2	1998	50-54/University	Trade/Housewife	Green Club	<i>Dan chi</i>
VV3	1995	52/University	Commerce/Self-employed	Parent association, TCCS, Chung Chiao, Tzu-chi, Chung Hua, Community service, Hua Ren Parent, Green Club ( <u>to meet friends; learn while doing</u> )	<i>Dan chi</i>
VV4	1999	55-59/University	Financial manager/Housewife	Chung-chiao, Tzu-chi ( <u>pay back to society</u> )	
VV5	1993	46-49/University	Housewife/same	Nursing home, TCCS, Green Club, school, election ( <u>to become a part of Canadian society; to learn English</u> )	Husband head of Green Club
VV6	1999	51/University	Secretary, insurance/Housewife	Flower arrangement, church, school ( <u>Contribute to societal causes; Religion</u> )	<i>Dan Chi</i>
VV7	1988	55-59//University	Nurse/Housewife	Nursing home, pre-school, foodbank ( <u>to kill time, to know more about Canadian society</u> )	Former <i>Dan chi</i>
VV8	1991	46-49/University	Banker/Banker	Chinese Woman Entrepreneur Association (to enhance one's profession)	

VV9	1995	40-45 /vocation al school	Housewife/Ho usewife	Christian Service <u>(Religion)</u>	
VV10	1994	55-59/Un iversity	China oil administrator	Canadian-Taiwanese Assoc. Chung-chiao, TCCS <u>(to kill time; to meet people)</u>	<i>Former Dan chi</i>
VV11	1997	46/Univer sity, M.A.	Planning and design consulting firm/Not in labour force	Green Club, Greater Vancouver Regional development; Presbyterian Church in Vancouver <u>(to meet people; love of nature)</u>	Urban Planning, Chung Hsin U. (friend of Cathy Wong, NPUST)
VV12	1994	46/vocati onal school	Trade/Housewi fe	TCCS; Richmond Community Center <u>(to meet friends, To pick up new skills.)</u>	
VV13	1992	55-59/uni versity	Telecommunic ations/housewi fe	TCCS, Green Club, Richmond Nature Park, Vandusen Garden <u>(to meet people; to learn new things; for fun)</u>	
VV14	1974	60+/unive rsity	Accountant in the U.S./retired	Hospital service, gift shop; GVTCA <u>(not stay home all the time; for Taiwanese society, oral history project)</u>	
VV15	1997	50~54/Un iversity	Kindergarten headmistress/a ccounting	TCCS, church, election campaign <u>(helping other Taiwanese; contribute to society)</u>	<i>Dan chi</i>
VV16	2006	54/Univer sity	Housewife/hou sewife	Homemakers union in Taiwan, Tzu-chi in U.S. and Canada <u>(Religion; pay back to society;</u>	Former Dan Chi (2 questionnaires)

				<u>learning)</u>	
VV7	1981	50/University (music)	Vancouver Formosa Academy/part-time in father's business	<u>(Taiwan cultural festival, Vancouver Chamber Choir, conductor, Vancouver Chinese Singers</u> <u>,Help raise Taiwan's visibility in Canada)</u>	
VV18	1969	55-59/University	Retired from employment benefit consulting/technician part-time work	Taiwan cultural festival, Kidney Foundation fund-raising, fundraising for council member <u>(To promote Taiwan culture; To back up Canadian-Taiwan relationship)</u>	
VV19	1997	55-59/University	High-school teacher/house wife	Meals on Wheels <u>(Practice English; learn about aging population)</u>	
VV20	1994	46-49/University	Accountant, home-made ice cream shop/part-time work in Salvation Army	Over ten kinds of volunteer work. <u>(Preaching Christianity to new immigrants, and helping them to get driving license, recycling, foodbank, sign language activities; help promote Taiwanese culture; Religion; Enjoy work of volunteer)</u>	Divorced; has deaf child
VV21	2000	48	Research assistant/house wife	TCCS, <i>Tzu Chi</i>	Interviewed in summer, 2005
VV22	2001	46	Import-export trade/self-employed	<i>Tzu-chi</i>	Interviewed in summer 2005

8 interviewed in Toronto (3 repeats); 22 interviewed in Vancouver (2 repeats).