The Lived Experiences of the Aging of Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers Residing in the United States

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE AGING OF
HONG KONG CHINESE BABY BOOMERS
RESIDING IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

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Rapid aging of the majority and minority populations is occurring in the United States. Diverse aspects of aging, concerns of the aging of the baby boomer generation, and the heterogeneities among aging persons from diverse races and ethnicities have been examined in detail; however, there is a void in the literature that offers information about the aging of Chinese baby boomers. This qualitative study used a hermeneutic-phenomenological method to investigate the aging experiences of 11 Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers who are residing in the United States. The findings of this study will possibly enhance the literature about the cultural parameters that relate to these persons’ aging. The information can benefit counselors whose work involves this population. The results of this study are consistent, highlighting Hong Kong baby boomers’ sensitivities
to health issues, their perceived physiological changes and change in personality attributes, their desires to strengthen relationships with families and friends and to practice preventive healthcare, their concerns about losing independence, and persons that are important to their aging journeys such as children, spouses, and friends. From an existential perspective based on lived experiences (specifically corporal, temporal, spatial, and relational), the participants’ subjective somatic experiences reflected some negative changes such as decline in memory and a lower level of energy. Their temporal sensibilities motivated them to do things that are desirable and meaningful. Their subjective sense of space would be the settings where they nurture their relationships and maintain their active lifestyles. Their relationships seemed to be marked by their longing to see their children often and to grow old with their spouses and friends. The findings indicate that these participants are negotiating their aging identities, autonomy, generativity, and integrity. The factors that protect these baby boomers, such as positive attitudes and sound health, are consistent with the adaptive means that relate to their aging. The importance of this investigation culminates in the cultural meanings of these findings, as they can enrich the counselor education knowledge base. Counselors must develop awareness and understanding of these meanings and integrate them into their work with baby boomer clients of Chinese descent.
DEDICATION

The child yearned to take care of her parents; the parents did not wait. The trees longed for stillness; the wind’s blowing did not cease. It is my misfortune and anguish that my parents are no longer waiting for me to take care of them; they passed away. This August marks the 19th and 20th anniversaries of the death of my father and mother, who merely began their aging journeys prior to their death. I wish they were around—to tell me about their aging experiences as they lived in a foreign country. I wish they were around—to celebrate with me my success in this dissertation as well as my studies. It is to my beloved parents that I dedicate this dissertation as a token of my unwavering respect for them and with my most immense indebtedness for all the gifts they gave me.
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I take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to many individuals whose support and help to me have added light to my dissertation, my studies, and my research work. I am most grateful for the persons from the churches who helped me recruit participants. I cannot thank them enough for their efficient responses and their incredible help. I express my greatest thanks to the 11 Hong Kong baby boomers who participated in this study. In respect of confidentiality, I am unable to list each participant by name. I value their insights, which can enrich the literature on the important aspects of the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. This study would not have taken shape without their participation.

I offer immense appreciation to Dr. Lisa Lopez Levers, my dissertation chair. I am grateful for her professional guidance and mentoring over the last three years. I have learned a lot from her expertise and passion in research and teaching. Her demand for excellence has been a profound motivator for me. When I was on the wrong track, she helped me steer in the right direction. I am glad to have had her chair my committee. I especially thank Dr. Jered Kolbert for being on my committee. He has led me to view things from different perspectives. I also appreciate his attention to detail. I extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Launcelot Brown for his phenomenal insights and advice on my dissertation work, particularly on the technicalities pertaining to the data collection, the data analysis, and the Institutional Review Board application procedure. I am honored to have had him on my committee. I value all of my committee members’ feedback, support, and direction along my dissertation journey.
Much of the credit for this dissertation goes to the colleagues at Gumberg Library of Duquesne University. The colleague at the Silverman Phenomenology Center has helped me search pertinent texts. The colleagues at the reference section gave me remarkable advice on the American Psychological Association’s (APA) writing style. The colleague from the Electronic Thesis and Dissertations department offered me noteworthy instruction. Her patience has touched me immensely. I also like to thank the colleagues at Duquesne University’s Writing Center, who had helped me strengthen my writing skills.

I am truly grateful to David Mott, OP, a friend who has devoted time to help me polish my writing of the five chapters of this dissertation. His considerate gesture has inspired me to recognize the true meaning of help. I express my special indebtedness to him for his meticulous efforts and generosity.

This acknowledgement will not be complete without thanking my family and friends. Most of them live some distance away from me. I deeply value their care, support, and encouragement through their visits, telephone calls, emails, and prayers. My thanks to them are perhaps best expressed by the success of this dissertation and my doctoral studies.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT....................................................................................................................... iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT..................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................. xiii

CHAPTER I ......................................................................................................................... 1
 The Current Scenario ......................................................................................................... 1
  Background of the Study ................................................................................................. 2
    Aging of the Population ................................................................................................. 2
    Aging of the Baby Boomer Population ......................................................................... 4
    Aging of Asian Baby Boomers ..................................................................................... 4
    Aging of Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers ............................................................ 5
 Statement of the Problem ................................................................................................. 5
  On Aging .......................................................................................................................... 6
  On Minority Populations ................................................................................................. 10
  On Baby Boomers .......................................................................................................... 11
  On Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers ........................................................................ 13
 Purpose of the Study ........................................................................................................ 15
  On the First Goal: Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers ............................................. 15
  On the Second Goal: Counseling profession ............................................................. 16
 Questions of the Study ..................................................................................................... 19
 Conceptual Assumptions ................................................................................................. 20
  Ecological Development ............................................................................................... 21
  Psychosocial Developmental Stages ............................................................................. 22
  Continuity Theory .......................................................................................................... 22
 Importance of the Study ................................................................................................. 24
  The Rapid Aging of the Baby Boomer Generation .................................................... 24
  The Expansion of the Asian Aging Population .......................................................... 26
  The Expansion of the Aging Chinese Population ...................................................... 26
 Definitions of Key Terms ............................................................................................... 27
  Aging ............................................................................................................................... 27
  Older Adults .................................................................................................................... 28
  Hong Kong .................................................................................................................... 28
  Hong Kong Persons ........................................................................................................ 28
  Baby Boomers ................................................................................................................. 28
  Baby Boomer Generation/Cohort .................................................................................. 29
  Minority Population ........................................................................................................ 29
  Race ................................................................................................................................. 29
  Ethnicity .......................................................................................................................... 29
 Delimitations of the Study ............................................................................................. 30
  Length of Residency ...................................................................................................... 30
  Gender ............................................................................................................................ 30
  Setting ............................................................................................................................ 31
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER III</th>
<th>CHAPTER II</th>
<th>CHAPTER I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
<td>……………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Related Literature</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Literature Review</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing Literature Relevant to the Proposed Study</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Aging</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Aging of the Minority Population</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Baby Boomers</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Aging of Baby Boomers</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Aging of Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Relevant Counseling Perspectives</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Ecological Theory of Human Development</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Stages of Psychosocial Development</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Continuity Theory of Aging</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Overview</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Assumptions</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Themes</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Inquiry</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary and Secondary Purposes</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Strategies</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Instrumentation</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Recording</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing of the Informed Consent Items</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions and Biases</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Concerns</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermeneutic Phenomenological Reflection</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Theory of Human Development</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial Stages of Development</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Theory of Aging</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings of this Study</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping the Layout</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Information of Participants</td>
<td>……………………………………………………………………………………..</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Demographic Information</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting F1’s Account of Her Aging Experiences</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting F2’s Account of Her Aging Experiences</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting F3’s Account of Her Aging Experiences</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting F4’s Account of Her Aging Experiences</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting F5’s Account of Her Aging Experiences</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting F6’s Account of Her Aging Experiences</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting M1’s Account of His Aging Experiences</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting M2’s Account of His Aging Experiences</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting M3’s Account of His Aging Experiences</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting M4’s Account of His Aging Experiences</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Themes Reflecting M5’s Account of Her Aging Experiences</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Common Themes Relating to Meaning of Aging</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>Common Themes Relating to Perceived Signs of Aging</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>Common Themes Relating to Means of Coping with Aging</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>Common Themes relating to My Concerns about Further Aging</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17</td>
<td>Common Themes Relating to Persons (Figures) that Have an Impact on Participants’ Aging Journeys</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 18</td>
<td>Common Themes Reflected in Participants’ Accounts of Their Lived Dimensions, Ecological Factors, Psychosocial Themes, Continuity Factors, and Aging in Hong Kong or the United States</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

