

HOW DO PAKISTANI IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN TRANSNATIONAL ASTRONAUT
FAMILIES NAVIGATE THEIR SETTLEMENT IN CANADA?

by

Reema Farooqui

BBA Honours, Karachi University, Pakistan, 1995

MBA, Karachi University, Pakistan, 1996

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ABSTRACT

HOW DO PAKISTANI IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN TRANSNATIONAL ASTRONAUT FAMILIES NAVIGATE THEIR SETTLEMENT IN CANADA?

Reema Farooqui
Master of Arts in Early Childhood Studies
Ryerson University, 2015

tThis study explores the settlement experiences of ten women of Pakistani origin who belong to transnational astronaut families. It examines their reasons for choosing to live as an astronaut family, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use for settling down in Canada in the absence of their husbands. The sample was recruited from among Pakistani immigrant families who had moved to the Greater Toronto Area in the last 10 years. Semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the women. Several important findings emerged from this study including: the privileges these women enjoy alongside their many oppressions; the impact of the traditional Pakistani cultural patriarchy on their lives; the unrecognized potential mental health problems these women face due to the repetitive cycle of reunions and separations. In conclusion, recommendations for future practices and policy changes as well as areas for further research are discussed.

Keywords: women, Pakistani immigrants, astronaut families, family stress, resilience

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Dedication

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Introduction

Research Problem

Among Pakistani origin immigrants in Canada there is a subset of those who choose to live as astronaut families. An astronaut family is a transnational family in which wives and children live in the countries of immigration, which are usually industrialized, English speaking nations, while husbands continue to live and work in their country of origin (Nora Chiang, 2008). Reasons for this family arrangement can include the desire for a western education for the children, the acquisition of an alternate passport, or even acquiring fluency in the English language (Waters, 2003). Once he settles his family in the country of immigration, the husband, who is the family breadwinner, returns to his home country for work, visiting his family once or twice every year (Waters, 2003).

This family set up has been referred to by different names. The Korean women and their children who move to the U.S. for the children's education are referred to as *kirogi* (Korean for wild geese) families (Finch & Kim, 2012). In Canada, several scholars such as Waters (2001) and Nora Chiang (2008) have referred to these families as astronaut families (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2001). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2015), the word astronaut comes from the Greek word *nautes* which means sailor and *astron* which means star and therefore the word astronaut roughly translates to a sailor among the stars. The term astronaut in the context of transnational astronaut families comes from the Chinese word *taikongren* which means "a person who spends time in space" (Skeldon, 1994; Tsong & Liu, 2009, p. 366). According to these scholars the husband is the metaphorical astronaut, who travels back, alone, to his country of origin (Waters, 2003). In this study I use the same term, albeit with a modification. I believe, the term astronaut, applies more aptly to the women and children who are sent to live in a new and

unfamiliar country, the figurative outer space, rather than to the men who continue to reside and work in their country of origin. Thus it is the women and children who form the astronaut families.

The lives of astronaut families are complicated - not only are the family members separated over geographical distances, but the wives and children are also new immigrants (Finch & Kim, 2012; Waters, 2002). Consequently, the role of women, who are wives as well as mothers in these astronaut families, also changes (Waters, 2002). The current literature on astronaut families in North America has focused on families originating from East Asia where the women may have had successful careers and domestic help with work around the house (Waters 2002). Once these astronaut families immigrate, many of these women do not find paid employment outside the house. Instead they become stay-at-home mothers and take care of their children. This is something for which they may have had little experience because of their career focused lives as well as help from extended families and/or domestic staff in their home countries (Waters 2002; Waters, 2003). Many women belonging to astronaut families emphasize the importance of being physically and emotionally present for their children in the new family arrangement, but some also suffer from feelings of helplessness and frustration at their lack of cultural knowledge and fluency in English, which limits their ability to adequately care for their children (Jeong, You & Kwon, 2014).

Separation from a loved family member is another very important aspect of transnational astronaut family life (Nora Chiang, 2008). However, transnational astronaut families stay in touch by communicating through the telephone and the internet (Nora Chiang, 2008). In addition, family members frequently visit each other, either in their home country or in the

country of immigration. Thus, the lives of these families are characterised by intermittent separations, reunions and father absence over long periods of time (Jeong et al., 2014).

When Pakistani families move to Canada as new immigrants, many men do not find appropriate jobs (Islam, 2013; Jibeen & Khalid, 2010). Broadly speaking, most Pakistani families still adhere to traditional patriarchal family roles (Jibeen & Hynie, 2012; Khalid, 2011). Men are usually the sole breadwinners, while women are expected to take care of their home and children (Rizvi, Khan & Shaikh, 2014). Thus, given their culturally informed gender roles, when the men do not find relevant jobs, many Pakistani immigrant families decide to have an astronaut family arrangement. The men move abroad, either to Pakistan or to the Middle East, where they secure well-paying jobs and are better able to fulfill their role of family breadwinners, while the rest of the family resides in Canada, where the women run the homes.

Pakistani origin women belonging to astronaut families have their own unique experiences and challenges while they settle in Canada as new immigrants. These women face several social problems, a direct result of moving to Canada as part of an astronaut family. Their culturally informed roles may change in the absence of their husbands and their distance from Pakistani cultural influences. Their responsibilities may increase and these women have to shoulder them without help or advice from their husbands, extended families, or other helpers. These responsibilities are likely to include making decisions about the children and the home and undertaking tasks which they have never done before. They experience repeated reunions and separations from their husbands, which may take a toll on their mental and emotional wellbeing. They may also experience loneliness and isolation as new immigrants, periodically living as single women. So, what are their specific challenges and how do they deal with them?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology was to understand the experiences of women belonging to Pakistani astronaut families and highlight the problems and issues they face in terms of settling down in a new country, while dealing with the socio-emotional consequences of being separated from their husbands. I wanted to document the lived experiences of the women and understand how they manage the changes brought in their lives after becoming part of an astronaut family. In addition, I wanted to understand the coping strategies these women employed to overcome the different challenges they faced, once they moved to Canada.

Research Context

Canada has traditionally been an immigrant-receiving country and its numerous immigrants come from many different parts of the world (Bernhard, Landolt, & Goldring, 2008). In 2011, Canada had a foreign-born population of about 6,775,800 people. They represented 20.6% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2011). On a regional basis, Asia (including the Middle East) remained Canada's largest source of immigrants between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Pakistan is among the top 10 source countries for new immigrants coming to Canada but the Pakistani immigrant community is a group that has not been given much attention by researchers and is often just grouped together with other South Asian immigrants (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2011).

Like most new immigrants, the immigration experience of the Pakistani immigrant community may be characterised by many cultural, socio-economic and practical challenges (Clark, Glick, & Bures, 2009; Jibeen & Khalid, 2010). Pakistani families are moving from an interdependent Pakistani culture to a Western culture that values independence, for which many of them are unprepared (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010). Also, their difficulty in getting Canadian

educational credentials as well as their lack of Canadian work experience has a negative impact on their ability to find relevant jobs (Islam, 2013). All these factors add to the difficulties Pakistanis face during their settlement into Canadian life.

More than one million and a half individuals identify themselves as South Asian in origin according to the 2006 Census and almost 10% of them are Pakistani (Statistics Canada, 2011). This represents a large number in absolute terms and if many of them decide to choose the astronaut family setup after they immigrate to Canada, it would be important to understand their motivations to do so, the challenges they face, and their coping strategies.

Significance of this Research Project

This research project is significant because it focuses on a subset of the Pakistani immigrant families in Canada, who experience immigrant life overlaid with transnational family issues. An area in Mississauga is even referred to as *begumpura* by other Pakistani immigrants (*begum* is an Urdu word which can roughly be translated as the lady of the house, and *begumpura* can roughly be translated to the town of *begums*), an allusion to households where the *begums* are managing their homes and families, in the absence of their husbands, who are working elsewhere. Although some studies have documented the experiences of Hong Kong and Taiwanese astronaut families living in Vancouver and Toronto and Korean kirogi families living in the US (see Nora Chiang, 2008; Kim, Agic & McKenzie, 2014; Waters, 2003), as far as I know, no study as yet has focused on the experiences of South Asian, and in particular Pakistani, immigrants who live as an astronaut family. I believe that a research project focusing on the lived experiences of these Pakistani families, especially in light of their cultural background and religious identity, will add a new perspective to the existing knowledge on immigrant and settlement issues in Canada. I also think that such a study will spread awareness and create

greater sensitivity to the particular social and economic problems these families face in settling down in Canada.

Research Questions

The research question I will explore in this study is: How do Pakistani immigrant women in transnational astronaut families navigate their settlement in Canada?

Chapter 1- Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

The conceptual framework in research study is a group of related ideas and concepts which frame research questions, shape the process of inquiry and help explain the research findings (Ivey, 2015; Maxwell, 2009). With the help of this framework, researchers develop new ways to explain a phenomenon, correctly interpret the meanings of the findings and explore any contradictions in the results (Ivey, 2015). They include the “system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 222) related to the phenomenon being studied, as well as the belief system which guides the researcher in seeking new knowledge and making sense of the evidence (Nolan, MacFarlane, & Cartmel, 2103).

Paradigms/ World view

This work is guided by my use of social constructivism. This worldview tries to understand the way individuals create meanings and seek an understanding of the world they live in (Creswell, 2014). Social constructivism posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction, interpretation and understanding (Adams, 2006). According to this paradigm, knowledge is created through interaction with the world and this knowledge can only be understood in the context of the social environment in which it is constructed (Adams, 2006; Nolan et al., 2013). Researchers following this paradigm work inductively and attempt to generate meaning from the data collected (Creswell, 2014). This view is aligned with the goal of my research project - to understand the unique and complex circumstances of the women of Pakistani astronaut families living in Canada.

Social constructivism obviously requires an interpretivist view of research. This is because the researcher “explores the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Nolan et al., 2103, p. 27). The interpretivist researcher seeks to find meaning in the actions and activities of humans. To understand someone else’s perspective, the

researcher and the participant seek to explore and construct meaning through a dialogue over the course of the research project (Nolan et al., 2103). My study is an attempt to understand how immigrant women from Pakistani astronaut families manage their settlement in Canada. I can only do this by listening to and documenting their experiences. However, as a researcher, I know that I will also bring in my own perceptions and world views into the interpretation of these narratives.

Theoretical Frameworks

The frameworks which have guided my research include theories which explain intersectional analysis, family stress and resilience.

Intersectionality or intersectional analysis is an approach which is rooted in feminist theory of power and is a framework for understanding the interactions of race, gender, age, class and other socially constructed systems of domination (Bastia, 2014; Purkayastha, 2010). According to this framework, women do not face oppression as a single process or in the form of a binary relation, but as multiple, converging and interrelated systems (Carastathis, 2014). As an approach, intersectionality attempts to explain the experiences of specific groups of women by looking at the different sources of oppression these women face and the interconnections among these sources of oppression (Bastia, 2014). This framework proposes looking at the interdependence among different categories of oppression rather than looking at each separately (Bastia, 2014; Denis, 2008).

Intersectionality theorists have also emphasised the concept of “situated knowledge” (Purkayastha, 2010, p. 31). This concept points to different groups of people who have knowledge of marginalisation or privilege, through their lived experiences (Purkayastha, 2010). In addition, intersectionality rejects the idea that the effects of oppression and marginalisation are

“mechanically additive” (Denis, 2008, p. 681) because the intersection of multiple socially constructed constraints and oppressions require simultaneous analysis based on the interconnections among different sources of oppression. Another aspect of intersectional analysis is its inclusivity, in that it brings into focus the experiences and social locations of a single social group of women who may be situated at the intersection of several master categories of oppression, such as race/gender/ethnicity, and who may otherwise be neglected (Carastathis, 2014; Denis, 2008). Therefore, intersectionality as an approach can enable the inclusion of different categories of identification, yet allow privilege and marginalisation to be analysed simultaneously.

Family stress theories attempt to explain why some families struggle while other families thrive when faced with stressors (Sullivan, 2015). All family systems are involved in a complex process of maintaining equilibrium in their collective life, until a crisis situation occurs (Malia, 2006). The stress process at the family level is complicated by the fact that each individual family member has his or her own way and timeline for understanding and coping with the stressor (Malia, 2006).

According to the contextual model of family stress and coping (Boss, 2002), families are very strongly influenced by their different contexts when coping with crises (Sullivan, 2015). These contexts are divided into a family’s external and internal contexts (Sullivan, 2015). Families have no control over the five external contexts (culture, genetics or heredity, economics, historical experiences and family development life cycle) but are capable of modifying their three internal contexts (the family structure, the psychological context which concerns the family’s assessment and perception of the crisis and the philosophical context which embodies the family’s beliefs and values) in response to a crisis (Malia, 2006; Sullivan,

2015). The cultural context includes the rules of the society as well as the family's own rules (Weber, 2011). The economic context refers to the financial situation the family faces, at the community level as well as at the societal level (Weber, 2011). The historical context refers both to the events happening at the time of the crisis event and also events experienced by the ancestors of the family, which may have been transmitted over generations (Weber, 2011). The family structure context refers to the role assignments to different members within a family and the boundaries which are established between different roles (Weber, 2011). The different contexts help families attach meaning to a given stressor (Sullivan, 2015). It is these meanings as well as the resources at their disposal, both from their internal as well external contexts, that help determine how families cope with crises (Sullivan, 2015).

When faced with a crisis, the family's altering of its internal context is an important coping mechanism (Weber, 2011). Over time, in response to the crisis, a family's internal context may change or different family members may develop different internal contexts from each other (Weber, 2011). This model can be applied to understand the experiences of diverse families who are undergoing stress since it brings in culture as a context from which families derive meaning (Sullivan, 2015). According to this model the development of a crisis is not linear, because family perceptions and meaning making, the resources available to the family and the event or situation itself impact each other reciprocally and this in turn affects how the family copes with the crisis (Weber, 2011).

Resilience is a dynamic concept and can be understood as a process of human development which increases the "experience of well-being" (Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013, p. 348) of an individual in the face of adversity. It has also been conceptualized as an interactive relationship between two components of a system, an individual and his or her

ecology, which enables either or both to change in favourable ways (Lerner, Weiner, Arbeit, Chase, Agans, Schmid, & Warren, 2012). Resilience can also be construed as a relational concept because the presence of resilience can only be “inferred from the individual variations in outcome among individuals who have experienced significant major stress or adversity” (Rutter, 2012, p. 336).

The social-ecological model recognises resilience as a process through which individuals interact with and utilise the resources available to them at different systemic levels of their environment, so as to successfully achieve positive outcomes in the face of adversity (Ungar et al., 2013). This model looks at resilience through a wider lens and appreciates the importance of the social, cultural and historical contexts, as well as the biological and personality traits of an individual. According to this model, multiple pathways to achieve a desired outcome or equifinality and the perceptions of a person about the realities of a situation, can have an impact on the eventual outcome (O’Dougherty Wright, Masten & Narayan, 2013, p.22). Therefore, this model focuses on the individual as well as on the complex, multi-level systems within which the individual functions (Ungar et al., 2013).