The Current Scenario

In 2010, there were 38.6 million persons who were 65 and over in the United States, and this figure represented 13% of the entire population (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2011). In the coming years, the older population will continue to grow, in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population (Brewington & Nassar-Mcmillan, 2000; Cornman & Kingson, 1996; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011a; Yee, 1992). In 2011, the first wave of baby boomers turned 65. By 2029, the 76 million babies born between 1946 and 1964 will have moved into the older adult category. All of these statistical data highlight the imminent aging of the United States population. In addition, in 2010, 6.86% of the total number of persons who entered the United States as immigrants and non-immigrants were 65 years of age and older (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2011). Among Chinese immigrants, 15.4% were older adults (McCabe, 2012). According to a forecast administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010a), by 2050, 8.6% of the older adult population will be Asians, Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. The message conveyed by all of these data is—the United States population is graying rapidly, and Asian and Chinese persons are crucial contributors to this aging scenario.

Aging, as one of the important changes in life, is an inevitable transition that requires necessary adjustments in various life spheres. Every person experiences major and minor changes across his or her aging span. Changes may include getting married, starting a new career, or moving to another country. Some of these changes are mild, while others can be challenging. For elderly immigrants, uprooting and resettlement are
additional sources of challenge in their graying process (Choudhry, 2001). This scenario resonates with some Chinese baby boomers who moved to the United States within the last decade or so. In addition to negotiating the changes that relate to aging, they are also confronting various types of transitions, both environmentally and culturally.

Aging, the baby boomer generation, and the minority population are topics prevalently discussed in scholarly literature. A growing stream of research has focused on various parameters pertaining to Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese persons and Chinese cultural aspects. So far, no literature has focused on Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers and their perspectives on aging. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the experiential factors of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States. To acquire in-depth perspectives that are discovery driven and qualitative in nature, the open-ended phenomenologically oriented method would help facilitate a deeper understanding of the subjective processes of aging. Complementing this research method is the theoretical framework that is made up of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development, Erikson and Erikson’s (1997) psychosocial development theory, and Atchley’s (1991) continuity theory of aging.

**Background of the Study**

**Aging of the Population**

In a book chapter, *The Dramatic Reality*, Taeuber (1990) argued that by 2030, approximately one in five Americans would be classified as an older adult. Older adults have become one of the fastest emerging groups in the United States (Lewis, 2001; Myers, 1995; Schwiebert, Myers, & Dice, 2000; Su, 2007). Between 2000 and 2030, the older adult population is anticipated to rise by 101% (U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services, 2011a); 26 states will double their elderly population (Bernstein, 2005; Qualls, 1998). These statistics reemphasize the realities of aging of the United States population.

Other salient factors are the racial and ethnic components that pertain to the aging American population. In the fiscal year 2010, 52,425 persons aged 65 and over obtained legal permanent residency in the United States, 42,618 became citizens, 3,276 entered under the refugee category, and 3,225,188 were admitted as non-immigrants (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2011). These numbers are significant because they indicate the upsurge of the non-European minority population in this country, much of which will belong to the elderly population. The 1998 US Census data (as cited in Olson, 2001) forecast that by 2030, the minority older adult population is expected to increase to 25% of the entire elderly population.

With regard to the minority population, in an article on *Social Integration among Chinese and Korean American Elders*, Kang (2007) articulated that from 2000 to 2025, Asian American older adults would increase by 246%. In addition, Chinese immigrants were generally older than other immigrant cohorts (Terrazas & Batalova, 2010). Earlier studies reported that most Chinese elders lived in major cities on the West and East Coasts (Olson, 2001).

A study on the most frequently pursued leisure activity among Hong Kong elderly persons indicated that 90% of the participants watched television or listened to radio on a daily basis, while playing cards and mahjong were the least preferred activities (Chou, Chow, & Chi, 2004). While some of these data may not resonate with the lifestyle and/or the perspectives of aging of persons who are in the initial stage of aging, all of these
scenarios about aging were important to this study because they informed the investigation of the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese population that is growing in this country.

**Aging of the Baby Boomer Population**

The enormous size of the baby boomer population, coupled with their oldest members officially becoming older adults in 2011 (Adams & Blieszner, 1998; Draper & Anderson, 2010; Frey, 2010; Hartman-Stein & Potkanowicz, 2003; Rollins, 2008), influences tremendously the demographics of the United States (DeVaney, 1995; Pettigrew, 2008). The baby boomer population, by their sheer size and reputation for creating trends and moving markets, is likely to craft a novel meaning of aging, and induce a constellation of lifestyle modifications in contemporary society.

**Aging of Asian Baby Boomers**

Despite the uniqueness that exists among persons from different nationalities and regions in Asia, some of these countries and regions share cultural practices, norms, and experiences of modernizations, which bring about comradeship among many Asians. Some Asian regions share similar linguistic structures, while other Asian territories share analogous infrastructural designs. In 1978 in China, Deng Xiaoping began a modernization drive and economic reform (Wang, 1995). Since then, many cities have undertaken significant makeovers, mirroring the growth that took place in Hong Kong in the 1950s. The urbanization, industrialization, and phenomenal growth in China have narrowed the ethnic and cultural gaps immensely among persons of Chinese heritage in China, Hong Kong, and in other parts of Asia. Thus, the aging experiences of Hong Kong baby boomers who are residing in the United States will forecast relevant references to
the aging experiences of their contemporaries of Chinese descent in the United States, in China, in Asia, and in other parts of the world.

**Aging of Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers**

Although there is no further breakdown of the number of Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, it is safe to assume that a reasonable percentage of the previously discussed minority population data represents Hong Kong Chinese persons born between 1946 and 1964. Some of these boomers might have moved to the United States several decades ago, while some might have settled down quite recently. Comparable to their American counterparts, Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers have played a role in effecting changes in society. Back in their home country, for many years, these boomers were society’s agents of change (Siu, 1996). They invested their efforts in shaping and strengthening Hong Kong’s economy (Law & Wong, 1997). As they move into later years of life in the United States, they will partake with the American baby boomers in reframing the meaning of aging.

Factors underscored in the background of this study have substantiated the scenario of the rapid aging of the United States population that is constituted by the graying of both the majority and minority populations in this country. The aging of American baby boomers, including Asian and Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, has made an impact on the aging demographics of the American population. Examining this background helps to ascertain the statement of the problem of this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

Globally, the progress in public health and hygiene has made possible longer life expectancy (Powell & Cook, 2009). The increase in the number of years of life is one of
the major reasons for the rapid upsurge of population aging in the United States and in many developed countries in the world (Powell & Cook, 2009). The rapid aging of the American population signifies a profound shift in its demographics. Other prominent factors that contribute to this shift include the aging of baby boomers and the aging of minority persons. Specifically, the aging of the Asian as well as the Chinese baby boomer population plays a role in the demographic changes of the American population. The components of each of the factors, such as aging, minority population, baby boomers, and Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, contribute to the backdrop of the chief concern in this inquiry. These factors are examined and discussed in the coming sections.

**On Aging**

Over hundreds of years, old age has been defined in diverse ways and contexts by diverse social groups, and old age has chronological, functional, and cultural meanings (Thane, 2010). In the United States, the Social Security Act of 1935 stipulated that persons who reached the age of 65 were entitled to old age benefits (Atchley, 1991; Markides & Mindel, 1987). This criterion for payment of old age benefits has made chronological age a threshold factor for individuals to retire from paid employment or to embrace some lifestyle changes. Hence, the age of 65 has become an arbitrary consensus for the beginning for old age (Meisner & Hynie, 2009), and individuals who have turned 65 are classified as “older adults” or “older persons.” Common American terms used to describe persons who are 65 and over are aged, elderly, elders, older adults, older persons, and seniors.