The relational developmental systems theory also provides a complex analysis of resilience, taking into account the mutually influential interactions between individuals and their contexts, while also acknowledging that the individual, as well as his or her context, is always changing (Lerner et al., 2012; O’Dougherty Wright et al., 2013). This theory focuses on the plasticity and diversity of human development over an individual’s life span and on the idea of “positive human development (PHD)” (Lerner et al., 2012, p. 275). According to this theory, there may be many developmental assets present in the different contexts within which an individual functions (Lerner et al., 2012). By utilising these assets, the individual can thrive over

his or her life span (Lerner et al., 2012). Hence, this theory defines resilience as an interactive relationship between an individual and the different contexts within which the individual functions. Through this theory, resilience can be explained at a particular point in time as well as over the life span of an individual (Lerner et al., 2012).

Related Literature

The purpose of this review is to examine literature related to the topic of transnational astronaut families. This review will begin by examining transnational family arrangements with a closer look at astronaut families. The lives of women and their children as immigrants and members of transnational astronaut families will be explored in this literature review. In addition, this review will also examine different aspects of patriarchy in Pakistani families.

Transnational families. There are many different types of transnational families. However, for the purpose of this literature review, transnational families can be defined as those families whose core family members are located in different nation states, and are separated over geographical distances, but who still hold strong family bonds (Jeong, et al., 2014). This type of family arrangement challenges the traditional concept of family and family life, both of which require “cohabitation” and the “ritualized practices of everyday life,” so that a “shared story” of a family can develop (Falicov, 2007, p. 159). However, Bernhard, et al., (2008) have argued that “the family, unlike the household, is not necessarily defined by co-residence or spatial proximity and can extend across long distances and multiple locations for indeterminate periods of time” (p. 6). The presence of physical distances among family members only changes the context in which family life is carried on, not the nature of the family itself (Bernhard, et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, any disturbance in the social networking among family members due to a transnational family setup introduces new tensions within the family (Heymann, Flores-Macias,

Hayes, Kennedy, Lahaie, & Earle, 2009). This may be particularly true with regards to the nature of power relations among different family members (Heymann, et al., 2009; Waters, 2001). However, as new situations emerge, new strategies for dealing with them also seem to evolve (Bernhard, et al., 2008).

A transnational family setup may not necessarily lead to the disintegration of the family unit (Finch & Kim, 2012). This is because different contextual and cultural norms guide family relationships (Finch & Kim, 2012; Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). In many cases, a transnational family setup leads to the upward social and economic mobility of its members (Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012).

Even though transnational families as a phenomenon are not new, the systematic study of transnational families has only recently come into focus (Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012). The prevalence of transnational families globally is not exactly known. Any estimates that do exist are through the work of nongovernment and/or international organizations (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Most studies exploring this phenomenon are usually qualitative case studies, and these tend to focus on the phenomenon itself, rather than on its consequences on people and families over time (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011).

Astronaut families. Another transnational family arrangement, which has only recently been observed in some high-income countries, is the astronaut family (Waters, 2001). In the astronaut family arrangement, the women as well as the children migrate, while the men continue to reside in their country of origin, for employment and work purpose (Nora Chiang 2008; Waters, 2001). The family does undergo cross border separation, but it is the men who are left behind in the country of origin, usually due to lack of employment and financial opportunities in the country of immigration (Waters, 2001). In the current literature, these families are referred to

as astronaut families. This is because the husband is referred to as the astronaut, who returns to his home country alone, and thus by extension his nuclear family is referred to as an astronaut family (Waters, 2003).

The women and the children, not only have to adjust to a new family arrangement, wherein there is geographic separation among family members over extended periods of time, but also have to settle down in the country of immigration (Kim et al., 2014; Waters, 2001). Astronaut families are sometimes referred to as a type of lone-parent families and are compared with families which have undergone divorce or separation (Tsong & Liu, 2009). However, this is not an accurate depiction because while the husbands and wives are separated over geographical distances, there is regular communication as well as visitation between family members (Tsong & Liu, 2009). Also, families adopt this arrangement with the expectation that it will be temporary (Tsong & Liu, 2009). The astronaut family belongs to the educated and professional class of society and may even possess considerable financial assets in the country of origin as well as in the country of migration (Waters, 2001).

Commentary on transnational astronaut families in the news media is divided in the way these families are represented (Waters, 2001). On the one hand, these families are seen as privileged transnational families who have at their disposal the international mobility as well as the economic security of the middle class (Waters, 2003). However, they have also been referred to as “unscrupulous immigrants” (Smart, 1994 in Waters, 2003, p. 226) for not fully declaring their household incomes to revenue agencies and for taking unfair advantage of the immigration policies of immigrant-receiving countries. On the other hand, they have also been portrayed as victims of adverse economic, financial and political circumstances, who must live geographically

apart, with the women and children facing loneliness and alienation in the country of immigration (Waters, 2001).

Reasons for choosing an astronaut family set up. Several immigrant-receiving countries, including Canada, implemented immigration programmes in the 1980s and 1990s to attract skilled businessmen and professionals from all over the world (Waters, 2001). While the option of moving to Canada was very appealing to many potential immigrants, the difficulty in setting up new businesses and the lack of recognition of the professional qualifications and experiences of the men made it difficult for entire families to move here (Waters, 2003). Therefore, many families from Hong Kong and Taiwan became the astronaut families (Waters, 2001; Waters, 2003).

The process leading to an astronaut family arrangement could be very complicated in some cases (Nora Chiang, 2008). Usually the men were the principal immigration applicants and the remaining family members were shown as dependents (Nora Chiang, 2008). The family arrived together in the country of immigration, but the men left after a while (Nora Chiang, 2008). This separation was a well-thought-out strategy that would allow the family to maintain a high standard of living, while also achieving other goals, such as an alternate citizenship (Waters, 2003). In many cases, the men stayed with their families for several months, looking for employment, but when they were unable to find appropriate jobs, they returned to their country of origin alone (Nora Chiang, 2008).

Nora Chiang (2008) noted several different reasons for many Taiwanese astronaut families living in Vancouver and Toronto, for migrating to Canada, such as for their children's education. Many parents were unhappy with the system of rote learning in Taiwan and felt that the Canadian education system gave their children more options particularly for their career

choices (Nora Chiang, 2008). Healthcare was another important reason for these families to move to Canada (Nora Chiang, 2008). Some families reported moving to Canada at the suggestion of their doctors, and often their children got healthier living in Canada, as compared to when they lived in Taiwan (Nora Chiang, 2008). Some families sought the better living environment in Canada while others wanted to avoid the perceived political instability of Taiwan or prevent their sons from getting conscripted into the Taiwanese military (Nora Chiang, 2008). Therefore, for many Taiwanese astronaut families the decision to move to Canada was based on social and political rather than economic reasons.

Families moving to Canada from Hong Kong had other, similar reasons for choosing an astronaut family arrangement (Waters, 2001). Many families chose to move to Canada so their children could learn English or get a western education. However for some families, the attraction of an alternate passport was the main motivation for choosing an astronaut family arrangement (Waters, 2001).

The Korean kirogi families chose the astronaut family arrangement mainly to allow their children an opportunity to acquire a western education (Finch & Kim, 2012). For these families, choosing the astronaut family arrangement was part of a long-term family project aimed at securing the best chances of success for their children in a global economy (Finch & Kim, 2012; Jeong et al., 2014). Korean culture emphasizes educational success as a way to maintaining social status or even moving up the social ladder (Jeong et al., 2014). English fluency is seen as a way to securing entry into a respected and highly paid profession in Korea (Jeong et al., 2014). Like Taiwanese astronaut families, many South Korean families were dissatisfied with the existing education system in their country (Jeong et al., 2014). Thus many families chose a kirogi set up, got their children enrolled in schools in the U.S. and the women and children moved to

the U.S. (Finch & Kim, 2012; Jeong et al., 2014). In their case, the parents viewed their commitment towards their children's future as a parental duty and thus, they were able to adopt and sustain this family arrangement over long periods of time (Jeong et al., 2014).

Challenges associated with living as an astronaut family. When fathers live away from their families for work related reasons, they leave their wives behind in the position of being a single parent (Nobles, 2013). In such situations, women as well as children, have to take on roles which they are not accustomed to and which might have been fulfilled by fathers if the family had been living together (Harper & Martin, 2013). This may be particularly challenging for astronaut families, where women and children have to adjust to a new cultural context (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2001).

The role strain hypothesis states that due to limited energy and time, an individual who has to perform multiple roles often suffers from stress (Gronlund & Oun, 2010). Relocation from their home country adds to a feeling of helplessness and frustration among women belonging to astronaut families since they may find themselves unable to fulfill many parental duties in a way that meets their own expectations (Jeong et al, 2013). This role strain is coupled with increased responsibilities as well - the women have to become the sole caretakers of the children and also the main decision makers of the household in the absence of their husbands (Jeong et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014).

Many women are also expected to renegotiate their culturally informed gendered role of mothers after migration (Jeong et al, 2014). They are expected to perform tasks which are considered 'masculine' according to their own cultural norms, such as repairing household appliances or maintaining a vehicle (Jeong et al., 2014). Many women are not happy with this

situation but others who are prepared to be flexible, view it as an opportunity to become independent (Nora Chiang 2008; Jeong et al., 2014).

Fathers perform many different roles in a family (Lamb, 2000). These include being breadwinners, moral and ethical guides, nurturing caregivers as well as role models for their children (Lamb, 2000). The relative importance of each role depends on the cultural context of the family (Lamb, 2000). Recent research points out that the absence of fathers does not necessarily “deprive children of the discipline needed to prevent them from conduct disorder” (Lamb, 2012, p. 103). Nevertheless, in astronaut families, women may have to take over disciplining the children alone, a role typically held by fathers in many families (Ali, 2008). Fathers have to accept a more marginal parenting role, disciplining their children from afar (Jeong et al., 2104).

Very frequently women feel overwhelmed by loneliness and boredom (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2003). Since it is their husbands who usually travel between the country of origin and the country of immigration, coming over for brief visits, the women also suffer from isolation, because they do not get many opportunities to visit their extended families (Waters, 2001). Some women belonging to Korean kirogi families also report experiencing prejudice and criticism from the local Korean community (Kim et al., 2104). This lack of social support from their own community adds to their sense of isolation (Kim et al., 2104). In addition, some women also express regret over raising their children in the absence of their fathers and question this family arrangement (Nora Chiang, 2008).

In some cases, women suffer from poor mental health when they arrive and settle in a new country away from their spouses (Ali, 2008; Kim et al., 2014). Carrying out dual parenting responsibilities in a single parent household after migration becomes a source of chronic

psychological strain for them (Kim et al., 2014). This is a real concern since poor mental health among these women may have a negative impact on their parenting style and their relationship with their children, which in turn may adversely affect the mental health of the children themselves (Kim et al., 2014).

Many women in astronaut families are not familiar with dealing with public institutions and making decisions for the household (Ali, 2008; Jeong et al., 2014). This problem may be further compounded due to their lack of fluency in English (Jeong et al., 2014). In such situations, the children who may have a better grasp of the language and customs of their country of immigration act as interpreters or translators for their mothers (Jeong et al., 2014). This may lead to a role reversal between mothers and their children and may even lead to mother-child conflict (Jeong et al., 2014).

Many women in astronaut families who had successful careers in their countries of origin, do not look for paid employment once they migrate (Waters, 2002). Many find it difficult to secure jobs due their lack of fluency in English and others feel that as single parents in a new country, their first responsibility is taking care of their children, so that they do not miss their fathers too much (Waters, 2002).

Often the women feel guilty about not being with their husbands (Nora Chiang, 2008; Jeong et al., 2014). While many women feel that their marital relationship is not affected by an astronaut family arrangement, they also feel that physical separation from their husbands actually estranges them to some degree (Jeong et al., 2014; Waters, 2001). For many, the emotional distance in their marital relations only grows bigger with time, such that even recounting every day events becomes difficult (Waters, 2001). The time difference between the two countries can also have an adverse impact on spousal interactions (Waters, 2002). Yet, many women report

that the real reason why their marital bonds remain strong, despite the geographic separation, is that they keep their complaints to themselves (Finch & Kim, 2012).

Extramarital affairs and infidelity, usually attributed to the men, are a very common negative consequence of an astronaut family arrangement (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2001). In these situations, the women feel a deep sense of betrayal because they always keep the interests of the family ahead of their own needs (Waters, 2001; Waters, 2002). Many women suffer from depression after they discover their husbands have girlfriends or mistresses (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2001). Alternately, many women feel that their relationship with their husbands strengthens after their migration, since this family arrangement is based on trust and partnership from the start (Finch & Kim, 2012).

The experiences of separation from fathers for children who specifically belong to astronaut families remain relatively unexplored in current literature (Sun, 2013). Also, little is known about the effects of astronaut family arrangements on parent-child bonds (Sun, 2013). Finch and Kim (2012) note that some children felt their father's presence may have helped them make better choices academically and socially.

At times the relationship between mothers and their children in astronaut families is strained. For the kirogi mothers with high school age children, the mother-child relationship is very tense sometimes, especially when the children are rebelling against Korean cultural expectations (Finch & Kim, 2012). Some Taiwanese mothers, in contrast, report feeling closer to their children since they spend so much time with them after they move to Canada (Nora Chiang, 2008).

However, in general, children react in a variety of ways to the separation from parents in transnational families where children are left behind and parents (either one or both) migrate for

work. Many react with anger towards their parents, some with feelings of vulnerability, anxiety and distress and many report “somatic complaints” (Schapiro, Kools, Weiss, & Brindis, 2013, p. 56). In some cases children find it difficult to talk to their absent parent(s) on the phone simply because there is no common ground of shared experiences to discuss and very often, children refuse even to come to the phone (Schapiro et al., 2013). However, the guilt that parents feel on account of their absence from the lives of their children and other family members, is a shared theme of most narratives concerning transnational and astronaut families (Nora Chiang, 2008; Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012).

Nevertheless, transnational and astronaut families accrue many benefits from this geographical separation (Jeong et al., 2014; Schapiro, et al., 2013). For astronaut families in particular, this family arrangement is a way of maintaining their class privileges or moving up in social status, across generations (Jeong et al., 2014). Yet, in some cases the economic benefits of remittances are actually cancelled out by a host of problems the family faces (Schapiro, et al., 2013). For instance, many transnational families report having more problems with health and children’s education as compared to non-migrant households (Heymann et al., 2009).

Men also make their own sacrifices to keep the astronaut families intact. Sometimes they have to scale back their living standards in their home country, so as to support their astronaut wives and children (Finch & Kim, 2012). For instance, some of them move into smaller accommodations or even move in with their parents, so they are better able to support their families in the immigrant-receiving country (Finch & Kim, 2012). Often, just commuting between two countries can be very exhausting and expensive (Nora Chiang, 2008).

The women belonging to astronaut families are “stoic and persevering in all kinds of situations” (Nora Chiang, 2008, p. 513) and are prepared to face challenging situations and help

their family achieve the original goal that was set for them, be it their children's education or attaining an alternate passport, sometimes at the expense of their own lives and happiness

Strategies for dealing with challenges. Women usually see themselves as performing an important task of providing a nurturing and supportive home environment to the children after they move to the country of immigration (Finch & Kim, 2012). Even the men consider this as an essential contribution by their wives because only when both spouses are committed to this stressful and expensive family arrangement, can it be successful (Finch & Kim, 2012).

Being connected to their ethnic community in a new country gives these women access to social and cultural capital (Nora Chiang, 2008). Women belonging to the same community, whose husbands work abroad often get together for informal teas or dinner, or regularly visit their community's cultural centers or women's clubs (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2002). Many start volunteering at their children's schools or other organisations as well as helping out at church, all of which are important avenues for social networking (Nora Chiang 2008; Jeong et al., 2014).

Reunions are an important part of the astronaut family lives. This is also a way for husbands and wives to maintain close marital relations (Jeong et al., 2014). It is invariably the men who travel back and forth (Waters, 2001). These visits can last from a few days to a few weeks, but are seen as an important step for keeping the family together (Jeong et al., 2014). While it is usually the husbands who travel between the two countries, sometimes the women also go back to their countries of origin for short visits (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2001). For the kirogi families, who usually do not apply for US permanent residency, the visa status of the women determines how often they travel back to South Korea. For kirogi women who move to the US on a visitor's visa, visiting South Korea every six months is imperative, but for others

with a more secure legal status, such as a permanent residency in the US, travel back to South Korea is less frequent (Jeong et al., 2014).

In some instances, women find the reunions to be “burdensome” (Jeong et al., 2014, p.1559) because they have to make special preparations for their husband’s visit, in a way to compensate for their absence. There is also a renegotiation of power relations within the family, which can cause stress (Waters, 2002). This may be because the women establish their own social world, in which their husbands have no part, and to readjust to their husbands’ presence, even for short periods of time, may be difficult (Waters, 2001).

However, in some instances, the women actually fare better in the country of immigration, away from the patriarchal set-up of their extended families, and find new avenues to develop their own skills and knowledge, based on personal interests, unconnected to the needs of their family (Waters, 2001). For instance, many women start attending English classes or engage in different artistic and sports activities and some find meaning in religion (Waters 2002; Waters, 2003). Religious organizations play an important part in the lives of many women belonging to astronaut families, either as a source of solace in times of loneliness, or as a hub for social networking within their community (Nora Chiang, 2008). Many women enjoy spending time with their children, leading to closer mother-child relationships (Nora Chiang 2008; Water, 2003).

For most astronaut families, it is the husband’s income which helps them maintain their middle-class life style after immigration (Finch & Kim, 2012; Waters, 2001). Nevertheless, fathers who live apart from their children in astronaut families often remain actively involved in the lives of their family and children (Jeong et al., 2014; Nobles, 2011). For many astronaut families, fathers are still regarded as the head of the household (Finch & Kim, 2012). They try to

participate in all the family decisions and keep abreast of the changes in the lives of their family members (Jeong et al., 2014).

While some women worry that their children will lose a close relationship with their father, many feel that the father-child relationship does not change much after immigration due to the frequent communication among family members (Jeong et al., 2014; Waters, 2001). Family members communicate almost daily with each other by telephone, email as well as internet phone such as Skype (Nora Chiang, 2008; Jeong et al., 2014). In fact, the style and quality of communication remains unchanged after migration, even though the actual communication takes place as a result of advanced communication technology rather than through face to face meetings (Finch & Kim, 2012).

In addition, many fathers actively work to maintain or restore their relationship with their children, especially when they visit (Finch & Kim, 2012; Jeong et al., 2014). During their visits, they try to spend quality time with their children, participating in activities which the children enjoy, such as watching movies together or taking family trips (Jeong et al., 2014). Some fathers continue to perform their paternal duties of disciplining their children even when they are apart, and are particularly successful at communicating with their sons rather than their daughters, as far as disciplining is concerned (Jeong et al., 2014).

Patriarchy in Pakistani families. A patriarchal society is one where the male heads of the household exercise all the power (Moghadam, 1992). The concept of patriarchy explains the among the different sources of women's subordination within households and families and also within society (Isran & Isran, 2012). The existence of patriarchal institutions and social relations help perpetuate the subordinate status of women in many societies (Isran & Isran, 2012). There is usually a clear distinction between the public and private spheres of life in patriarchal societies

(Moghadam, 1992). Thus, patriarchy does not emerge from a single factor but from the intersection of multiple elements at different levels of society (Isran & Isran, 2012).

Traditionally, the head of a Pakistani household is a senior male member, who controls the family's economic and material resources and acts as a mediator on behalf of the women of the household in the non-familial, public spheres of society (Isran & Isran, 2012). Females generally do not hold any position in the public spheres of life (Moghadam, 1992). The male patriarch expects complete obedience from all the family members, including the younger males of the household, as a cultural and religious obligation (Isran & Isran, 2012). The women are expected to submit to their husband's authority, and also to the authority of their parents in law (Isran & Isran, 2012). However, older women, especially those who are mothers of sons, have more access to economic resources and more decision making power within families as compared to the younger female members of the household (Isran & Isran, 2012).

Even though Islam gives them considerable inheritance rights, traditionally under Pakistani feudal and patrilineal system of inheritance, women have very limited rights of inheritance, with regards to land and property (Isran & Isran, 2012). Due to their lack of independent economic resources, young wives are totally dependent on the goodwill of their husbands and their families. Fear of the threat of divorce makes them avoid conflicts with their spouses and their families (Isran & Isran, 2012). Until they become mothers, young wives have no real position in their households, since it is through their children that they gain acceptance in their husband's families (Isran & Isran, 2012).

However, the family structure also influences the role and decision making power of a woman within a household. A woman in a nuclear family enjoys far greater autonomy than one who is part of an extended family household (Isran & Isran, 2012). However, many Pakistani

married women continue to live with their in-laws as part of extended family households in Pakistan (Isran & Isran, 2012).

Within households, work is also divided along gender lines, which perpetuates male patriarchy in other ways (Khalid, 2011). Both men and women are taught from early on that childcare and household chores like cooking, washing, laundry and cleaning, are the responsibilities of women (Khalid, 2011). Although in most cases these tasks are usually carried out by domestic help under the supervision of the women, men are never consulted in the execution of these tasks (Khalid, 2011). However, the payment of utility bills, maintenance of the household appliances including repairs of small and large electrical appliances or plumbing are culturally considered to be masculine tasks. These responsibilities usually involve hiring skilled workers but this again is considered to be the responsibility of the men of the household (Khalid, 2011). Therefore, traditional patriarchy in Pakistani families determines the status as well as the role of women within their families.

Synthesis of the literature on astronaut families. The astronaut family arrangement has been around for more than two decades. Even though such families belong to the middle and upper-middle class, they still have their share of problems and challenges. The fact that men and women are able to sustain this family arrangement over long periods of time is a testament to their commitment to each other and to the future of their children. The heaviest burden of this family arrangement, in my opinion, is borne by the women who have to uproot themselves, renegotiate their gendered roles in the family and work towards keeping their marital relations strong and their children comfortable. Their prior experience as women living in a patriarchal society, where interdependence is much more common than independence, does not prepare them well for living on their own and making decisions. Many of them struggle to meet these

conflicting family demands while some actually thrive in their new-found independence. The men continue to support their wives, economically and often emotionally as well, but they have their own challenges to face-commuting between two countries and accepting their new, sometimes less central role in the family.

Gaps and limitations in existing literature. There are many gaps in existing literature concerning transnational families as far as separations and reunifications are concerned. Most studies are qualitative in nature and have focused on the problems but have not explored, in depth, the factors that would lead to less problematic separations (Schapiro, et al., 2013).

Many of the issues that are relevant to astronaut families have not been addressed by current research. For example, the challenges of being part of a transnational astronaut family and the acculturation stresses that come with it have not been thoroughly explored. Also, since women and children experience may experience similar stresses and tensions after migration, it may be interesting to investigate the mother and children of transnational astronaut families together, as a unit of analysis (Kim et al., 2014).

The studies focusing on astronaut families so far have focused on the experiences of the women and to a lesser extent the children of astronaut families. The voices of the men are largely missing in discourses about astronaut families. In addition, there is no study that I know of, which looks at the experiences and challenges different family members belonging to astronaut families face when the men leave their jobs abroad and take up residence with the women and children in the country of immigration. Since families from East Asian countries were one of the first to try an astronaut family arrangement, almost all the current literature explores their lived experiences. However, there is a large diaspora of South Asian families in many English-speaking Western countries, and transnational family arrangements, particularly astronaut

families, in this group have not garnered any attention from researchers. I believe that some of these gaps can be addressed through the research questions of this study: How do Pakistani immigrant women in transnational astronaut families navigate their settlement in Canada?

Chapter 2-Methodology

Approach

I chose a qualitative approach for this study. This is the best approach for “exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The qualitative approach is used for accessing the research participants’ understanding of a social issue (Creswell, 2014). This project focused on the experiences of astronaut families of Pakistani origin and the social problems they face in their settlement in Canada. It was from their experiences and perceptions that I drew meaning for my research study. Thus, the qualitative approach was the right approach for my research project.

A constructivist and interpretivist world view guided my project. Constructivism, as a research epistemology, posits that knowledge and meaning is constructed when individuals engage with the world they are trying to understand (Creswell, 2014; Flood, 2010; Nolan et al., 2013). According to the interpretive theory, reality is a social construct and the lived experiences of the participants must be explored through their point of view (Nolan et al., 2013). My research project was able to adhere to both a constructivist and an interpretivist world view, since I drew meaning and knowledge from the experiences and perceptions recounted by the participants during their interviews.

An important intellectual goal I was able to achieve through the qualitative approach was understanding how the research participants understood and interpreted their experiences (Maxwell, 2009). Because the experiences of Pakistani origin immigrant women’s cycle of reunions and separations from their husbands as a part of their settlement in Canada has not been studied before, my study will contribute to our conceptual understanding of this phenomenon.

The purpose of this study was to generate new conceptual understandings but not to generalize them. A qualitative approach was best suited to this purpose.

Strategy

The strategy that worked best for my research question and purpose was phenomenology. This is an approach which is frequently used by qualitative researchers and its goal is to understand the participants' experiences of the selected phenomenon (Converse, 2012). The goal of phenomenological research is to understand the "meaning of an experience of a phenomenon" (Converse, 2012, p 31), rather than creating knowledge which is generalizable. The research participants in a phenomenological study must have directly experienced the phenomenon (Converse, 2012). Therefore, phenomenology is an interpretive qualitative approach which helps researchers understand how a phenomenon is experienced and how meaning and understanding can be derived from these experiences (Flood, 2010).

Sample and Recruitment

It is the phenomenon which determines the recruitment method and the type of participants for a research study (Hycner, 1999 in Groenewald, 2004). The target population for this research consisted of transnational astronaut families of Pakistani origin residing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) of Ontario, who immigrated to Canada in the last ten years. The distinct characteristic of these families was that the women and the children lived in Canada while the men lived abroad, either in Pakistan or in the Middle East, for reasons of employment/self-employment.

The sample size for phenomenology was approximately 10-12 participants, who were purposefully selected (Creswell, 2014; Converse, 2012). I was primarily interested in the experiences of the women in their roles as wives and as mothers. They were therefore my

primary source of data. I thought their spouses and children may add to the validity and richness of my data, but knew that access to these secondary sources may be quite difficult. However, I managed to recruit 10 women and 12 children between the ages of 5 and 16.

I first put up research participant recruitment flyers at three grocery shops which sell Pakistani spices and prepared foods (please see Appendix A for the Grocery Store Flyer). These shops are located in Mississauga. Since I am based in Mississauga and I frequent all three grocery stores, using these three sites seemed logical. I had spoken with the managers of all three grocery stores regarding the display and distribution of my research flyers and after receiving their consent I put up the flyers in November 2014. These flyers included my university email address as a way for potentially interested participants to contact me. I also distributed the research recruitment flyers at all three sites, going there in the mornings after 9:30 am. I chose this time because it is immediately after most women have dropped their children off at school and so they are most likely to go for grocery shopping. I went thrice to two sites and once to the third site and spent two hours each time, distributing the research recruitment flyers. These visits took place between November 2014 and February 2015. Placing and distributing the flyers at the grocery shops, however, did not yield any interest. I was only once approached by a man who asked me if I will pay him to interview his wife. I had to explain that my research is based on voluntary participation and I could not pay the participants.

I also distributed the flyer among my friends and acquaintances in the Pakistani community in the GTA, starting in January 2015, and asked them to pass it on to people who matched the criteria for my research sample (please see Appendix B for the Information Flyer for my friends and acquaintances). I made several phone calls to acquaintances and friends who I

knew to have a large social network in the Pakistani community in the GTA and could connect me to potential research participants.

It was through my personal contacts that I finally started getting leads to potential participants. Once I received the phone numbers of some women who were interested in volunteering for my study, I called them and explained the purpose and procedure of the study. When they agreed to be interviewed I arranged an appointment to meet with them to get their written consent and conduct the interview. At the same time I also asked for their consent to interview at least one of their children.

I had initially planned to use snowball sampling but none of the families I recruited through my contacts recommended any other families to be interviewed. In total, I contacted 18 women and of them, 10 agreed to participate in my research study. Of these 10 women, only six allowed me to interview their children, of two boys and ten girls. I had group interviews with three children at a time in two families and one child per family in the remaining four. The families were recruited from Mississauga, Brampton, Oakville and Milton, in Ontario.

The eight women who did not consent to participate were worried that I might accidentally disclose facts about their astronaut family arrangement to the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), that I was doing this project for the CIC or that Ryerson University was in some way affiliated with CIC. I cannot be certain of the source of their fear or lack of trust. One potential research participant refused to participate in my study by letting me know that her family's citizenship papers were being processed and participating in my study was a risk she was not ready to take, since she felt that I might accidentally report her to CIC and this might reduce her family's chances of getting a Canadian citizenship. The sense of fear among Pakistani astronaut families that they might be reported to the CIC is so great, that many were

not willing to participate in this study, despite my assurances that I was in no way connected to the CIC, that the study will maintain their confidentiality and in my MRP, all that the data collected will be destroyed after five years and that I will use pseudonyms to refer to all the participants.

Setting

The interviews were held at community centres or at the homes of the participating families, depending on their choice. Thus the choice of location for the interviews, depended upon where the participants felt most comfortable sharing their life stories and experiences with me (Creswell, 2014). Two of the women agreed to meet me at a community centre in Mississauga but the others wanted me to interview them at home.

The comfort level and privacy of my interviewees were my main concerns. I let them make the final choice in selecting the venue for our interview and therefore agreed to meet them in their homes (Creswell, 2014). Thus, I visited one home in Milton, two in Oakville, four in Mississauga and one in Brampton.