**Older adults.** Older adults form a distinct group that shares experiences, reminiscences, and customs that are unique among its members (Blando, 2011).
Nevertheless, the older population is dissimilar and varied; although older persons share some life experiences, their reactions to those experiences can be different and distinct (Myers, 1994). Diversities among older persons are characterized by education, health, competency, and financial stability, as well as by age, sex, ethnicity, and race (Bronfenbrenner, McClelland, Wethington, Moen, & Ceci, 1996). The demands and concerns of older adults today may not be the same as those of tomorrow (Stickle & Onedera, 2006). Likewise, the demands and concerns of previous generations may not be identical to those of today. The key to understanding today’s older persons’ needs and concerns is to attune to these persons’ meaning of aging in today’s context. To prepare for this attunement, it is helpful to explore the crucial objective and subjective aspects of aging for today’s older adult population.

**Aging.** A universal truth about aging is that each experience is unique, as individuals experience aging in different forms, at varied time frames, and to dissimilar extents. For example, not all persons feel old when they reach their 60s, and not all persons experience loneliness after their adult children become independent and live apart from them. Some remain very independent, while others seek the assistance or comfort of living with peers in homes or communities for the aging. Some older persons may feel excited about transferring to a new environment such as an assisted living home, while others resent this transition. Aging refers to the course of growing old (Markides & Mindel, 1987), which can be perceived a positive or a negative part of natural developmental phases, and aging begins much earlier than it becomes evident (Atchley, 1991). All human persons continually experience aging, and the experience can occur in unique circumstances, co-creating its effects (Baars, 2010).

7
Another important reality about aging is that it does not happen overnight; it occurs on a gradual basis. Aging is a personal, socio-emotional, and psychological concept driven by the way persons perceive themselves as they live their later years of life (Meisner & Hynie, 2009). As people age, they will change the values and preferences that they used to hold onto when they were younger (Smith & Clurman, 2007).

Understanding aging is quite a complex matter. Visual traces of aging that mask the inner, vibrant identities of persons are classic examples of the complexity of aging that Featherstone and Hepworth (as cited in Cole & Ray, 2010) discussed. The key to unfolding the complexity of aging is to “step out into the true existential unknown of these new years of life now open to us, and to find our own terms for living it” (Friedan, 2006, p. 69). More important, “the role of old age needs to be reobserved, rethought” (Erikson & Erikson, 1979, p. 62), as it furnishes the perception of the experience of aging in the context of today’s living. The crucial indicators of aging that need to be reexamined and reconsidered are chronological aging, functional aging, life phases, cultural aging, and the social meaning of aging.

**Chronological aging.** Many people perceive chronological age as the threshold of aging merely because of the number itself. Chronological age is also the marker for social privileges such as old age pension (Thane, 2010). In many places, turning 60 is the age people begin to enjoy seniors’ benefits such as free drinks and concessions from public and entertainment services.

**Functional aging.** Another indicator of aging is by means of the person’s functional age. Functional age is identified by visible traits, mental and physical capacities, and strengths (Atchley, 1991). Examples of functional aging include thinning
or graying of hair, wrinkling of skin, loss or deterioration of memory, and weakening or loss of hearing capacity. These circumstances of aging will influence myriad facets of persons’ way of living (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1996).

**Life phases.** When reexamining and reconsidering important aspects of aging, life phases and developmental stages offer the clarifying lenses. According to Achtley (1991), life phases include adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, middle age, later maturity, and old age. In the realm of psychosocial development, Erikson and Erikson (1997) talked about the eight stages of life cycle that consist of infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age.

**Cultural aging.** The next crucial pointer of aging is cultural aging. Cultural aging refers to the norm set by society or community by which persons appear old (Thane, 2010). For example, people in many societies consider a person old because this person has lots of gray hair. In some cultures, people who have retired are considered old. However, in some societies, people are perceived as old only when their weak physical conditions render them dependent on others for daily activities.

**Social meaning of aging.** When examining the meaning of aging, it is important to explore its social meaning. According to Atchley (1991), aging is fundamentally social. That is, the social changes that accompany the aging process play a key role in a person’s aging experience. For instance, challenging aging experiences in the form of death of loved ones, age-related disability, and loss of autonomy (Foster, 2009) interfere with a person’s social pattern. A 95-year-old woman may feel lonely, as she has outlived most of her relatives and friends. On the other hand, an 86-year-old man could resent the need to rely on others for daily living activities despite his weakening physical condition.
Consistent with the need to reexamine and reconsider the aspects crucial to aging, it is important to take heed of the social factors such as the aging persons’ interactions with their loved ones in their immediate environments, and other relational contributors such as their friends and peers in other regions or places in the world.

**On Minority Populations**

A second aspect of the backdrop relevant to this inquiry relates to the minority population. Stepping into the second decade of the new millennium, “the United States has clearly become a mosaic of diverse cultures and a country with major immigrant inflows” (Lee & Tse, 1994; Olson, 2001, p. xi). In a study on immigrants in the United States (Mui & Kang, 2006), it was projected that, by 2050, non-Hispanic whites would constitute merely 53% of the entire population. Significantly, the number of immigrants represents only a fraction of the growth of the minority population, as the total number of non-immigrants contributes more to such growth. For example, the Pew Hispanic Center made an estimate figure of more than 11.1 million unauthorized foreigners currently residing in the United States (Shrestha & Heisler, 2011).

**Asian population.** In the last few decades, the Asian population has been maintaining a stable 40% of the entire minority population. In 2010, 39% of persons who obtained legal permanent status reported Asia as their last residence (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2011). In addition, Asians were principal constituents of the aggregate immigration of professionals in the United States (Kanjanapan, 1995; McCabe, 2012). Furthermore, among Asians who became legal permanent residents, 17.28% were persons from China, Hong Kong, and Macau (United States Homeland Security, 2011).
**Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese populations.** In 2010, statistical figures showed that China was second to Mexico as the leading country of origin of the legal permanent resident population in the United States (Rytina, 2011). In the same year, 1,098,728 Chinese persons received citizenship, obtained legal permanent resident status, entered as non-immigrants, or were granted asylum (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2011). In 2006, immigrants from China accounted for 4.1% of the entire nation’s immigrant population (Terrazas & Devani, 2008); this percentage rose to 6.8% in 2010 (United States Homeland Security, 2011). Concerning immigrants from Hong Kong, starting with the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989 and until the return of Hong Kong’s sovereignty to China in 1997, Hong Kong Chinese sought entry en masse to principal countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. Some of these emigrants were highly educated, competent professionals with portable skills (Chan, 1997). Nearly 50% of the Hong Kong and Chinese immigrants settled into the states of California, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania (Terrazas & Batalova, 2010).

**On Baby Boomers**

Another prominent factor that forms the backdrop of this study is the baby boomer generation. The sheer size of this generation accentuates its impact on the pace of the graying of the population. Moving into 2012, the youngest baby boomers are approaching the fifth decade of their lives. For these boomers, by now, aging would not be a foreign matter to them. Even if they have little experience in aging, they might have witnessed or heard their peers’ experiential account of aging. To pave the way for understanding the importance of exploring baby boomers’ aging experiences, it is
essential to examine the impact this generation has on social changes, trends, health, education, and careers.

**Impact on social changes.** In the early 1950s, Mannheim (as cited in Roof, 1993) discussed generations and their vital force in effecting social change. Indeed, the immense size of the baby boomer generation furnishes these boomers with the pre-requisites to influence social change. For decades, this generation’s “obsessions become national obsessions, its concerns national concerns” (Russell, 2004, p. 1). This birth cohort has occupied the limelight of American society, dominating its culture for half a century (Dychtwald, 2000). Essentially, the baby boomers have lived the most varied ways of confronting many life changes (Adams & Blieszner, 1998; Maples & Abney, 2006; Pettegrew, 2008).