Data Collection Tools and Processes

Data for my research were collected through face-to-face interviews. Doing ethical research requires being honest and providing the research participants with an informed consent form since this helps reduce suspicions and encourages sincere responses from them (Groenewald, 2004). Before recruiting any family, I asked all the potential research participants (women) to read and sign an informed consent form as well as an assent form for their children (if they had agreed to let me interview their children) so that they understood their rights as a voluntary research participant (please see Appendix C for the Informed Consent Form and Appendix D for the Assent Form for children). All the potential participants asked me to email

the informed consent form (and the assent form) to them before they agreed to participate in the study. I also explained all aspects of my research to them, especially their role as participants and their right to withdraw at any point from the study. In addition I gave them my email address and my cell phone number, so that they could voice any queries and concerns they may have had about the research before the date for the interview was scheduled. None of the women contacted me to ask any questions. Only those potential participants who agreed to the contents of the informed consent form were selected to participate in the study. On the day of the interview, I took two hard copies of the informed consent form for the women (and the required number of child assent forms, if the women had agreed to let me interview their child/children) for them to sign. One signed copy remained with the participants, while the other was signed and returned to me.

In a phenomenological study, in-depth interviews with the participants are reflective rather than observational in nature (Converse, 2012; Flood, 2010). The data collection tool I used was a semi-structured interview guide, which allowed me to conduct in depth interviews of the women (please see Appendix E for the Interview Guide). The interview guide helped me follow a general plan for the conversation, but by asking for clarifications and examples I was able to understand the participants' perceptions and experiences of being part of an astronaut family (Converse, 2012; Flood, 2010). All the interviews for my research were conducted over a six month period from January 2015 to June 2015.

I held two separate interviews with the women and the children, albeit all of the women were present in the room when I interviewed their child/children. Based on a discussion with my supervisor I felt the children would be more comfortable answering my questions in their mothers' presence, since I was a stranger and I was asking them questions about a sensitive topic

which concerned their family. In addition, I also decided to take their responses at face-value rather than try to second-guess what they might have said, had their mothers not been present. Both interviews were face to face, so that I could observe the facial expressions of the participants as they shared their experiences with me.

Initially I had planned to audio record all the interviews (with the consent of the participants, indicated by them in the informed consent form) and then transcribe them as soon as possible (Creswell, 2014). However, only two women allowed me to audio tape their family's interviews. The other participants felt more comfortable if I only took notes. Their reasons for not allowing me to audio-record them was their discomfort with having their voice recorded or having someone whom they did not know hear their voice. I felt that the given reasons were really based on the fear that their confidentiality may not be maintained.

I began with introductory questions which were followed by questions which were more specific to the research problem (Creswell, 2014). All through the interview I tried to develop a rapport with the interviewees, so they would expand on their perspectives and experiences without being rushed. All the interviews were conducted mainly in English. If some participant felt more comfortable expressing an idea or a feeling in Urdu, I wrote up what they said in English in my expanded notes.

I wrote my own expanded notes within a day of conducting each interview. The notes were based on my brief notes, memory, observations and reflections on the interview. These notes also helped me clarify my own thoughts (Groenewald, 2004). Conducting the interviews in an environment familiar to them was helpful because they were quite relaxed in their own homes (Creswell, 2014).

Keeping ethics in mind, I asked the participants if they would like to read the transcripts or expanded records of the interviews. I also wanted to get their opinion about the data I had collected in the interviews (Maxwell, 2009). However, none of the women wanted to read the full notes, and told me they trusted me with the data I had collected.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

After writing up the interviews and my own thoughts about the interviews, I systematically began the analysis of the data. The first step consisted of doing a “naïve reading” (Flood, 2010, p.12) of the data several times to identify emerging themes (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). This helped me identify several different concepts and patterns in the data (Maxwell, 2009).

A visual display of the concepts identified, in the form of a mind map or a network helped me look at the overall picture of themes that were developing. Next, I also looked at similarities and differences within the data collected (Converse, 2012). This helped me identify and label some codes which I described in the visual display chart as well as in my notes. I then looked for relationships among the different codes (Maxwell, 2009).

At the same time, I tried to triangulate the data sources. This is a process through which data are collected from different informants, to check if multiple sources yield the same data, which validate the conclusions drawn from the data (Groenewald, 2004). The data collected from the interviews with the women and the children, as well as the notes I had made after each interview helped me with the triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2014; Groenewald, 2004).

Next I developed the new themes and sub-themes, then combined or discarded other themes, as needed. Structural analysis takes place when the data are condensed into sub-themes as well as main themes, so that the essential meaning of the lived experience is revealed (Flood,

2010). Once again I critically examined the raw data collected (the interview transcripts as well as my notes) keeping in mind the research question and the relevant literature and theoretical framework, so that some new or overlooked themes could also be included in my analysis (Maxwell, 2009). I felt that the more I read the transcripts and my own notes, the better I was able to see connections among them and the sub-themes I had developed earlier. This process followed the reflexive and iterative process of qualitative research analysis (Maxwell, 2009). By reading the raw data, not just literally, but also reflexively and interpretively, I was able to inductively construct some specific themes, along with sub-themes that addressed my research question

The next step in the analysis was to determine how the themes would be represented in the report. Once the themes have emerged, the findings must be presented in a linear way and located within the context of the purpose of the research study and its theoretical framework (Flood, 2010). At this stage I had to organize my findings according to their relative significance, and coherence with each other and with their sub-categories.

Finally in the interpretation of the data it was important to focus on what my findings meant within the context of my study, and what were the implications of those findings in terms of practice and policy. There can be no single, objective or true interpretation, since researchers have personal involvement in the interpretation, and they bring their own personal perspectives to the interpretation (Converse, 2012). I continuously reflected on the purpose of my research project and made sure that my analysis linked back to my research question and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks informing my work. Since my topic has not really been the subject of any other study that I know of, it is very likely that my findings and interpretation will also raise new questions about the lives and experiences of astronaut families of Pakistani origin living in

Canada and what the implications of those findings are in terms of practice, policy, and theory (Creswell, 2014).

As a researcher, it is important that my findings of my research are trustworthy. The data collection tool, a semi-structured interview guide allowed me to ask all the participants some basic questions relating to their experiences as an astronaut family. The discussion would later move into different directions depending on the unique experiences of the participants (Converse, 2012). This flexibility allowed me to capture the details that elaborated, enriched, and validated the participants' initial responses. During the interviews I tried to keep my researcher bias and reactivity to the minimum, by encouraging participants to articulate their own views and perceptions (Maxwell, 2009).

During the analysis and interpretation process, I tried to bracket my own subjective and preconceived ideas about a Pakistani origin astronaut family (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). One way to do this was by identifying and critiquing my own observations and thoughts about the topic, so that I proceeded with caution in my analysis, with regards to my personal biases about the research topic (Creswell, 2014; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). However, in a phenomenological study, it is impossible to remove all bias from the interpretation and analysis, because interpretation always comes through the researcher's own experiences (Converse, 2012).

Social Location

My social location, as a new immigrant of Pakistani origin may have had an impact on how I understood and interpreted the findings of this research study. However, my social location could be construed as a "shared social location" (Manohar, 2013, p.189), because as a new immigrant of Pakistani origin to Canada and as a woman, I have probably faced similar difficulties and challenges these Pakistani women faced, when they first arrived in Canada. That

I did not belong to an astronaut family was where our experiences differed. However, at one point, my family did consider having an astronaut family arrangement, in case my husband did not find a relevant job within a year of arriving in Canada. We did not choose that option and stayed together in Canada, yet we were prepared for such an eventuality as a family. This gave me an insider/outsider perspective of Pakistani astronaut families living in Canada and in particular to the experiences of the women (Manohar, 2013).

My interest in the experiences of Pakistani origin astronaut families, particularly in the more central roles that the women tend to play in this family arrangement, motivated me to explore this phenomenon in greater depth. At a more personal level, being of Pakistani origin myself, speaking the same language as well as belonging to the same cultural background, I felt that I could really understand the experiences, triumphs and concerns of Pakistani origin women belonging to astronaut families.

Chapter 3 – Findings

Background

The findings of this study are based on the interviews of ten women (as well as some children) from Pakistani origin astronaut families. All ten women come from large, urban cities in Pakistan. All of them belong to traditional middle class Pakistani families where the husbands are the main breadwinners. All ten women have graduate degrees from colleges and universities in Pakistan and two of them held jobs before the family decided to opt for an astronaut family set-up and move to Canada. Eight of them moved to Canada after having spent a few years in the Middle East, while the remaining two moved here directly from Pakistan. All of them have children, although some are young mothers with toddlers while others have children who are attending high school in Canada. I was able to identify some patterns in the narratives of their experiences. The themes that emerged from the data are explored in the following sections.

Reasons for the Astronaut Family Arrangement

Among the ten women, there were varied reasons for choosing this family set up. Some women stated acquiring a Canadian citizenship as the reason for adopting this family set up. Aaliya, who had moved to Canada nearly four years ago with her two teen-aged children, cited the deteriorating security conditions in Pakistan as a reason for moving to Canada. “The insecurities in Karachi, in terms of the law and order situation...It’s a kind of threat all the time there. So we got the opportunity and we thought it will be best for our children.” Therefore, getting a Canadian nationality seemed the most feasible option for Aaliya’s family in order to provide a safe and comfortable environment for her two children. However, since her husband had a well-established business in Pakistan, he did not want to leave for Canada with the family. Therefore, they had to become an astronaut family to get their citizenship process started.

Maria, who moved to Canada three years ago with her three children, also cited her family's desire to acquire a Canadian passport as their main reason for moving to Canada. She felt that living in the Middle East for long periods of time still did not lead to a citizenship, or even permanent residence for non-residents, but going back to Pakistan was also not a great option for her family when her husband retired from his job in the Middle East. She knew that her children would not be able to adjust in Pakistan "after they have lived abroad all their lives." This was partly due to the security issues but mainly because she felt they were not used to living with the day-to-day problems of developing countries such as power outages, water shortages, and other similar inconveniences. Therefore the family decided to move to Canada, so they would not have to compromise on the living standards they had become accustomed to in the Middle East, with the added advantage of acquiring an alternate citizenship.

Some women identified their children's education and future prospects as the reason for moving to Canada. With the Canadian citizenship, their children could attend world class Canadian universities at a fraction of the cost charged to international students. Shazia, a mother of three children, moved to Canada nearly four years ago to avoid sending her daughter to university as an international student. While her family had received their Permanent Residence (PR) cards sometime in the past, it was only when her daughter was about to start high school that the family decided to become Canadian citizens. "We found out that Grade 11-12 must be done in Canada. Otherwise our daughter would be treated as an international student." This decision was based on the suggestions and advice of their friends and acquaintances in the Middle East, rather than on any research of universities and their admission requirements which they conducted themselves. As she admitted later in her interview "We have made this sacrifice for the kids. Now I don't know if they would have given my daughter an international student

status or not had she not done her high school from here? We had just heard from other people and decided to move to Canada.”

Shumaila, who lived in the Middle East before moving to Canada three years ago with her three children, believed that the superior Canadian education system and the dearth of higher education options in the Middle East was what made her family decide to adopt an astronaut family set up. In the Middle East, schooling options for non-residents are limited and very expensive, especially if parents choose to send their children to international schools. For Shumaila, moving to Canada meant switching the expensive international school system with the Canadian public school system, which offered her children comparable education but at no cost at all. Shumaila had asked her friends who were already residing in Canada to identify good school districts in the GTA, so that her children to get the best out of the public school system. Like Shazia, Shumaila also believed that allowing her children to graduate from Canadian high schools would give them an edge over international students for admissions and tuition for universities.

Four out of the ten women cited poor job prospects in Canada for their husbands as the reason for adopting the astronaut family set up. Many Pakistani families still follow the traditional patriarchal custom of men being the main breadwinners of the families, with the wives taking care of the home and children (Rizvi et al., 2014). Humna, who had moved to Canada two years ago with her three children, two sons and one daughter, felt that “men don’t have job opportunities here. The day some good job opportunity comes up, my husband will move here immediately. He is ready to make the move, but there are no good job opportunities, so how will we survive?” She believed that having an astronaut family set up would probably lead to problems later, particularly with the processing of her husband’s citizenship. She blamed

the Canadian government for not doing enough to educate new immigrants about their employment prospects in Canada.

Uzma's family had not planned to have an astronaut set up initially. She had moved to Canada two years ago with her husband and four children, with the intention of getting Canadian citizenship, but also for permanently residing in Canada. When her husband could not find any job in Canada, he left them here and started working in the Middle East. The family was forced to make this decision, Uzma felt, because there was no other option for them. "He tried for a whole year looking for a job, but everywhere he applied, they would ask for Canadian experience. They knew we were immigrants so how could he give them Canadian experience? Sometimes I wonder why they even give us a Permanent Residence (PR) card when they clearly cannot give us employment. I really feel this is racism."

Shazia, whose family moved to Canada so her daughter could attend university as a domestic student also felt that the "bad market for jobs" in Canada made them choose the astronaut family set up. She believed that moving to Canada together as a family would have required her husband to leave a well-paying job in the Middle East and settle for a lower-paying one here.

All ten women claimed that the decision to have this family set up was a joint one. None of them felt they had been forced into something by their husbands which they had not agreed to. Anum, who moved to Canada nearly four years ago with her three children, echoed the feelings of all ten women when she said "My husband and I decided to have this family set-up as it was the best thing for our family."

Challenges Associated with Living as an Astronaut Family

All ten women discussed how they had to adapt themselves to living in Canada in an astronaut family set-up. After moving to Canada, these women had to take on many new family duties and responsibilities as part of their changed maternal role in the family. Many felt unprepared for this role change, since they had to step out of their culturally informed maternal role, which was that of a woman who stayed at home and took care of the children and the house. Learning to drive, shopping for groceries, dropping off children at school and then picking them up, putting gasoline in their cars, doing banking transactions, were some of the new tasks these women had to do after they moved to Canada.

However, it was the role of family decision maker, a role traditionally performed by men in Pakistani nuclear families, which appeared most daunting to nearly all these women. This was a clear break from the culturally informed patriarchal practices of many Pakistani families. It seems that there was an unspoken expectation from their husbands regarding their duties and responsibilities once they moved to Canada. Thus not only were they expected to fulfill all their traditional responsibilities such as taking care of their children's upbringing, wellbeing, health and education, they were also responsible and accountable for making decisions concerning their homes, their expenses, their finances and all other aspects of their everyday lives in Canada on their own.

Some of the women were uncomfortable with the new expectations and the changes in their expanded roles in their families. Several mentioned that they should have been given greater independence and responsibility especially with decision making or keeping track of family expenses and finances when they were still living with their husbands, so that their transition into an astronaut family was made easier. In the case of all ten women, however, the

extended families did not move to Canada with them. Therefore, they did not have the additional responsibility of having to take care of their parents-in-law

Saima, who moved to Canada two years ago with her two daughters, felt that her responsibilities had increased tremendously after she had moved to Canada. Taking care of her daughters, looking after the house and all its maintenance and making all decisions concerning her family in Canada overwhelmed her. In Canada she was single-handedly shouldering many of the responsibilities which she had previously shared with her husband. She said “Now I am the dad and mom together. I am running the whole show- I am doing both mom and dad’s role together. The role itself has changed for me- it has really widened. I have to make so many decisions and I have to do it on the spot. When I am making these decisions, my husband is not physically present there. So, if anything goes wrong, it is on me. I always have to be ready to manage the consequences for any decisions I have taken, whether they were correct or not. So if the consequences are not to your liking, you will have to endure it. ”

This role expansion also caused them some anxiety among the women, especially with regards to the diminished family role of their husbands. Some of them felt that their children would lose their traditional cultural values, especially that of respect of their fathers. Mehreen, who had been living as an astronaut woman in Canada with her three daughters for over six years, felt that over the years she had become more independent as a decision maker. She thought that her independence undermined the traditional position of a father within a Pakistani family. She felt that she had to repeatedly make her children realise how important it was for them to respect their father, even if he was no longer the authority figure in the family. “What has happened in all these years is that he is the man of the house but I am the decision maker now, so I don’t have to call him and ask him everything, unless it is something big where a large

amount of money is involved. But when he comes, you have to make the kids realise that he is also a decision maker. It's not just only Mummy all the time... As mothers, if we don't tell our children the role of a father, how important he is, how to show respect to him and to love him, they will not know. For them their dad will just become a money-making machine. So daddy will just be sending them money but they will think that the real authority is with mummy."

Mehreen also felt conflicted about her role as the family decision-maker. On the one hand, she still felt accountable to her husband for the safety, health and wellbeing of their children because Pakistani wives still "have the typical *desi* (a term used by South Asians to denote people from that part of the world) mentality- what will we tell their father if something happens to them?" But on the other hand she also felt that her husband should not hold her answerable for everything just because she was in Canada, taking care of everything.

Humna felt that by not sharing family responsibility and decision making, Pakistani husbands did a great disservice to their wives. It was because many wives never made decisions and therefore never faced their consequences, that settling down in Canada as part of an astronaut family was unnecessarily difficult for them. "In our culture our husbands really cooperate with us. Whether it was in Pakistan or in the Middle East, he was always helping me with everything, so we got used to him doing everything for us. Which is wrong, I think, because I feel we should have been more independent... We (women) are to blame as well, that we never took any responsibility for ourselves and we let our husbands do everything for us. This is true for all husbands I think."

Maria spoke about her anxiety due to the increased responsibilities attached to her maternal role in Canada. "When we were together in the Middle East, I used to be more relaxed. But now that I am here, I am always vigilant. I want to know where my kids are, who is going,

when, where. I think I am also scared because I am alone here, and I am scared for my children so that is a change that I have seen in myself.” She also felt that there was a lot of fear attached to this feeling of responsibility because ultimately she alone would have to face the consequences of any negligence on her part towards the children. Some of this fear was associated with trying to ensure that the children grow up firmly rooted in Pakistani culture and ideals.

In addition to role expansion, there was role reversal for some women vis-à-vis their children. Saima felt that her daughters were able to pick up many aspects of Canadian life much before she was able to master them. “Kids absorb new things really quickly...for example, bus routes are easy for the children to understand but for me, it is so difficult, I need a map to get from one place to another.” To depend on her daughters to guide her in the things that were new and unfamiliar to her was a completely new and unsettling experience for her.

Loneliness and isolation was also something these women had to contend with. As Maria said “When you are alone, the loneliness is bad.” Shumaila noted that “...being alone is also a source of tension and stress. We Pakistani women are never really alone, we are always with our husband and children.” Saima, who had a job before moving to Canada but could not find employment here, noted that being a stay-at-home mother was the source of her isolation. “I am not socializing a lot with my friends because there is so much house work, or there is grocery to do. I have very little communication with other people, my friends, and this is not a pleasant change for me, I find life here to be very boring...nothing is changing for me.”

For some women, living without their husbands for the first time was in itself very daunting. Anum, who has been married for more than twenty years, found the idea of living away from her husband the most frightening aspect of moving to Canada. Mehreen also had

similar feelings, having never lived alone, before or after marriage. She described living with extended family in Pakistan as having “security around you all the time.” Yet once she moved to Canada, she was scared of sleeping at night, always afraid there would be a break in, even though she knew those fears were unfounded in Canada. Nevertheless, she took to sleeping in the living room, within view of the main entrance to her apartment, as a way of exercising some control over her situation.

The absence of fathers was keenly felt in all ten astronaut families. The children missed their fathers and the family dynamic was different when he was around. Shumaila’s daughter thought her house felt different and empty in the absence of her father. Some long-cherished family rituals had also changed for most astronaut families in the absence of fathers, such as having dinners together as a family, going out together for dinner or making mini trips out of town for the weekends.

For the children, absence of fathers also meant something important was missing from their lives. The boys missed playing in the park with their fathers or visiting hardware stores or even playing video games together. A few women reported their daughters becoming withdrawn and quiet after their fathers left. Mehreen felt her youngest daughter, seven year old Iman, who was only a year old when she moved to Canada away from her father, had developed certain insecurities in her relationship with both her parents. Uzma noted that her two youngest children, four year old Shoaib and five year old Maha, threw tantrums, cried and shouted whenever they started missing their father. Adjusting to their father’s absence had been particularly difficult for them since they did not fully understand the reason for his departure. Each time her husband left to go back to his work, the children suffered from night terrors for some time and became extremely clingy to Uzma. In her words “I think they are afraid I will also leave them.”

Similarly, Maria felt that while her two sons were “bearing up well ...they have a long list of requests for things from their dad but my daughter is so attached to her father, she doesn’t make any requests from her Baba (father).” For the older children, acceptance of their fathers’ absence did not mean they were happy with this situation. As Dina put it, “I have accepted it that he is not here, he has to work there. We just roll with it.”

Anxiety about disciplining the children was another source of stress for the women. According to Aaliya, if her husband lived with them, just his presence would have been enough for her children never to misbehave. Humna also echoed the same thoughts when she shared her concerns with her husband when her son was starting high school “I told my husband I won’t be able to cope, especially if my son falls into bad company.” The absence of the fathers meant that the women also had to take on the role of family disciplinarian, a role for which they felt unprepared. According to Anum, before they moved to Canada, her husband was the authority figure in the family, but after their immigration, she had to discipline her children, since her husband did not “have the heart to be tough on them.” Even then, Anum still felt that just mentioning her husband’s name did more to instill discipline in her children, rather than a scolding from her.

Maryam, whose daughter Ayesha is eleven years old, felt that according to Pakistani cultural and societal norms parents had to be careful with their girls’ upbringing and being a vigilant parent was more a father’s responsibility, since “girls, you know, are always great favorites of their fathers.” Alternately, Shazia believed that it was imperative for her 12 year old son to be around his father since, “he needs a father, a friend with whom he can always share his thoughts and feelings.” Thus the women believed that the absence of their fathers put the children at a serious disadvantage.

The cycle of separations and reunions, which were an important aspect of family life in these astronaut families, were also a source of emotional and psychological tumult for these women and their children. Most families were able to meet at least twice every year. Having school-age children meant spending summer and/or winter holidays together in Pakistan or the Middle East. In addition, the men also visited their families in Canada once or twice a year, usually for up to three weeks at a time.

All the women (and their children as well) reported being very happy, relaxed and excited whenever there was a reunion. Conversely, nearly all ten women reported feeling depressed after every separation, and that it took them time to recover from these feelings.

Reunions usually brought happiness and some relief from the increased family responsibilities for many of the women. As Uzma pointed out “I am always looking forward to them. Very much. When he is here, I am very relaxed, mentally and physically... he takes over a lot of the work, and I am with him, but we are doing things together. That is always so good.” Maryam believed that she and her children “...have no family here until he visits.”

However, these reunions were also a source of stress for some women. Maryam felt that although she looked forward to these meetings the impending separation was always on her mind. Thus she never really enjoyed her time with her husband. “I am very happy but all the time that he is here, I just keep feeling that again he has to go back. We will be apart again. This is a very bad feeling and even the good times, I cannot enjoy...he will go back...now five days are left, now four days are left. This is very bad for me.” In her case, the anxiety of the coming separation made the reunions distressing too.

Humna believed that while the reunions were a cause for happiness, handling the separations was particularly difficult for her. “When he leaves, we feel his absence a lot. When

he is here, he is helping me with everything, but when he leaves, the entire burden falls on my shoulders again, so I start getting a little irritated. It is very tough for me after he leaves. To again adjust to life without him becomes very difficult. In 15-20 days I get so used to having him around.” Aaliya, who worked, felt an added pressure of guilt when her husband visited. This was because she was not able to spend more time with him because of her work schedule, but also knew that she needed her job to cope with her loneliness when her husband was in Pakistan.

Anum echoed the same thoughts. She stated that it was more hectic for her when her husband came over since her workload at home increased. Visiting him in the Middle East was more relaxing for her. While her domestic staff there did all the household chores, she was free to enjoy her husband’s company. Yet, coming back after spending two months away from Canada every summer seemed as if they had “...never lived here alone, it’s like starting all over again, the sadness and loneliness really hits you.” Aaliya also reported getting very disturbed after visiting her husband and all her relatives in Pakistan. In fact, it took her nearly four months to settle back into her life here in Canada.

For Maryam, going to visit her husband in the Middle East was something she regarded as the highlight of her year. This was because her house in the Middle East was still set up as before, which made her feel, for those two months, as if nothing had changed for them as a family. But coming back to Canada was always a depressing prospect. Similarly, Shumaila felt that she always became very depressed after returning to Canada from one of her visits to the Middle East and “getting into the (right) frame of mind takes some time” but she could not afford to indulge her own feelings since her children depended on her to look after them as well.

Due to the cycle of these reunions and separations, these astronaut families organized their lives around waiting and planning for the next visit and dealing with the separation. Shazia

explained that the level of excitement in her house starts building up as her children begin counting days to their father's visit. For Uzma, every time her husband left, she had to really make an effort to get the children readjusted to being away from their father but very soon they "start counting days for my husband's next visit."

For some of the older children, a visit from their father required some adjustment in their routines. Dina, Saima's daughter, felt that everyone in the house had to readjust their "routines because he is here." However, Aaliya's daughter, another teenager, noted that it did not take long for her to get back to her regular lifestyle in Canada after her father left, "because that is normal." While Shumaila's seventeen year old daughter, Areeba complained about finding it difficult to concentrate on her school work after a visit from her father, her eleven year old son, Umair, observed that if their father came for a short visit, it was easy to readjust without him, but if the visit were longer, perhaps for a month, then it was always difficult going back to not having him there. Shumaila's younger son, six year old Numair shared that he felt so upset every time after his father left, "I just don't want to do anything, so I just play on my PlayStation."

Mehreen, who has been here the longest among the ten women, believed that six years back, the separations and reunions were emotionally very difficult for her. Every time her husband left, she would cry but hid it from her daughters so as not to upset them. Yet now when he leaves, her main concern is his safe journey. For her "the emotional part was over."

Many of the women also acknowledged their husbands' loneliness due to this family set up. Humna felt that her husband had nothing to come home to after work every day in the Middle East, since he was alone in the house. Therefore, this separation was tougher for him than it was for her and the children. Maryam also believed that being away from their two children was particularly difficult for her husband since he really missed them both. However, Uzma's

husband tried to stay connected with their children by helping their older son with his Math homework over Skype, or by playing online video games with his children on the weekends. Only Humna alluded to a possible weakening of marital bonds between spouses when she said that “this family arrangement probably affects the relationship between a husband and wife as well, because we get used to living without each other.”

Non-astronaut Pakistani immigrant families tend to avoid astronaut families, probably because they do not fit the mould of traditional Pakistani (patriarchal) family arrangements. The term “begumpura families,” which is used often to describe Pakistani astronaut families by other Pakistani immigrants, is derisive in its connotation, because these families are headed by women, rather than men. As a result, the women from astronaut families are also reluctant to meet other non-astronaut Pakistani immigrant families, for fear of being judged.

Even in cases where an astronaut family had been friends with a non-astronaut immigrant family before they both moved to the GTA, it was difficult for them to maintain their relationship. This was because when traditional Pakistani families socialize, the men and women generally do not intermingle except when dinner or other meals are served. Uzma observed that she was uncomfortable meeting other Pakistani immigrants families in Canada because “What will their husbands do, when my husband is not there? They will get bored.” Saima became reluctant to accepting dinner invitations from non-astronaut families, and especially avoided social events where children were not invited, since she felt uncomfortable attending those dinners without her husband. For Shumaila, attending late night events like dinners was nearly impossible without her husband. She routinely refused these invitations for fear of staying out too late, alone. However she sometimes she accepted some invitations because she still wanted to join the social network within the Pakistani immigrant community. Weekends were particularly

tough for these families because they could not invite or visit any other Pakistani families where the men were present.

Strategies for Dealing with the Challenges

A striking aspect of the stories of nearly all ten women was their coping strategies and the resilience they displayed when faced with challenges. Saima noted that only through flexibility and adaptation could one settle down and move on after migrating to Canada as part of an astronaut family. Maryam felt that she had no other option but to take on all the challenges which came her way, be it buying property, working with lawyers, finding movers and packing up her all her household things on her own while also taking care of a young baby. She said she just had to "...make myself strong and go out and do what I have to do." Aaliya found strength in being patient during her tough times and like Humna, felt that overcoming challenges helped her become self-confident and self-reliant. In addition, Humna felt that focusing on the positives of the situation, such as better schooling and future prospects for the children, helped her settle down faster, rather than only thinking about her loneliness and the added responsibilities. Similarly Anum felt that negativity only led to sadness and "...instead of saying, I hate it here, I just say, let's get things done."

Shumaila felt that the closeness she has developed in her relationship with her children helped her cope with her loneliness and increased responsibilities. "There has been one big change in my relationship with my children. They have become closer to me. Back in the Middle East, there was so much work someone else was doing. We had a nanny and a driver. But I feel that here we are closer. They (the kids) are more empathetic, more caring and helpful now... they are always there to give me advice." Uzma also reported something similar when she recounted how her older daughter took over many of the household duties, especially taking care

of her younger siblings, when Uzma's younger daughter was hospitalized for pneumonia at the Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto. According to Uzma, "My older daughter is really my biggest support. She helps me and takes on so much responsibility, taking care of the younger ones, doing work around the house."

Faith in Allah (Arabic for God) was also a source of comfort for many women and helped them cope with and accept all the changes in their lives. On the one hand, Shumaila and Aaliya felt that once the family had made the decision become an astronaut family, they left the rest to Allah to help them settle down and make a success of their decision. Mehreen's faith had also been a source of strength for her and she firmly believed that it is only because of her faith that she was able to spend six years as an astronaut woman. "All I can say is that Allah has been very kind to me. Nothing really bad has happened to me or my children since we moved here. Whenever I asked Allah for help, he gave it to me."

Shazia, however, was still unhappy with the decision to become an astronaut family, and said that "All families must live together. I am still stuck in the middle about how I feel about this decision. I can't say it's wrong, because Allah decides everything. Still there are doubts in my heart." She had been trying to reconcile her situation with her faith in Allah, but could not overcome her misgivings about how families should live. Nevertheless, she said she had "Left everything to Allah and came here."