**Impact on trends.** Baby boomers have transformed many conventional ways of living and have initiated new trends in many life spheres (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). In their youthful years, they developed the jogging fad and aerobics (Greenblatt, 2007). These boomers, while in their middle ages, continued to be “at the vanguard of cultural transformations in this country” (Roof, 1999, p. 3). As they step into their later years of life, the probability is high that they will develop their version of the meaning of old age (Blanchette & Valcour, 1998; Greenblatt, 2007; Murphy et al., 2005; Smith & Clurman, 2007), and reframe relevant traditional aspects pertaining to aging (Murphy et al., 2005).

**Impact on health, education, and career.** On the health front, baby boomers’ unique lifestyle may alter the fundamental opinions of the health of older adults (Blanchette & Valcour, 1998). In the spheres of education and career, the boomers’ eagerness in pursuit of knowledge and keenness for staying in the workforce will likely
change the conventionally set ages for students and retirees (Murphy et al., 2005). In addition, baby boomers would reframe the concept of retirement as some of them choose to leave the workforce in their 50s and 60s, while many prefer to stay (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1996).

**On Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers**

As Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers were born and raised in the same era as their American peers, it is important to explore relevant aspects, such as environmental background, traits, and characteristics of the Hong Kong baby boomer generation. This exploration brings to light the perspective of some of these Hong Kong baby boomers’ experiences and attributes that are common to their American peers, and others that are unique. Literature that discusses relevant aspects of baby boomers highlights that Asian Americans are the most educated boomers (Russell, 2004). Additionally, Hong Kong baby boomers were described as “a generation typically made in the increasingly cosmopolitan environment of Hong Kong matured into the movers and shakers of the 1990s” (Siu, 1996, p. 183). Many Hong Kong baby boomers grew up in a period when Hong Kong was under the British rule; they lived a lifestyle predominantly fused with British and Chinese cultural traits. Many older and educated baby boomers had actively engaged in Hong Kong’s historical growth (So, 2000). Hong Kong’s political and economic accomplishments in the 1980s and the 1990s were very much connected with the baby boomers’ careers (Siu, 1996). The baby boomer generation’s careers had advanced with Hong Kong’s progressing into the global trajectory as a financial cosmopolitan in the Asian Pacific rim (Siu, 1996).
**Environmental background.** Hong Kong is a metropolis renowned for its comprehensiveness and variety (Tam, 1997). This metropolis has been virtually a place of immigrants and emigrants (Siu, 1996). Baby boomers in Hong Kong grew up at the time when Hong Kong became the safe haven for Chinese and Vietnamese refugees, who were major contributors to the expansion in size and diversity of the Hong Kong population in the 1950s. In the 1950s and the 1960s, Hong Kong made its way into the international orbit, achieving social stability and economic growth. In 1984, the Sino-British Joint Declaration specified the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997 (Li, 2005; So, 2000). This agreement, followed by the Tiananmen Square Incident in China in 1989, sparked a massive surge in emigration among middle-class Hong Kong residents, owing to people’s apprehension about the uncertain political future (Li, 2005). As a result, many of these residents migrated to Western countries such as the United States. The number of baby boomers was significant among this migrant cohort.

**Traits and characteristics.** As a generation, Hong Kong baby boomers perceive themselves as a noticeable, sophisticated social cohort (Siu, 1996). People from this generation are confident, striving to maintain their visible profiles (Siu, 1996). The sheer population size of the boomers created high demands on social goods and services, and these boomers developed their adeptness as well as hardworking traits in identifying and acquiring resources that fulfilled their demands. They witnessed their parents’ persistence in getting them into prestigious schools, they studied harder in order to be able to enroll in one of the only two available universities in Hong Kong for their higher educational pursuits, and they experienced keen competition in securing employment at renowned corporations and institutions.
The discussions cited and presented in the statement of the problem have elucidated the scenario of the rapidity and diversity of the aging American population. The discussions also have highlighted the sheer size of the baby boomer population that has a profound impact on the aging demographics. Specifically, the discussions have accentuated the increasing Chinese population in this country as well as the contribution of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers to the graying and culturally diversified demographic realities. Implicit in these discussions is the importance of this study, which is to investigate the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers currently living in the United States.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study had two important goals. The first goal was to learn about the subjective experience of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers’ aging in the United States. The second goal was to channel the gathered insights into important implications for the counseling profession. The definition of gerontology Achtley (1991) articulated—“the use of reason to understand aging” (p. 3)—inspired me to examine aging that stems from Hong Kong baby boomers’ experiences rather than my own reasoning. Specifically, these boomers’ meaning of aging is derived from their personal, generational, cultural, and ecological lenses. A whole gamut of patterns, themes, prominent factors, and common and uncommon traits sheds light on the meanings of aging that related to the experiences of Hong Kong baby boomers who are residing in the United States.

**On the First Goal: Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers**

The information gathered on the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers would facilitate the understanding of not only Hong Kong Chinese baby
boomers’ experiential account of aging, but also the aging account of other Chinese and Asian baby boomers who are living in the United States. Noting the potential peril of generalizing the perspectives among different ethnic groups, the gathered aging experiences from Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers would not be interpreted as the identical experiences of all baby boomers of Chinese descent. Nevertheless, based on the notion of shared cultural traits among many Chinese persons, the gathered data would offer a pertinent ground in understanding the subjective experiences of Chinese persons’ aging in this country.

**On the Second Goal: Counseling profession**

In discussing aging, Atchley (1991) underscored the importance of looking at not simply what aging would do to individuals but what individuals need to do with aging. This importance was in line with the second goal of this study because professional counselors need to recognize not only the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, but also what counselors can offer to help baby boomers of Chinese descent process the changes that come with age. More specifically, professional counselors need to consider the aspects of counselors’ proficiency and cultural competency, as well as the curriculum of counseling and the globalization of counseling, in order to serve these aging persons in their best interests.

**Proficiency of counselors.** The escalating rate of aging of the United States population suggests the high probability for counselors to have older adults and their families as clients (Myers, 1992; Myers & Harper, 2004; Myers & Sweeney, 1990; Schwiebert et al., 2000). Counseling, which operates from a strength-based paradigm, helps clients enhance their strengths (Blando, 2011; Rollins, 2008) and identify their own
resources to adapt to changes. Counselors who have older adults as clients are responsible for preparing themselves with adequate professional adeptness (Werth, Kopera-Frye, Blevins, & Bossick, 2003) in working with this clientele. Such adeptness relates to their awareness of and sensitivity to the unique way a person perceives and deals with changes and challenges that accompany aging. Essentially, counselors must sharpen their proficiency and understanding of aging, and learn to comprehend the life world in which older persons live (Blando, 2011). One salient factor that demands counselors’ attentions is abuse suffered by older persons. It is important that counselors acquire the skills to explore with older clients the risk of abuse and to identify relevant supportive sources.

**Cultural competency of counselors.** Counselors who are working with racially or ethnically diverse older individuals need to cultivate their therapeutic competencies with regard to both race/ethnicity and age (Angel & Hogan, 2002; Blando, 2011; Mui & Kang, 2006; Yeo & McBride, 2008). Counselors also must develop empathy and understanding of the everyday challenges of these culturally diverse clients. In addition, the current demand for counseling service in China indicates that recurring descriptions of Chinese people’s reluctance to discuss personal issues with strangers, as well as a tendency to relate their emotional issues to psychosomatic problems, no longer hold true (as cited in Chang, Tong, Shi, & Zeng, 2005).

**Curriculum of counseling.** The third aspect corresponds to the dire need for the profession to ensure that the counseling curriculum is sensitive to the anticipated demand of counseling service that corresponds to the aging of baby boomers, particularly boomers from diverse racial and ethnic cultures. It is important for counselor educators to
promote and design curriculums that integrate relevant gerontological training for beginning and practicing counselors.