Aaliya felt that working outside the house helped her deal with her loneliness and made living as an astronaut woman bearable. Aaliya, who was able to find employment in Canada, felt that "If I don't work or leave my job, it is hard for me to stay alone. It is a big blessing to have a job and I love my job, so I need my job. I need to go out from my house and that is how we are

managing without my husband. If I didn't work, and I became a stay-at-home mom, then it would have been very difficult for me to stay without my husband."

Mehreen found keeping busy the best way to cope with feelings of depression. "It was very important keeping myself and the girls busy. Just sitting in the house meant being frustrated and depressed. I started going to their schools and volunteering. This is how I made friends also." Because she really she missed her extended family in Pakistan, stepping out into the community helped Mehreen overcome her feeling of loneliness. It also helped her connect with other families which she liked because "having friends really made things easy. You don't have relatives here, at least not very close relatives. Also picking up kids from school helped me make a lot of friends. I have a very close friend who is from Sudan. I had never made any friends outside my own culture. It has been a good experience, making friends here." Even her daughters benefited from being involved in community events. She said, "I used to take them to the Ontario Early Years programme and also to the LION bus, going to the library and attending all those events just to keep them busy. So that's how they were able to overcome feeling sad, that daddy is not here and their grandparents are not here." She believed that making herself and her daughters independent was an important step towards developing resilience. "How much can your neighbours come and help? They have their own problems. They are also surviving alone" she said. Mehreen saw this independence as a source of growth and development for all of them. She said, "Some friends used to always take me for grocery with them, especially when the girls were younger. But now the girls help me. We have a trolley and if there is more stuff, they put it in their backpacks. So we have become very independent now, we do all our work on our own."

For Maria, totally cutting herself off from her life in the Middle East was the coping strategy she chose for her family. "I know that if I keep going back then it will be very difficult

to come back and readjust to life here... The lifestyle there is so luxurious, you are just relaxed.” She felt that instead of constantly comparing their Canadian lifestyle with the Middle Eastern one, and always living between two worlds, it would be better for her family to exclusively focus on settling down in Canada.

For Uzma, the solution to settling down in Canada away from her husband was to find other, similar Pakistani astronaut families. “We are more comfortable meeting with them. We have to do this, otherwise we will feel very down and totally cut off from our community. So every weekend, we go out together, take the kids to the park, or to the mall or to watch a movie, so the kids don’t feel so bored on the weekends and we meet up and catch up with each other.”

Humna had devised another way of forming her own social network of astronaut families in Canada. By staying in touch with all her friends and acquaintances in the Middle East, she would find out if any new astronaut women were moving to Canada, and once they had arrived, she would connect with them. According to her social network within the Pakistani astronaut families “Last year, 25 women moved to Canada, with their children and they are doing well. They are managing.”

For some women who had extended family and relatives living in Canada, particularly in the GTA, the feeling of being othered by the greater Pakistani community was lessened. Aaliya, whose brother and cousins live in the GTA, felt connected to the community through her extended family. Thus, she has never felt like an outsider. Similarly, Shazia, whose brother and sister live in the same city, found their presence to be a “blessing” and often visited them when she was feeling lonely or upset.

For all ten astronaut families, communicating through telephone, Skype or FaceTime took away some of the loneliness. Using FaceTime or Skype made the families feel as if they

were all together. As Dina, Saima's daughter commented wryly "It is the closest to being with dad. I think that with a few years it will be holograms and then it will be like he is really here."

The time difference between Canada and Pakistan and/or the Middle East also helped these families stay closely connected and up to date on each other's lives. When the men were getting off from work, the women were just returning from dropping off their children at school.

Therefore, throughout the morning, the husbands and wives were able to talk with each other, catching up on each other's days. By the time the children returned from school, it was nearly time for the men to sleep but they still spent some time talking with the children before the family said goodnight. It was because of these improved telecommunication options that many families have been able to sustain this family set up for many years. As Uzma pointed out "It's better than nothing, I keep thinking that if this was 20 years ago, then I would just be writing letters to my husband, waiting for the post endlessly...my husband supports me a lot from there. I discuss everything with him, any problems or issues I am having or the children are facing." For Shumaila, talking to her husband every morning for two or three hours at a time made her feel closer to her husband than she had felt ever before.

The women often complained to their husbands about their loneliness and/or frustrations. The men were usually sympathetic and tried to support their wives as best as they possibly could. Maryam, relating her own experience said that "when I complain in front of my husband about this family arrangement, he says why are you so upset, take the car and go for shopping, go for coffee, go and watch movies...but I tell him that I don't feel like watching movies without you. I enjoy doing these things with the whole family, going alone does not make sense, I don't like it."

The men also appreciated everything their wives were doing for their families. Humna stated that her husband really appreciated all the effort she was making and she had heard similar

accounts from many of her friends as well, of their husbands thanking them. When Maryam bought a house in the GTA and moved into it, while taking care of her two young children by herself, her husband was pleasantly surprised because she had never done any of these things before and he thanked her for getting all the things done so well.

For many of these families, the men were still paying the home utility and credit cards bills online and generally managing the family finances. Some women appreciated their husbands' efforts. A few women, such as Shumaila, wanted to learn more about their family finances and take over some of these responsibilities, particularly pertaining to banking and bill payments, to be better informed of their spending patterns in the Canadian context. Again, this was a break from the traditional patriarchal practices, where according to Humna "Normally in our families, the husbands earn and the wives stay at home. They (husbands) only know about the family finances, but once we move here, we also start understanding the family finances."

For a few women after having successfully navigated their astronaut family in Canada for a couple of years, personal development was the next target. Both Saima and Shumaila were looking for colleges and university programmes to apply to, with the goal of securing employment in the future. Shazia had started attending Arabic classes so she could understand the Quran better.

Chapter 4 – Discussion and Analysis

According to the intersectional analysis framework, women face oppression from multiple sources and it is through the lived experiences of these women that their marginalization or privilege can be understood (Carastathis, 2014; Purkayastha, 2010). For women belonging to Pakistani astronaut families in Canada, there are indeed multiple sources of oppression but also many privileges.

To begin with, these women experience many privileges as wives and mothers in astronaut families. First, they choose to move to Canada with their children as a result of a joint decision with their spouses. None of these women was forced to move to Canada. This is similar to the experiences of the kirogi families, where this is a decision made by both parents together (Jeong et al., 2014). For other astronaut families too, spouses living in different countries work to make a success of this family arrangement since they both have jointly decided to adopt this family arrangement (Waters, 2001).

Another privilege enjoyed by women belonging to Pakistani astronaut families is their financial security. The women continue to enjoy their middle-class lifestyle in Canada, which is financed by their husbands' earnings from the Middle East and Pakistan. In fact, some Pakistani women seek paid employment as a way to fight their loneliness, rather than to help with the family finances. This is an important privilege and is only possible because their husband's income supports their middle class life style. This can be compared to the experiences of the Hong Kong and Taiwanese families, for whom the salary and status of their husbands in their countries of origin help sustain their middle class lifestyle in Canada (Waters, 2001). For the Korean kirogi families, the astronaut families are able to maintain American-style middle-class households because of the husbands' successful careers and earning and sometimes because the

husbands also scale back their own living standards in South Korea to help their families live in ease in the US (Finch & Kim, 2012).

The ability to plan for their children's future is another privilege the women from Pakistani astronaut families enjoy. Unlike refugee families, or immigrant families living in poverty, they are able to choose the schools and universities their children attend. In addition, because of their permanent residence status, their children are charged domestic students' tuition fees at universities and colleges. Thus they are able to provide the best possible educational opportunities to their children. Their situation and privileges can be compared to the *kirogi* families, who move to the US with the sole aim of providing their children with a western education so that their chances of securing prestigious jobs in South Korea increase tremendously, which in Korean culture is the most respectable way of moving up the social ladder (Finch & Kim, 2012; Jeong et al., 2014).

Travel to their country of origin or where their husbands are based for work is another privilege enjoyed by women in Pakistani origin astronaut families. Every year, they travel to Pakistan or the Middle East to spend their children's summer break with their husbands. This mobility gives them a temporary break from the stresses and challenges of living as a new immigrant and a single parent in Canada. Thus, while separation from their husbands is a significant family stressor for these women, they are able to overcome this by using the financial resources available to them. Women belonging to Taiwanese astronaut families also travel back to Taiwan occasionally but there is limited mobility for the women from Hong Kong since it is primarily the husbands who travel between East Asia and North America to meet with their families (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2001). For *kirogi* mothers, the visa category on which they are residing in the US determines how often they travel back to South Korea (Jeong et al., 2014).

Thus, unlike kirogi mothers, the Pakistani women, due to their status as permanent residents of Canada, are able to choose when and also how often they travel abroad to visit their husbands and extended families, which is another important, related privilege.

Another important privilege is that these women live away from their parents in law once they move to Canada. In the case of all ten women, the parents in law continued to reside in Pakistan.. As part of an astronaut family living in Canada, these women enjoy the privilege of being away from the traditional patriarchy of their extended families and households of Pakistan.

The Pakistani astronaut families are also able to utilise modern communication technology very successfully. This is another significant privilege. With the internet, easy and inexpensive communication among family members becomes possible. Software programmes such as Skype and FaceTime allow family members to stay in touch and closely bonded. This also helps them maintain an astronaut family set-up over long periods of time. The time difference between Canada and the Middle East or Pakistan is also convenient for electronic communication. They are able to bridge their physical and geographical distance and participate as fully as possible in each other's lives, which is a privilege that was unavailable to immigrant transnational families even a decade ago. Similarly, other astronaut families living in North America also utilize modern communication technology to stay in touch so the men are up to date on all the developments in the lives of their wives and children (Nora Chiang, 2008; Finch & Kim, 2012; Jeong et al., 2014).

Almost all the women belonging to astronaut families note changes in their relationship with their children. The Taiwanese women report feeling closer to their children since as stay-at-home mothers, they are able to spend more time with them in Canada as compared to when they lived in Taiwan (Nora Chiang, 2008). Some kirogi mothers, in contrast, report tense and strained

relations with their children as the families settle into their new lives in the US (Finch & Kim, 2012). For the Pakistani astronaut mothers, living in Canada affords them two important privileges - not only are they closer to their children, the children also reciprocate these feelings of care and love. Some mothers claim that their children show empathy for them and for the stresses they feel, while others recall that the children stepped up and helped them during times of extreme stress, or shared their household workload. This is a privilege which these mothers experience only after they start living in Canada as part of a Pakistani astronaut family.

Alongside the privileges, these women also face many oppressions. The lack of job opportunities for their husbands is a source of oppression for these women. Some men do not even attempt to look for jobs due to the poor employment prospects in Canada. Others spend several months looking for employment, which is commensurate with their non-Canadian qualifications and work experience. When they do not find any employment, they leave their families and move back to the countries where they worked before.

These families cannot change the time span within which they must utilise their Canadian residency papers. If they do not move to Canada within the given time limit, they may lose the option to migrate here. As a result, they end up becoming an astronaut family regardless of other internal contexts of their family, such as the husband's career, or the children's ages. This change leads to uncertainty and anxiety among families, especially for the women who now have the task of settling down with their children in a new, unknown country, without the support of their husbands. The women become the astronauts, ejected into the figurative outer space, while the husbands return to their familiar surroundings. Thus, the lack of employment prospects for their husbands becomes a source of oppression for these women.

These experiences of Pakistani origin astronaut families can be compared to those of the Taiwanese and Hong Kong astronaut families living in Canada. The better business and employment opportunities available to the men in their country of origin as compared to those available in Canada are the most important reasons for many East Asian families choosing an astronaut family arrangement (Waters, 2001). Even when some men arrive in Canada with their families, many cannot find appropriate jobs and have to move back to their countries of origin (Nora Chiang, 2008). In contrast, for the kirogi families, the main reason for an astronaut family set up is better educational opportunities for the children and the men do not consider leaving their jobs and businesses in South Korea to move to the US as a possible option (Jeong et al., 2014).

The patriarchal cultural traditions in Pakistan frame women's roles as wives and mothers. As wives they perform a narrow, circumscribed role in the family which is usually limited to everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning and the care of young children. Because husbands are usually the breadwinners and the wives are financially dependent on them, the former assume the major decision maker's role in the family. The moral and educational upbringing of the children is a shared role, but fathers continue taking the lead in disciplining children and instilling a sense of right and wrong in them. For many Pakistani women the lack of independence in decision-making or independent action is a source of oppression. When they move to Canada, the women can no longer afford not to make everyday decisions, or to implement them by themselves. Neither their normative roles, nor their prior experiences prepare them well for this change

In Canada these women become heads of their astronaut families. They are expected to perform, alone and successfully, a more expanded role in the family, which routinely takes them outside the comfort zone of their previous roles – developed in Pakistan or the Middle East - for

which they are ill-prepared. In addition, they have to deal with the assumption that they are accountable to their husbands for making sure the children follow Pakistani cultural practices and also excel in their academic work. This abrupt transition from one extreme of a narrow, well-defined position in the family with limited agency, to that of a much expanded role, where all responsibility and accountability now rests with them, is the most important source of their oppression. Many women feel that the responsibility for any poor or ill-informed decisions on their part will be theirs entirely, not shared with their husbands or the extended family. Many of them mention that had they taken greater responsibility in the family earlier, or been allowed them a greater share in family decision-making, they would have been better prepared for their current situation.

Another source of oppression is the difference between the living standards of middle class families in Canada as compared to those in Pakistan or the Middle East. Many of these women could afford domestic help, nannies and drivers when they lived in the Middle East or Pakistan. However, due to the different wage structure, it is difficult and expensive to hire similar help in Canada. Thus for the first time in their lives, these women have to clean their houses, drive their cars and look after their own children without any domestic help rather than just supervise this work, as they have been used to doing in the past (Khalid, 2011). Having never done any of these tasks before on their own becomes a source of oppression for many of them.

In the case of the Taiwanese and Hong Kong astronaut families, the women hold jobs before moving to Canada, with maids and nannies taking care of their homes and children (Waters, 2002). Becoming stay-at-home mothers once they move to Canada is their source of oppression (Waters 2002; Waters, 2003). In contrast, the Pakistani women are stay-at-home

mothers with very little exposure to the outside world. Many of them have not learned to drive, or manage finances, or deal with movers or contractors. Their source of oppression, once they move to Canada, is the increased responsibility of their position as heads of their astronaut families, which until recently had been the sole responsibility of their husbands.

Patriarchy, as a source of oppression, is expressed in other ways as well for these Pakistani women. The othering of the women from these astronaut families within the Pakistani immigrant community is a direct result of cultural patriarchy and gender discrimination in Pakistani society. Pakistani women heading their households in Canada, in the absence of their husbands, are marked as different. The reputation of these intermittently single women can get easily tarnished if they are seen to be very socially active in the absence of their husbands. The absence of their husbands makes it difficult for these women to socialise even with non-astronaut families they had known before, because they are ostracised for the lack of a present male ‘guardian.’ This is similar to some kirogi mothers who face prejudice and criticism from other non-astronaut families belonging to the Korean community once they move to the U.S. although it is not clear if this criticism stems from Korean cultural patriarchy or from some other source (Kim et al., 2014).