**Globalization of counseling.** In society today, increasing transnational way of living calls for the globalization of counseling. For instance, counselors who are working with Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers in the United States are indirectly working with these clients’ families and friends in this country as well as in other parts of the world. Counseling students from China and Hong Kong will bring the knowledge and experience they gain in the United States back to their home countries upon completion of their studies. These cultural exchanges suggest that the counseling profession needs to take necessary action to respond to internationalization. Integrating cultural constituents into research and literatures is a major response to the globalization movement. Studies that examine the efficacy of diverse cultural versions of assessment instruments represent another internationalizing approach. A growing volume of studies focused on Asian cultural traits, using Asian as well as Chinese participants. Current counseling literatures that discuss Chinese cultural aspects under the Asian or Asian American umbrella, offer little information for counselors and other helping professionals to ascertain the cultural nuances among Chinese persons. The constant increase of the Chinese and Asian population in this country is a clear sign for the profession to expand its literature, introducing enhanced content to the cultural spectrum. Additionally, the rapid aging of the Chinese population calls for studies that explore aging concerns, models, and theories that are amenable to this culture. All of these aspects—counselors’ proficiency and competency, the curriculum of counseling, and the globalization of counseling—together
with the insights obtained from the participants on their aging account are important variables that relate to the purpose of this study.

Questions of the Study

The questions of this study address the lived aging experience of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. Discovery of this experience informs the use of the phenomenologically oriented approach. The key objective of this approach is to discover the meaning a person gives to a particular experience. Van Manen’s (1990) hermeneutic phenomenological method “to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (p. 41) guided the design of the questions for this study. To uncover a specific experience, van Manen (1990) suggested researchers to be a part of the research question and to identify with that question. Accordingly, the researcher needs to nurture the curiosity and interest, orienting to the phenomenon of the study.

The primary purpose of this study seeks to investigate the aging experience of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers currently living in the United States. Adhering to the discovery-oriented approach of phenomenological human science (van Manen’s, 1992), the guiding question of this study was: “How does the process of aging affect Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers that are residing in the United States?”

The guiding question prompted four subsidiary questions that reflected the concept of the lived existentials (van Manen, 1990), the ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the psychosocial stages of development, (Erikson & Erikson, 1997), and the continuity theory of aging (Atchley, 1991). The four dimensions of the existentials, namely, lived space, lived time, lived body, and lived relation helped to address the experiential depth of persons’ life world. The protective
factors and risk factors of the ecology of the developmental path of Hong Kong baby boomers facilitated the processing of important factors in the participants’ current aging experiences. Additionally, the psychosocial themes of development provided the lens to ascertain the attributes these boomers cultivated and which assisted them in negotiating their aging processes. The internal and external sources pertaining to the theory of aging facilitated the perspective of the boomers’ way in adapting to their current life transitions. Following the phenomenologically oriented approach and the theoretical framework, the four subsidiary questions were: (a) What meaning is derived from the process of aging? (b) What makes up the factors that enable these baby boomers to navigate their aging journeys? (c) In what way does the lifestyle in Hong Kong help or pose challenges to the aging experiences of these baby boomers as they live in the United States? and, (d) What risk factors are associated with the aging of these baby boomers? These subsidiary questions form a guiding structure for the protocol questions listed in Chapter III.

**Conceptual Assumptions**

For this study, conceptual assumptions served as a basis that facilitated the examining of the aging phenomenon of Hong Kong baby boomers. This section discusses the conceptual assumptions informed by the phenomenologically oriented approach of inquiry, the ecological theory of human development, the psychosocial themes of human growth, and the continuity theory of aging. The theme of the phenomenologically oriented approach is intentionality, which entails researchers to bracket their common sense, prior knowledge, and supposition (van Manen, 1990). This theme helps researchers to establish a basis for recognizing any assumption they may hold in their interpretation of the aging phenomenon. It was important also to recognize the
assumptions of the three theories of the theoretical framework for this study. In the context of aging, these theories presuppose the proximal and distal, intrapersonal and interpersonal, and other interactional factors that are part of the aging process. Examining the assumptions that underlie each of these theories enabled me to detect the common among the uncommon, as well as the special among the trivial characteristics of the aging experiences of participants.

**Ecological Development**

Various courses of aging may have their specific dynamic properties that are influenced by ecological or social frameworks and individual ways of life (Baars, 2010). In this study, I used the ecological theory of human development as one of the theoretical instruments to examine aging. The assumption of this theory stated that ecological transitions and changes in roles or setting take place throughout one’s life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Persons develop strengths from the environment in which they grew up, as well as from persons with whom they dealt in their formative years (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As these persons have developed their strengths in their unique ways, their abilities in dealing with changes may differ from those of their family members (Smith, 2006). For Hong Kong baby boomers, besides negotiating the transitions that relate to aging, they also are dealing with factors such as living a significant distance from Hong Kong, changes in relationships with relatives and friends in their home country as a result of the physical separation, and their living as minority persons in the host country. The conceptual assumption of the ecological theory of human development offers a relevant perspective for the understanding of the people, important social agents, and other factors of the environment that influence as well as accompany
the growth of (Levers, 1997) Hong Kong boomers as they deal with the diverse situations that arise with their aging in the United States.

**Psychosocial Developmental Stages**

The assumption of Erikson’s life themes is persons’ negotiation of the positive and negative polarities at each stage of life. Growth takes place when individuals have dealt successfully with some conflicts or difficulties. In addition, growth developed in one stage will accompany the individuals as they continue to negotiate subsequent life issues. The essence of the psychosocial theory, “the later version of a previous item, not a loss of it” (Erikson & Erikson, 1997, p. 63), highlights the cumulative feature of the developed stages. That is, when persons reach a new stage, their formerly acquired psychosocial attributes will amalgamate with the new ones, forming a new version. The psychosocial theory’s emphasis of discordance and pressure as the basis of growth, potency, and obligation (Erikson & Erikson, 1997) offers a perspective of Hong Kong baby boomers’ abilities in dealing with challenges or difficulties which can interfere with their aging process.

**Continuity Theory**

The continuity theory of aging underscores persons’ use of the traits they previously nourished in adapting to new circumstances. This theory furnishes the vantage point for studying the way older persons adapt to their later years of life. Underlying the assumption of this theory is persons’ perceptions of themselves, which stem from their internal and external continuities (Blando, 2011). External continuity refers to people’s association of an environment with personal meanings, which may become a meaning that enables them to cope with issues or challenges in their later years of life. According
to the assumption of the external continuity theory, for example, older Chinese persons from Hong Kong may prefer living in an area that has lots of restaurants and shops. The facilities in such an area may remind them of their lifestyle in Hong Kong, offering them a sense of familiarity.

In regard to internal continuity, according to Atchley (Hill, 2005), persons’ previously nurtured characteristics dictate the way they adapt to their aging experiences. Unless change occurs in persons’ developmental experiences, internal continuity states that the way persons responded to particular situations or handled particular tasks while they were young can be indicators of the way these persons deal with a similar situations or tasks in their later lives (Blando, 2011). For example, individuals who use a pessimistic lens to view things will likely experience despair in their later years of life, as they tend to perceive life from a melancholy angle.

On the other hand, discontinuity takes place when there is disruption to internal or external continuity (Blando, 2011). Immigrating to another country is an example of discontinuity, where persons experience changes and differences in various facets of life in the host country. This discontinuity calls for adjustments, internally and externally, in order to maintain a sense of self and to cultivate a sense of familiarity in the new place. Disruption to internal or external continuity may result in favorable or unfavorable outcomes depending on the way individuals respond. The disruption may prompt growth if the individuals are able to transcend the vicissitudes. On the contrary, the disruption can upset the individuals’ feelings toward themselves. For example, some individuals who have driver’s licenses for years in Hong Kong, and have accumulated years of experience in driving, may be reluctant to take driving lessons and test again in order to
get a driver’s license in the United States. Meanwhile, other persons believe that the driving lessons and test provide them with an opportunity to be familiar with the road signs and rules, preparing them for the adjustment to a different traffic system.

**Importance of the Study**

The importance of the proposed study is threefold: (1) the rapid aging of the baby boomer generation, (2) the expansion of the Asian aging population, and (3) the expansion of the Chinese aging population. All of these three factors are important because they play key roles in the rapidity and heterogeneity of the aging United States population. The importance of each of these factors is examined in this section.

**The Rapid Aging of the Baby Boomer Generation**

For more than half a century, the baby boomer generation has maintained their most significant role in influencing the United States population, informing the mood and its people, and shaping its age distribution (Russell, 2004). Given the fact that the 30 million babies born in the generations before and the 36 million babies born after the baby boomers are described as “waves,” the relatively larger number of 76 million babies born within a generation would make the baby boomer generation a “tsunami” (Maples, 2005; Maples & Abney, 2006). The current aging of this tsunami, coupled with the effect of the prevailing phenomenon of individuals’ prolonged years of life, are creating a dramatic shift in the vital demographics of this country.

Recognizing the tsunami impact of the baby boomer generation, it is important to take note of the aspects central to their aging circumstances. On the domestic front, changes in familial structures and relational patterns are prevalent in the last few decades. For instance, the baby boomer generation has experienced higher rates of separation and
divorce and lower rates of marriage (Frey, 2010), and these boomers have more siblings than children (Blanchette & Valcour, 1998). The effect of having fewer or no children, coupled with the changes in family values and cohesiveness, raise the uncertainty about the persons from whom baby boomers could receive care (Koenig, George, & Schneider, 1994) as they age. Meanwhile, a recent study shows that 25% of baby boomers are caretakers of their parents (Arno, Viola, & Shi, 2011). A foreseeable trend among aging baby boomer households would be the shrinking in size as boomers’ adult children move out to establish their own independent livelihood. Perhaps these boomers will experience a higher rate of transition into assisted living and other nursing care facilities when they reach the stage where they need relevant care and support in their daily living, and they have no or few children themselves to care for them.

The baby boomer waves also took place in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and Canada; the period of the generation among these countries vary by a couple of years (Dychtwald, 2000). The period of the Hong Kong baby boomer generation is in line with that of the American baby boomer generation. This study is important as its discussion highlights many important aspects relative to the aging of the baby boomer generation. Given some shared traits and experiences between the American and Hong Kong baby boomer generations, the gathered information on the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers will help shed light on the understanding of the aging of the baby boomer generation in the United States.
The Expansion of the Asian Aging Population

The Administration on Aging (2010) forecast that the Asian, Hawaiian, and Pacific Island older adult population would expand to 7.6 million by 2050; data generated from the same report indicated that in 2008, close to 60% of the Asian older cohort resided in the states of California (40.5%), Hawaii (9.6%), and New York (9.2%). In the state of Arizona, between 1990 and 2000, the Asian American older adult population recorded a rise of 155% (Kang, 2007). From a cultural standpoint, it is common for Asian parents to move with their adult children (Kang, 2007). This tendency helps explain one of the major reasons for the surge in older Asian adult immigrant population. Adult children’s sponsor of their parents to immigrate to the United States reflects their practice of the collectivistic values.

Anticipating the burgeoning of the Asian elderly population, partly due to the aging of Asian baby boomers and partly caused by the constant rise in the rate of older Asian immigrants, it is imperative for professional counselors to explore these persons’ aging experiences. Previous studies showed that many Asian and Mexican-Americans, even after residing in the United States for many years failed to comprehend the fine distinctions of publicly funded services (Yee, 1992) such as health services. This finding, although informative, may not be applicable to the Asian older adult population to date. Therefore, this study is important, as its findings would illuminate the aging issues of today’s Asian older persons.

The Expansion of the Aging Chinese Population

Earlier studies that described older Asian Americans’ distasteful experiences in accessing public health services or linguistic and cultural challenges (Markides &
Mindel, 1987) are unlikely to happen to Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, owing to these boomers’ higher educational level and stronger English-speaking skills. Likewise, situations reported decades earlier about Chinese feeling vulnerable and cut off in nursing homes, or Chinese elderly not needing nursing care because of their tradition that emphasized respect for older persons (Wong, 2001) are unlikely to resonate with the baby boomer generation’s experiences as they negotiate their course of aging. Erikson and Erikson (1979) contended that the principal image of old age of merely a couple of decades before was different entirely from the image of old age at his time. This is a reality that calls for the reexamining and reconsidering of the role old age plays in today’s society. Therefore, this study is crucial, as it has discovered an up-to-date, rich version of the lived experiences of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers that are residing in the United States.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

Because several terms are used frequently in the discussion of this study, this section offers the definitions of these terms in order to clarify the meaning used in the context of this study. These terms are aging, older adults, Hong Kong, Hong Kong persons, baby boomers, baby boomer cohort/generation, minority population, race, and ethnicity. These are terms that carry substantial weight throughout the five chapters. Therefore, discussing their definition facilitates the common understanding of their meaning.

**Aging**

Aging as an adjective denotes the course of growing old (Atchley, 1991; Markides & Mindel, 1987); however, the process of aging does not mean that the person
is old (Atchley, 1991). Aging as a noun refers to the physical or biological, psychological, and social processes that over time incite changes that interfere with a person’s way of living (Atchley, 1991; Reichard, Livson, & Petersen, 1962).

**Older Adults**

Older adults are persons aged 65 and above. In this study, the terms older adults, older persons, aged, elderly, and seniors were used interchangeably.

**Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is a densely populated metropolis situated in the Southeastern part of Asia, at the southern tip of China. The city was under British rule from 1842 to 1997, when it functioned as a British colony, a Chinese community, and a global city (Mark, 2007). In terms of lifestyle, political, economic, and legal regimes, Hong Kong is markedly dissimilar to Mainland China (Wang, 1995).

**Hong Kong Persons**

Hong Kong persons are persons of Chinese descent who were born and/or raised in Hong Kong. In the context of this study, Chinese persons born and/or raised in Hong Kong, or whose last residence was Hong Kong before immigrating to the United States are classified as Hong Kong persons.

**Baby Boomers**

Baby boomers are persons born between 1946 and 1964. In the United States, 76 million babies were born during this period. Daley (1998) used the expressions “fertility binge” or “fertility splurge” to conceptualize this boom. A note of caution about the baby boomer generation: Despite the common themes that exist among the characteristics of the baby boomer generation, the 18-year span and the diverse social environments of the
boomers’ developing years prohibit one’s view of the entire birth cohort as a monolithic group (MetLife Mature Market Institute, 2009).

**Baby Boomer Generation/Cohort**

A generation refers to persons born within a certain period of time. According to Mannheim (as cited in Wolff, 1971), a generation status is the sum of the chronological and historical-social simultaneity. A cohort consists of members who belong to a subcultural category that mirrors the priorities of values accentuated within a certain time frame (Burlingame, 1995; Egri & Ralston, 2004). The baby boomer cohort represents all persons born in the same era, sharing common experiences (Blando, 2011).

**Minority Population**

The term “minority” in the context of this study refers to a group that is smaller in number relative to another group. That is, the minority population refers to the population that has a smaller number of members as compared to the non-Hispanic white group, which takes up the majority proportion of the American population.

**Race**

Race is defined as “a scientific classification of major biologically different subdivisions of humanity” (Atchley, 1991, p. 28). In the United States, principal racial categories are Caucasian (White), Black, Asian, and American Indian (Atchley, 1991). In the context of this study, Chinese refers to persons of Chinese descent. Chinese persons are listed under the Asian race category.

**Ethnicity**

Ethnic groups have common culture and languages. Culturally, Chinese persons share similar ethnic values and practices. Concerning the Chinese language system, the
written form is universal. Hong Kong and Taiwan use the traditional written form, while China and Singapore use the simplified form. Spoken Chinese dialects vary among different provinces in China. In Hong Kong, English, Cantonese, and, progressively, Mandarin are the official languages (Nunan, 2003). Other widely spoken languages in Hong Kong are Chiu Chow and Hakka.

**Delimitations of the Study**

The crux of this study is to investigate the experiential account of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States. Essentially, the criteria for the participants are persons of Chinese heritage, born between 1946 and 1964, and their reported country of residence was Hong Kong at the time of their immigration or entrance to the United States. Participants also could be non-immigrants. The importance is their Hong Kong identity, Chinese heritage, age category, and current residency.