The strangeness of being head of a single parent household for long periods of time and all the loneliness and isolation this brings, are interrelated sources of oppression. Meanwhile, many of the external contexts for these families cannot be changed. For instance, the option to move back to Pakistan where the women would be closer to their extended families is not available due to the worsening security conditions there. Thus, apart from the physical demands on these women of managing their homes and taking care of their children, there is emotional

and psychological strain which follows becoming a Pakistani woman belonging to an astronaut family in Canada.

For many Pakistani women from astronaut families, the role-reversal with children becomes another source of oppression. Depending on their children to help them navigate issues in everyday life is an unfamiliar and uncomfortable experience for some Pakistani women. They feel that their maternal authority is being undermined because of their dependence on their children. Some kirogi mothers also shared similar experiences of role reversal between mothers and children, which in their case resulted in parent-child conflict (Jeong et al., 2014).

A recurring source of oppression for the Pakistani women is the cycle of separations and reunions astronaut families face. In order to keep the family bonds strong, the family members often visit each other. While the reunions are always a source of joy, the separations negatively affect the psychological equilibrium of the women and children. This creates a crisis in the family. Both the women and the children report feeling depressed and disoriented after each separation. Additionally, their own beliefs and their Pakistani cultural context do not allow them to look at these episodes of intermittent elation and depression as a symptom of a mental health problem, due to the stigma attached to mental health issues in Pakistani society. They recognise it as a recurring problem in their lives, which is a natural consequence of their family set up, and accept it without any questions or protest. Every year the astronaut families go through repeated episodes of euphoria associated with meeting the men followed by even longer episodes of depression. During and after these episodes, it is only their belief in Pakistani family values, such as parental and spousal responsibilities and their active decision to remain part of this family set up, which provide them with a rationale but not necessarily relief from this potential mental health problem. None of the women mentioned the toll of the emotional upheavals, or a desire to

access medical or psychological counselling resources, which may be readily available in their immediate external environment, the Canadian cultural and social context. It can be hypothesised that this unacknowledged mental health issue could have long-term consequences on the health and wellbeing of the women.

Another source of oppression for these women is their newcomer status in Canada. This is similar to the experiences of other newcomer families in Canada. Not only do they have to cope with the demands of settling down, they also have to understand Canadian cultural norms and expectations. Many of these women belong to well-to-do middle-class Pakistani families and life in a Western country is not unfamiliar to them because of previous travel or exposure to Western media. However, like other immigrants, adjusting to the Canadian climate, especially the long and hard winters, commuting without their own cars, learning how to do small maintenance jobs around the house can be challenging. For instance, while many Canadian-born women do know how to change a bulb, being Pakistani middle class wives and mothers, these women have never needed to change one in their lives (Khalid, 2011). Therefore this simple activity becomes an unfamiliar experience for them. Their lack of prior knowledge and experience in certain very important aspects of Canadian everyday life makes their status as new immigrants a source of oppression for them. Korean kirogi mothers have similar concerns about adjusting to their new lives in the US (Jeong, et al., 2014). Some women found that performing small scale maintenance jobs around their homes took them out of their zone of comfort since they regarded these tasks as “masculine” while others saw them as an opportunity to become independent and self-reliant (Jeong et al., 2014).

A family stressor related to their astronaut family status is the change in their cultural context, that is, the external context in which their family is now geographically located. Some

women are able to accept this change and especially want their children to integrate in Canadian society by balancing the demands of their new cultural environment and that of their Pakistani cultural values. Other women continue to struggle, unable to change their internal contexts to match their new reality and are apprehensive that their children will adjust to Canadian ways and forget their own values.

A similar but related concern many other women have concerns the change in the traditional patriarchal culture of their nuclear families, due to the absence of the men. While some women have accepted their role as the head of their nuclear families in Canada, others have not been able to do so and are afraid to fully take on a more central role in case it infringes upon the authority and respect fathers usually command in traditional Pakistani families. Many women also feel accountable to husbands for the children's traditional relationship with their father. This becomes a source of oppression for these women because they feel that they will be held accountable by their husbands and also by their husbands' families if the children do not show the proper respect afforded to fathers in traditional Pakistani families. While women belonging to other astronaut families do work towards maintaining a loving and close relationship between their husbands and their children, the literature does not indicate that they feel responsible or accountable to their husbands or their families for maintaining the traditional cultural role of parents within their nuclear families (Jeong et al., 2014; Waters, 2001).

Some children in these Pakistani astronaut families find it difficult to adjust to their new family arrangement, which adds to their mothers' challenges. Sometimes they resist accepting their mothers as disciplinarians or decision makers in the family, or become quiet and withdrawn in the absence of their fathers. Some children find it difficult to deal with the departure of their fathers after a reunion. This is particularly true for younger children who develop insecurities in

their relationship with both parents and some even start suffering from night terrors after their fathers leave.

Fear of being alone for the first time is another stressor for the women who may never have lived without their husbands before moving to Canada. Changing some of their external contexts is impossible in this situation, therefore many women try to change their perception of the situation and find effective ways to deal with this fear. Many start understanding the source of their fear, such as the fear of being burgled and take steps to deal with this while others only focus on the positives of their situation and therefore find psychological strength from this.

One unpleasant consequence of an astronaut family set up is the strain that marriages can come under as a result of spousal infidelity. Many husbands of Taiwanese and Hong Kong families find girlfriends and mistresses once their wives and children leave for Canada, causing their wives to suffer emotionally and psychologically as a result of this betrayal (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2001). None of the Pakistani women alluded to any marital strains as a result of their astronaut family set up, possibly because they are unlikely to discuss a personal issue like this with a researcher. Only one woman actually alluded to a possible change that she had sensed in her marital relationship as both she and her husband were getting used to living without each other.

Despite the different crises faced by these families, the women develop effective coping strategies and resilience so as to move beyond all these challenges and settle down in Canada. The goal for all these women is to settle down in Canada and eventually acquire Canadian citizenship. To achieve this end, they find faith in God to be an important coping mechanism. Many Hong Kong and Taiwanese women find solace through religion, not only through their faith but by going to church and participating in church activities (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters,

2003). They also find support through the help and counselling they receive from religious organizations (Nora Chiang 2008). Pakistani women in contrast do not generally go to mosques, and thus the religious community is not their source of resilience. It is their faith in God which becomes their guide and source of strength, and they turn to religion at a personal level whenever they face challenges or problems.

In the same way, by only focusing on the positive aspects of their lives instead of thinking of what is missing in their lives, many Pakistani women from astronaut families are able to carry on. For some women, this family arrangement gives them an opportunity to develop very close and loving relationships with their children. The care, respect and empathy they get from their children helps them cope with the challenges they face. What is more, for some women, their perception of their role and responsibilities within their families also changes with time. After they have lived as a single parent for a few years, they want their husbands to realise that just because they are in Canada with the children, they cannot be solely held responsible for the upbringing and wellbeing of their children.

These women also learn to negotiate their way around Pakistani patriarchal cultural expectations at the societal level. They find other astronaut families like their own to connect with so that they are no longer dependent on traditional non-astronaut Pakistani immigrant families to include them in their social network. Therefore like the Taiwanese and Koreans, Pakistani women meet with other similar astronaut families from their communities on weekends and holidays and this helps them cope with their loneliness and their need to socialize (Nora Chiang, 2008; Waters, 2002).

Additionally, these women also start acquiring new skills, such as learning how to drive, taking care of small and large home maintenance tasks, and even learning how to conduct their

family's business with bankers and lawyers- tasks which they have never performed before. Because the Canadian cultural context encourages them to become more involved in different aspects of life, many women have started utilizing the resources available to them in Canada to develop themselves. Some actively seek to enhance their skill-sets through enrolment in colleges and other educational programmes while others want their husbands to let them manage the family's finances in Canada rather than controlling them from abroad. These can be seen as examples of positive human development, which is a consequence of resilience (Lerner et al., 2012).

Pakistani women from astronaut families often complain to their husbands about the challenges they face in Canada. For these women, effective communication and visits by their husbands are the most likely reasons why they are able to live as part of an astronaut family for long periods of time. Complaining helps them share and cope with the stresses they face in everyday life. By contrast, the Korean kirogi women never complain to their husbands about the loneliness or the challenges they face while living in the U.S. Many kirogi women feel that the absence of complaints is the reason why they are able to manage this astronaut family set up for long periods of time (Finch & Kim, 2012). Similarly, while the time difference between East Asia and Canada becomes an obstacle in maintaining regular communication between family members in some Korean kirogi families, the time difference between Pakistani astronaut families and the men living in the Middle East or Pakistan works to their advantage and helps keep the families connected (Finch & Kim, 2012).

The men attempt to remain involved in the lives of their wives and children (Jeong et al., 2014). This is true for Korean kirogi, Taiwanese and Pakistani astronaut families. In both cases, the men visit their families in North America as well as maintain communication over the phone

and the internet (Nora Chiang, 2008; Jeong et al., 2014). The men also appreciate the efforts made by the women in providing a nurturing environment to their children and for taking on the stressful role of managing their homes and families in a new country (Finch & Kim, 2012). This becomes a source of strength and resilience for the women belonging to astronaut families, because if their efforts and sacrifice are being acknowledged and appreciated, they feel happy and valued.

Implications for Practice and Policy Recommendations

The findings of this research study point to two important issues which need to be evaluated by academics, practitioners and policy makers. The first relates to the invisible barriers in the job market for new immigrants to Canada. The Government of Canada offers many services to new immigrants to find employment, such as through Job banks on Canadian government websites, through its Service Canada offices, through its sponsorship of several employment bridging programmes and recognition by the government of private sector employers who are market leaders in providing employment to new immigrants (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014). Collaborative initiatives between the Government of Canada and its partners in the field of education such as the Canadian Immigrant Integration Programme (CIIP) offer valuable pre-departure services to new immigrants, their spouses and their dependents, so as to help prepare them for economic success on their arrival to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013). Of the provincial governments, the Government of Quebec offers an attractive programme to employers, the Employment Integration Programme for Immigrants and Visible Minorities (PRIIME), aimed at providing new comers with lasting employment (Canada Business Network, 2014). Many new immigrants are advised to seek volunteer positions to get in order to acquire some Canadian work experience or are placed into unpaid co-ops through their

bridging programmes until they can find paid employment (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2015). For new immigrants who are living off of their savings, volunteering and unpaid co-ops can also be a drain on family resources.

Nevertheless, the expectation from employers to show some Canadian work experience continues to be the biggest obstacle in the way of finding relevant and gainful employment (Islam, 2013). The new Canadian immigrant system, called the Express Entry system, which was rolled out in January 2015, attempts to match applicants for Permanent Residence to the existing labour shortages in different employment fields in Canada. This may address the discrepancy between skilled new immigrants and lack of job opportunities in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014).

Yet, the incentives given to employers to attract and retain new immigrants to skilled jobs are still not enough and many new immigrant families may continue to choose an astronaut family set up for the foreseeable future. Perhaps, the provincial and/or federal government should offer enhanced financial incentives to companies who hire new immigrants, rather than just recognising these organisations as industry leaders for their recruitment practices. Therefore, this is an economic and social problem which should be addressed to prevent new immigrant astronaut families to continue to fall through the cracks of the Canadian immigration and settlement system.

The second issue relates to the mental health of women belonging to astronaut families. Many suffer from the stress of being new immigrants and taking care of their homes and children in a new country, in the absence of their husbands. The one constant source of psychological strain on these women is the intermittent separation from their husbands. This occurs when they come back to Canada after visiting their husbands in Pakistan or the Middle East and when their

husbands leave after visiting them in Canada. Nearly all women report some form of psychological distress after each of these visits, referring to it as depression. The worrying aspect of this situation is that each episode of psychological distress comes immediately after a period of elation and happiness, which all these women (and their children) experience during their reunions with the men. This cycle of elation followed by depression occurs several times every year, yet its cumulative effect on the mental health and wellbeing of these women and their children is still unrecognised and unknown. If left unrecognised, this mental health issue may have intergenerational consequences such as poor mental health for the children and its repercussions on their lives and also on family relationships particularly between the mothers and the children. This mental health problem may also adversely affect the marital bonds of the spouses and may lead to emotionally painful and financially expensive divorces. However, another indirect consequence of this mental health problem may be expensive medical costs associated with treating these women and children if they start suffering from chronic mental health and psychological problems. As Canadian residents, these families will have access to government health cards, therefore the cost of their treatment will be paid for by the Government of Canada.

What must be recognised is that these women and in many cases the children as well need psychological counselling and help. They also have to be educated about the importance of mental health and seeking help to alleviate feelings of depression and despair. Only when they are able to overcome the cultural stigma attached to mental health issues in Pakistani society, will they be able to voluntarily seek help. By seeking help, they will discover effective ways to maintain their mental health and equilibrium after every cycle of reunion and separation.

Newcomer settlement services can help many astronaut families by recognising the needs of these women and their children as separate from those of other immigrant families. Free counselling services dealing with multiple issues such as taking care of children in single parent households and education about mental health problems may help these women recognise and manage the psychological and emotional strain they experience due to the cycle of reunions and separations they go through every year. In addition, free skills-based educational programmes similar to family literacy programmes, which are conducted in several different languages, can be designed to help these women learn certain basic life skills such as maintenance of small and large appliances in their homes, vehicle maintenance, verbal and written communications skills to help them in their interactions with schools as well as public and government institutions, as well as tips and skills to cope with Canadian winters and other practical lessons.

Limitations

Like any other study, this study has several limitations. First, the research is based on the experiences of ten women belonging to Pakistani astronaut families who live in the GTA in Ontario, Canada. Thus the findings are not generalizable to other astronaut Pakistani new immigrant families, or those who do not have an astronaut family set up. Second, children belonging to Pakistani astronaut families in Canada were interviewed as secondary subjects, while their mothers were the primary subjects of this study. The children's views about their family's situation are likely to be coloured by their own adjustment trajectories. Third, since the sample size was limited to ten families, I only interviewed the first ten women who agreed to volunteer for this study. However, from the results of this research project, I found out that each family had different experiences and different stories to share. Therefore, I believe that there are

many more stories which still need to be documented, and which may provide new perspectives and insights into the experiences of astronaut families.

Implications for Future Research

The women of Pakistani families face many challenges in their settlement process in Canada. Nevertheless, their lived experiences are varied, depending on the number and ages of children, and if the mothers have found employment outside their homes.

The most pressing need for future research is to recognise astronaut families as a distinct subset of new immigrant communities in Canada. With this recognition, the specific challenges faced by these families can be identified and highlighted especially since they are different from those of other new immigrant families where both men and women are living together, in Canada. Thus policy makers and newcomer settlement agencies may be able to provide them with appropriate services to help them settle in Canada.

There has been little or no research conducted on astronaut families belonging to other South Asian and Arabic speaking communities. Many Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Arabic speaking families, from the Middle East as well as North Africa, live in Canada as astronaut families. Since each community has its own social and cultural norms, the experiences, needs and challenges faced by astronaut families may differ vastly among different communities.

Furthermore, any Pakistani astronaut families living outside the GTA should also be included in future research on astronaut families. The families interviewed for this research study moved to a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Canadian urban centre (GTA) that already has a well-established South Asian community. Therefore, they did not report facing any racial, ethnic, religious or cultural discrimination during their settlement in Canada. However, women of astronaut families living outside the GTA, in areas of Canada where their ethnic and/or religious

community is not well established, may have different experiences and challenges in settling down in Canada as compared to the ten women included in this study.

Future studies on the topic of astronaut families should also consider men as subjects, along with the women and the children. The studies on astronaut families conducted so far do not look in depth at the issues and challenges men face while they live abroad, away from their families. For instance, while this study uncovered possible mental health issues suffered by women and children of astronaut families, what effect this family arrangement has on the physical and mental health of the men is unknown. Thus by including men also in future studies, a broader and a more all-encompassing view of the challenges faced by different members of an astronaut family within and outside Canada may emerge.

Conclusion

This study is a qualitative phenomenology which explores the settlement experiences of ten women of Pakistani origin who belong to transnational astronaut families. It highlights the problems and issues they face in terms of settling down in Canada, while dealing with the socio-emotional consequences of being separated from their husbands.

Many Pakistani families still follow the traditional patriarchal custom of men being the main breadwinners of the families, with the wives taking care of the home and children. When Pakistani families move to Canada as new immigrants, if the men do not find appropriate jobs many families decide to opt for an astronaut family arrangement.

The theoretical frameworks which have guided this research include theories which explain intersectional analysis, family stress and resilience. The target population for this research consisted of transnational astronaut families of Pakistani origin who lived in the GTA and who had immigrated to Canada in the last ten years. The women were the primary source of data but I thought their children may add to the validity and richness of my data. I managed to recruit 10 women and 12 children between the ages of 5 and 16. The data collection tool used was a semi-structured interview guide.

Several themes emerged from the data collected through the interviews. First, the families had different reasons for choosing an astronaut family arrangement. Some women stated that acquiring a Canadian citizenship was their motive for adopting this family set up. Others identified their children's education and future prospects in Canada as their main reason for choosing this family set-up and for some families the poor job prospects in Canada for their husbands was the reason for adopting the astronaut family set up.

Second, the women also enjoyed many privileges while being part of an astronaut family in Canada. All ten women claimed that the decision to have this family set up was a joint one and that not one of them was forced to move to Canada. The women belonged to middle class Pakistani families and were financially secure. They were able to plan and prepare for their children's future and to travel every year to Pakistan or to the Middle East, where their husbands live. They had also developed very close and loving relationships with their children after moving to Canada.

Alongside the privileges, there were many challenges these women faced while living in Canada as part of an astronaut family. Because of the patriarchal norms in Pakistani society the women had limited independence and decision-making experience but after moving to Canada, they had to take on many new family duties and responsibilities as part of their changed role in the family. Their unfamiliarity with many of these new tasks and responsibilities became a source of oppression for them. The cycle of separations and reunions, which the families undergo several times every year, was also a source of emotional and psychological turmoil for these women and their children. Also many women felt accountable to husbands for their children's upbringing and also for maintaining their children's traditional relationship of respect with their fathers. Loneliness and isolation was also something these women had to contend with, and related to this was the othering of these women and their astronaut families by non-astronaut Pakistani immigrant families.

Over time, these women developed different strategies for dealing with the challenges they faced. Many women turned to religion, at a personal level, whenever they faced any problems. Additionally, these women also started acquiring new skills, such as learning how to drive, taking care of small and large home maintenance tasks and even learning how to conduct

their family's business with bankers and lawyers- tasks which they had never performed before. Some of them were looking to further develop their skills-set by enrolling in college and university programmes. Some developed close and empathetic relationships with their children. These women also learned to cope with their loneliness and isolation by finding similar Pakistani astronaut families to socialise with.

There are some important implications for practice and policy recommendations which have emerged from the analysis of this research study. The most pressing need for future research is to recognise astronaut families as a distinct subset of new immigrant communities in Canada. Effective steps have to be taken to remove the invisible barriers in the job market for new immigrants to Canada. It is also very important to recognising the potential mental health problem these women and in many cases the children may develop because of the cycle of reunions and separations. Also these women must be counselled that there is no stigma attached to seeking help for mental health issues in Canada. For future research, the voices of the children and men should be included alongside those of the women in research projects on astronaut families.

Volunteer Participants Needed for a Research Study

The purpose of this study is to document the experiences of Pakistani transnational families* as they settle down in Canada.

Eligibility

- You belong to an Immigrant Family of Pakistani origin
- You have migrated to Canada in the past 10 years
- You live in the Greater Toronto Area
- Your Husband/Father lives outside Canada, for Employment Purposes

To be able to participate in this study:

- You will be interviewed for about an hour, in English or Urdu, based on your preference, by the student-researcher.
- If you agree, after your interview, your children will also be interviewed by the same student-researcher.
- If you agree, all the interviews will be audio-recorded.
- The place and time for the interviews can be decided between you and the student-researcher. For instance at the local community centre or public library, or any place where you cannot be heard or seen by other people.
- The audio recording of your interviews will be transcribed and this transcription will be provided to you.
- Your confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

* Transnational families are nuclear families which are separated by geographical distances and international borders, but still work at maintaining close family bonds among family members.

To learn more about this Research, contact Reema Farooqui

Email: reema1.farooqui@ryerson.ca

This research is conducted under the direction of the School of Early Childhood Studies, Ryerson University, Toronto

Volunteer Participants Needed for a Research Study

The purpose of this study is to document the experiences of Pakistani transnational families as they settle down in Canada. In this context, Pakistani Transnational Families are defined as new immigrant families of Pakistani origin who live in the Greater Toronto Area, and who have the father/husband, living outside Canada (either in Pakistan or the Middle East), for employment purposes. Therefore, such families are not only coping with immigration related concerns, but are also dealing with issues faced by many transnational families-intermittent separation and its effect on different aspects of family life.

If you belong to Immigrant Families of Pakistani origin, who have migrated to Canada in the past 7 years, who live in the Greater Toronto Area, and who have the Father/Husband, living outside Canada, for Employment Purposes, you can participate in this study

To be able to participate in this study:

- You will be interviewed, in English or Urdu, based on your preference, by the student-researcher, for about an hour. If you agree, after your interview, your children will also be interviewed by the same student-researcher. Also, if you agree, all the interviews will be audio-recorded. The place and time for the interviews can be decided between you and the student researcher. For instance, the interviews could be conducted at the local community centre or public library, at a place where you cannot be heard by other people, but where your confidentiality is maintained.
- The audio recording of your interviews will be transcribed and this transcription will be shared with you. In this way, if you need to have something changed or removed or added, the student-researcher will make the necessary changes. A copy of the revised transcript will also be provided to you.

To learn more about this Research, contact Reema Farooqui

Email: reema1.farooqui@ryerson.ca

This research is conducted under the direction of the School of Early Childhood

Studies, Ryerson University, Toronto

Appendix C-Informed Consent Form

How do Women and Children belonging to Transnational Families of Pakistani Origin Navigate their Settlement in Canada

Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participating Transnational Families

You, as the mother/wife in a transnational family, living in Canada, are being asked to volunteer to participate in a research study. This project is designed to gather information about how transnational families of Pakistani origin, navigate their settlement in Canada. Before you agree to be a participant, please read the following information, and ask as many questions as you want to be sure you understand everything about this project.

Investigators

This study is being undertaken by me, Reema Farooqui, Graduate Student, Ryerson University, in partial fulfillment of my Master's Degree, under the direct supervision of Dr. Mehrunnisa Ali.

Reema Farooqui –Student Researcher

MA- Early Childhood Studies

Ryerson University

reemal@farooqui@ryerson.ca

Mehrunnisa Ali- Research Supervisor

School of Early Childhood Studies

Ryerson University

maali@ryerson.ca

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to document the experiences of Pakistani transnational families as they settle down in Canada. In this context, Pakistani Transnational Families are defined as new immigrant families of Pakistani origin who live in the Greater Toronto Area, who have moved to Canada less than 10 years ago, and who have the father/husband, living outside Canada (either in Pakistan or the Middle East), for economic reasons. Understanding the settlement trajectories of these families will help us find out their specific needs and how these needs could be met.

Description

The data will be collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews of the participants. The participants in the study will comprise of 10- transnational families of Pakistani origin. All the interviews for the research will be conducted over a three month period in the fall of 2014. The main purpose of the interviews will be to understand the perceptions of these families about their experiences of settling down in Canada as members of transnational families.

For the purpose of this research study, two separate interviews will be conducted with each family. The first interview will be with you, the mother / wife. The second interview will be with at least one of your children, if you and your child agree. If you agree, both the interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed. If not, I will take notes during the interviews.

Both interviews will consist of some semi-structured questions. The place and time for the interviews can be negotiated between you and me. For instance, the interviews could be conducted at a private room in the local community centre or public library, any a place where your responses cannot be seen or heard by other people.

Risks and Benefits

There are some potential risks involved with this study, although it is definitely a minimal risk study.

- You and one (or more) of your children will be asked to share your experiences about living in Canada as new immigrants and as part of transnational families. It is possible that in recalling / talking about some of these experiences you may get emotionally upset. If this were to happen, you can tell me to stop the interview or decline to answer the question. I will also share a counselling resources list with you at the beginning of the study, so that you have this information on hand in the event that sharing your experiences with me causes you some distress, during or even after the interview.
- Your child/children may get upset recalling / talking about their experiences as members of transnational families. Again, if this were to happen, they or you can tell me to stop the interview or say pass to answer the question.
- As participants, you will not gain any direct benefit from your participation in this study. However, one of the potential benefits of this study is to add to the body of knowledge about transnational families of Pakistani origin. This knowledge and insights gained from

this study could potentially benefit other families in similar situations, families considering similar living arrangements and service providers who work with such families, such as teachers and doctors.

Confidentiality

- You will not be identified by name in any written or oral report. Instead a pseudonym will be used.
- Any information you provide will be stored in a password protected computer drive or papers kept in a locked drawer to which only I will have access. The only person with whom the data will be shared will be the Supervisor of this research study, Dr. Ali. The data will be maintained for five years after the completion the study and then destroyed. The hard copies of the data will be destroyed by shredding all the documents and the soft copies of the data will be destroyed by deleting them on my computer hard drive.

Voluntary Participation in the Research Study

- Your participation and that of your child/children, in this project, is voluntary. You will not be paid for your participation in this research study
- You may discontinue participation in the research study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study, any and all information collected from your interviews (or partial interviews) will not be used in the research.

Costs of the Study

- There are no costs to participate in this study.

Ethical Review

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects, at Ryerson University.

Questions or Concerns

In case you have any questions or concerns about this study please clarify them now. If you have any further questions about the study, please contact Reema Farooqui at

reemal.farooqui@ryerson.ca . You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Ali at maali@ryerson.ca .

If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a human participant of this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board:

Chair, Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
Email: rebchair@ryerson.ca
Phone: 416-979-5000 x 6300

Agreement

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. You completely understand the nature of this research project and your role as a participant in it, and any and all questions you have had about this project, have been satisfactorily answered. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights. You have also received a copy of this consent form.

_____	_____	_____
Name (please print)	Signature of Study Participant	Date

Do you agree to be audio-recorded, understanding that you can ask the recorder to be shut at any point, and that the recordings will be destroyed five years after completion of the project?

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name (please print)	Signature of Study Participant	Date

Do you give me permission to approach your child/children named _____

_____, to seek his/her assent for an interview.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I, the undersigned have fully explained the research to the above participant. In my judgement, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

_____	_____	_____
Name (please print)	Signature of Researcher	Date

Appendix D – Assent form for the Children

Assent Form for Child Participant

What is the purpose of this Research Study?

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Pakistani transnational families and especially children, as they settle down in Canada.

What are transnational families?

Transnational families are those families where some members of the family are separated over geographical distances. For instance, a family where the mother and the children are living in Canada but the father is living and working in another country.

Who is doing the Research Study?

My name is Reema Farooqui and I am a student at Ryerson University. I am doing this research study.

What will you be asked to do?

You will be interviewed by me. An interview is a conversation in which one person asks questions and the other replies. These questions may be about experiences and feelings. I will ask you questions about your experiences in settling down in Canada. The interview will last about 30 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded. If you do not want to be audio-recorded, I will take notes during the interview.

What are the possible risks of this study?

You may get upset recalling/talking about your experiences. If this were to happen, you can tell me to stop the interview or say pass to answer the question.

What are the potential benefits?

This experiences you share with me in your interview could potentially benefit other families, especially those with young children, in the same situation or families considering similar living arrangements as your family or people who work with such families and help them settle down in Canada, such as teachers and doctors.

You should know that:

- You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You won't get into any trouble with me or my university if you say no.
- You may stop being in the study at any time
- Your mother was asked if it is OK for you to be in this study. It is still your choice whether or not to take part.

What if you have any questions or concerns?

In case you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact me at reema1.farooqui@ryerson.ca or my research supervisor, Mehrunissa Ali at maali@ryerson.ca or if you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant of this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board at: rebchair@ryerson.ca.

I will give you a copy of this assent form for your own records

Sign this form only if:

- you have understood what you will be doing for this study,
- all your questions have been answered,
- you have talked to your mother about this project, and
- you agree to take part in this research

Name (please print)

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Do you agree to be audio-recorded (you can ask the recorder to be shut at any point, and that the recordings will be destroyed five years after completion of the project).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Name (please print)

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Appendix E- Interview Guide

Interview Guide

First part of the interview (women) – primary interviewee

1. When did you move to Canada?
2. How many members do you have in your family?
3. Are you all living together?
4. How long have you been living as a trans-national family?
5. What made you decide to have a trans-national family?
6. What did you feel about this decision at the time you took it?
7. How do you feel about it now?
8. Has this family setup had any effect on your family life? (followed by probing questions)
9. How do you stay in touch with your husband during his absence? How often?
10. How often do you meet your husband in a year? Where?
11. What are your feelings regarding these meetings? (followed by probing questions)
12. What are your children's feelings about this family setup? (followed by probing questions)
13. Do you do anything differently in your every-day life nowadays as compared to when you were all living together? (followed by probing questions)
14. How has your role in family changed because of your immigrant/transnational family setup?(followed by probing questions)

Second part of the interview (children) – secondary interviewee/s

1. How do you feel about living in Canada?
2. How do you feel about living away from your father? (followed by probing questions)
3. How often are you able to get in touch with your father?
4. Where and how often do you meet your father?
5. What are your feelings when you are about to meet your father? (followed by probing questions)
6. Are there any changes in your everyday life nowadays as compared to the time when you all lived together?
7. What do you do when you miss your father?

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