**Length of Residency**

For this study, persons’ length of residency in the United States is not a deciding variable that relates to recruitment of participants. Participants’ length of stay can be similar; however, their experiences of aging can be different. Reciprocally, participants’ length of stay may differ; yet their aging experiences can be quite the same. This study focuses on the experiences lived by each and every participant. Regardless of the length of residency, the heart of the matter is “to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld” (van Manen, 1991, p. 11).

**Gender**

The ideal scenario in regard to gender is to recruit an equal percentage of male and female participants in order to provide a gender-balanced finding. In reality, the
gender ratio is subject to persons’ expressed interest in participating in the interview. The essential matter is the depth and breadth of the aging account of the participants rather than the comparisons of the effects of aging among females and males.

**Setting**

The delimitation of the setting is characterized by the inartificiality and naturalness that are informed by the naturalistic inquiry. There will be no manipulation or control of the environment. A quiet, undisturbed private office would be an example of a potential setting. Nevertheless, the inartificial feature implies possible interruptions or noises that stem from the environment.

**Education**

There is no minimum requirement for participants’ educational level. Although English is not the native language of Hong Kong baby boomers, the use of English as the language medium for the interview should not pose difficulty to this population. As stated earlier, Asians represent the most highly educated group among boomers in the United States. In addition, Hong Kong people who immigrated to the United States over the last two decades are largely well-educated professionals with portable skills. Also, for more than 100 years, English is the language used predominantly in the governmental, legal, and judicial systems of Hong Kong (Nunan, 2003). English is an official language in Hong Kong, as well as Cantonese and increasingly, Mandarin. Moreover, Hong Kong baby boomers grew up in an English-medium educational system that was, and still is, perceived as a source for advanced life opportunities and as a local middle class identity (Sweeting & Vickers, 2007).
Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the study of the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States. Specifically, this chapter has discussed key aspects of this study, including the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, conceptual assumptions, importance of the study, definitions of key terms, and delimitations of the study. The discussion has underscored the values of this study, which springs from the information about the aging experiences of the generation of Hong Kong baby boomers, whose sheer size will have a crucial impact on the aging American demographics. Insights gathered from this study seek to shed light on the counseling profession in regard to addressing the needs of aging clients who are of Chinese descent. In the next chapter, discussions will center on the theoretical framework and review of relevant literature. Chapter 3 will delineate the research methodology and design. Details relating to sampling procedure, collection of data, and analysis of data will be provided. Chapter 4 will discuss findings and interpretations; themes and patterns will be analyzed. Chapter 5 will focus on the summary of the findings and relevant implications. Limitations also will be illustrated and discussed.
CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

This literature review has two important objectives. The first objective is to provide an overview of existing literatures germane to this study. Literatures that discuss aspects of aging, minority population, baby boomers, Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese culture, and counseling parameters are examined. The second objective is to explore the theoretical framework that facilitates the understanding of the perspectives of the experiences of aging of Hong Kong baby boomers residing in the United States.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development, Erikson and Erikson’s (1997) psychosocial stages of development, and Atchley’s (1991) continuity of theory of aging constitute this theoretical framework. The ecological theory of human development offers a life-span perspective of the environmental, intrapersonal, and interpersonal intricacies that influence the process of aging. The psychosocial themes provide a lens for examining relevant developmental aspects that associate with adulthood, old age, and other experienced life phases. Continuity theory of aging facilitates the outlook of aging persons’ ways of confronting new circumstances via their internal and external continuity properties. This chapter begins with the discussion of the purposes of the review of literature and closes with a summary of the literatures reviewed. Examination of research methodology will take place in chapter 3.

Purpose of the Literature Review

Moving into the second decade of the millennium, the size and diversity of the aging population have become increasingly apparent as an inescapable reality in the United States and in many countries and regions. In the impending years, the elderly
population will expand at a faster pace, largely influenced by the graying of baby boomers (Matthews, Channon, & Lerberghe, 2006) and expanding aging minority populations such as the Asian and Chinese populations. The purpose of reviewing the literature is to furnish an overview of studies that are pertinent to the issues relative to this study. More important, the review of the literature indicates what appears to be the void that spurred this study.

**Reviewing Literature Relevant to the Proposed Study**

This section specifically offers a review of existing literatures on pertinent aspects reflected in these section headings: aging, aging of the minority population, baby boomers, Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, aging of baby boomers, aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, and relevant counseling perspectives. This review culminates in the discussion of the gap in existing literatures, which to date has not discussed—the lived experiences of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States.

**On Aging**

The interest in the study of the meaning of aging began in the early twentieth century, inspired by the industrialization and a regime in providing social insurance for older persons, which prompted questions such as the peaks of job effectiveness and productivity (Hareven, 1978). Research on aging evidenced that aging involves multi processes that generate affirming as well as non-affirming effects (Atchley, 1991). In addition, gerontological studies highlighted that individuals share similarities and differences when negotiating the process of aging (Blando, 2011).
Many literatures underscored changes as the catalyst of the aging process. Decline in physical health is an example of the change aging that persons experience. Some studies articulated that changes are conceptually interrelated processes of aging (Markides & Mindel, 1987). Other studies highlighted physical decline and social losses as the undeniable realities that accompany aging (Cheng & Heller, 2009). Different branches of gerontology examine the processes of aging according to their branches’ specializations. For instance, biological gerontology, which specializes in aspects of biological aging, argued that aging is the physical decline that parallels the advance in persons’ chronological age. This branch of gerontology also defined aging as the gradual loss of operational ability of an organism after attaining its reproductive prime of life (Strehler, 1960). The branch of psychological gerontology refers to the emotional and cognitive changes that accompany aging, such as changes in memory, knowledge acquisition, intelligence, and aspiration (Markides & Mindel, 1987). Studies of geriatric medicine classify aging as a regular course rather than a state of ill health (Downs, 1994).

Beginning in the early 1980s, a growing collection of research in the field of counseling has addressed psychological and psychosocial needs of older persons and discussed relevant programs and services catered to this age group (Myers & Salmon, 1984). In the sphere of social gerontology, aging was perceived as one of the catalysts that may induce a shift in social roles such as grandparenting, volunteering, and academic learning (Markides & Mindel, 1987). Furthermore, social gerontological literature accentuated the social importance of aging, stating that aging does not matter as much as the symptoms and indicators that come with age (Atchley, 1991). For instance, for persons who are 85 years and older, aging years can be as enjoyable as any other years of
life provided that these persons are disability-free. Studies indicated that Americans live 72% of their post-old age years free of disability (Knickman & Snell, 2002). Some writers expressed that aging could be a pleasant experience if people make necessary preparations at a younger age (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Similarly, middle-aged persons’ behaviors, cognitive patterns, and emotional and spiritual lifestyle could make a substantial impact on their health and later life (Hartman-Stein & Potkanowicz, 2003). Essentially, aging alone cannot deter older persons from acquiring knowledge or from contributing to lives around them and to their own lives (Downs, 1994).

In regard to theories of aging, volumes have been written about the phase of old age as part of a life cycle, as an extension of earlier years of life, and as an important stage of life. In a recent text on gerontological counseling, the author contended that no unified overarching theory of aging can explain the multifaceted characteristics and parameters of aging; every person’s perception of aging forms his or her personal theory of aging (Blando, 2011).

**Perceptions of aging.** Studies on aging highlight that individuals’ view of themselves, of what will happen to them when they grow old can be one of their most vigorous internal limits (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Persons’ optimistic outlook toward aging can help promote prolonged health (Downs, 1994). Such an outlook echoes Gabriel and Bowling’s (2004) argument that persons’ perceptions, demeanors, and individuality traits inform their lives and behaviors. Furthermore, such positive characteristics form the criteria of a prevailing force in gerontology: successful aging (Werth et al., 2003). Successful aging is defined as the low occurrence of illness and incapacity, high functioning of intellectuality and physical capability, and active involvement in various
aspects of living (Werth et al., 2003). Baars (2010) argued that healthy aging individuals are able to strengthen their practice and proficiency in areas in which they take pleasure, particularly when they receive recognitions of their efforts. On the other hand, some studies indicated that persons who have negative perspectives about themselves age earlier than their peers who maintain positive self-perceptions (Meisner & Hynie, 2009). This scenario implies the impact of negative perspectives on persons’ attitudes as well as their processes of aging.

**Attitudes toward aging.** Interest in the subject of attitudes toward aging is shown in gerontology, gerontological counseling, and psychological research. For instance, many studies have discussed that numerous cultures, including American culture, devalue aging (Myers, 1994). A growing volume of studies revealed that in recent eras, older persons often experience contempt, words of disdain, and even repulsion; in addition, persons marvel at children’s development from one stage to the other, while disparaging adults’ losses or declines in liveliness (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Such attitude bears witness to society’s glorification of youth, accentuating images of vibrancy that resemble young age and emphasizing images of frailty and incompetency that reflect old age (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989; Friedan, 2006). Prior to the industrialization era, American society respected older persons, praising them for their wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and success; however, people’s regard for older persons has declined gradually (Dychtwald, 2000). It is posited that if society appreciates early life more than later life, its people’s sense of happiness is likely to decline as they advance in years (Blando, 2011).
Undesirable images and comments relating to old age can deter people from delving into the subject of aging. Some writers remarked that persons’ neglect and dodging of the subject of aging reflect a condition that has seeped into the American society—gerontophobia (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Moreover, all human persons, including elderly people themselves seem to have developed gerontophobia (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). The rapid graying of the population signifies a sense of urgency to attune to an objective, affirming attitude toward aging. To nurture this attitude, it is necessary for persons to ascertain some relevant concerns of aging in the context of today’s society.

**General concerns about aging.** Volumes of literatures have focused on stressors that come with age, such as physical decline, loss of loved ones, and loss of autonomy, which can be overwhelming and distressing for persons (Foster, 2009). Federal reports on aging have shown an increase in the number of persons declaring a disability as they age (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011b). The chief concern for present-day studies of aging relates to the transitioning circumstances that influence the social outlook of later years of life (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005).

Biological changes that accompany aging imply escalating demands for healthcare products and services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009) and for the necessity of physician office visits (Cherry, Lucas, & Decker, 2010). Decline in physical health of elderly persons also implies their need for caregiving service. Studies indicated that demographic changes that accompany the overall aging of Americans, such as changes in the concept of family structures, rising economic burdens, and changes in the social context of caregiving, influence the dynamics of future
caregiving (Fredriksen-Goldsen, Kim, Muraco, & Mincer, 2009; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010b). Studies that specialized in cultural shifts suggested the facilitation of the younger generations and society to discover more pleasure in caring for parents and older persons (Knickman & Snell, 2002). On a national level, aging of the population will add pressure to healthcare services and to the request for social services and pensions (Korper & Raskin, 2008).

**Mental health issues and aging.** Studies that relate to the mental health perspective of aging revealed that quite commonly, physical health problems intertwine with psychological and social issues (Myers, 1994). Many literatures showed that most seniors have adjusted well to changes; however, some have developed addictive behaviors by relying on substances as a means of coping with stress and difficulties (Briggs, Magnus, Lassiter, Patterson, & Smith, 2011). Older adults’ misuse or abuse of alcohol, drugs, and prescription medications is escalating, however, only a small percentage of these problems have received attention, and not many older adults seek treatment (Schonfeld et al., 2010). Recent research findings have substantiated the situations pertaining to older adults’ disordered substance use as under-recognized, under-diagnosed, and under-treated (Briggs et al., 2011). The ongoing rise of the problem of substance abuse implies the need for healthcare service providers to evaluate older persons’ existing substance abuse problems (Gfroerer, Penne, Pemberton, & Folsom, 2008). It is imperative for the healthcare service industry to ascertain older persons’ treatment needs with regard to long-term health consequences of substance abuse (Korper & Raskin, 2008). In addition, some studies raised the principally unacknowledged, budding concerns among older persons, such as abuse, neglect, or mistreatment in their
own households, where, in general, victims are women and most perpetrators are people within the family (O’Shaughnessy, 2008).

**Financial concerns and aging.** In addition to physical, social, and psychological concerns that relate to aging, many literatures highlighted the financial concern for aging persons. For older persons, four key “aging shocks” include out-of-pocket prescription drugs, medical expenses not covered by Medicare or private insurance, out-of-pocket private insurance costs, and out-of-pocket long-term care expenses (Knickman & Snell, 2002). From the national standpoint, it was projected that by 2035, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security will double their share of the economy, adding strain to the remainder of the federal budget (Walker, 2002). As the rate of the aging of the population accelerates, there will be fewer people remaining in the workforce to support the budget through their tax and pension contributions. For health service providers, studies have shown that the increasing demand for healthcare workers is not simply due to the growing proportion of older adults (Matthews et al., 2006). The increase in demand for healthcare workers essentially reflects the older adults’ higher level of affluence, their increased use of advanced forms of technology, and their knowledge regarding medical privileges and treatments they receive (Matthews et al., 2006).

**Stereotypical views of aging.** Other common issues prevalently discussed in aging literatures were the negative stereotypical perspectives of seniors. Studies showed that even healthcare and social service professionals who work with elderly people possess the stereotypical perspectives about aging (as cited in Cheng & Heller, 2009). Quite commonly, people perceive that older adults are similar among themselves; they are seen as frail, senile, incompetent, dependent, and lonely. Gerontological studies
maintained that perceptions about old age are influenced by a myriad of negative myths (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Common myths are: (a) persons above 65 are frail, (b) many older adults have ill health, (c) older adults’ minds are not functioning as well as their younger counterparts, (d) older adults lack the capability of doing things, (e) older adults are unappealing and sexless, and (f) all older adults are homogenous (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Additionally, in the mental health field, the myths discussed in the research literature include: (a) older persons are poor, (b) all seniors desire to live with their adult children, (c) older adults live in nursing homes, and (d) older persons are depressed (Myers & Schwiebert, 1996).

Mental health research highlights the notion of fear of aging, which informs many of the undesirable labels given to seniors (Myers & Schwiebert, 1996). Such fear may stem from one’s own anxiety of aging and dying, discernment of the loss of loved ones, thoughts about the decline in mobility, anticipation of the decrease in social activities, or pondering of the eventual loss of a stable income. Other studies on aging evidenced that in reality, older adults belong to a diverse group that does not accept plain classification; this group originated from a diverse social class, a varied racial and ethnic heritage, and different family backgrounds (Angel & Hogan, 1992). In addition, studies showed that stereotypical views of older people are no longer valid, as people who maintain active physical lives fare better in the aging process (Hartman-Stein & Potkanowicz, 2003).

Furthermore, clichéd perspectives of older adults as unattractive and sexless need to be reexamined. Studies that specialize in aging found that men and women stay sexy and sensual as they grow old, albeit with a slight decline in their sexual activities (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Furthermore, some older adults who have a variety and
complexity of romantic histories would continue with their affectionate way of living, expressing the same deep emotional desires and responses which they had when they were young (Huyck, 2001). According to Malde (1988), promoting connections among persons of different generations would help reshape the views of old age and inspire deeper understanding and gratitude toward the diversities and individualities of persons at different stages of life. All of the above literatures have provided a sketch of the crucial aspects of aging that undergird the importance of investigating the process of aging in the context of contemporary living.

**On Aging of the Minority Population**

Numerous studies have accentuated the reality that the ethnic minority population is becoming a progressively crucial segment of the American society (Angel & Hogan, 2002). The rapid growth in diversity among older adults suggests the results of the discrepancy in the rates of birth and relocation among racial and ethnic American minorities that took place in earlier years (Angel & Hogan, 1992). More and more textbooks have examined the racial and ethnic parameters within the realm of aging (Olson, 2001). Some journal articles have accentuated the importance of acknowledging the cultural differences that amplify the effect of the heterogeneity among aging Americans (Dixon, Richard, & Rollins, 2003; Myers & Harper, 2004). In the sphere of the helping professions, many studies underscored pertinent aspects of helping professionals who have older minority adults as their clients (Angel & Hogan, 1992, 2002; Olson, 2001; Weaver, 2011; Yeo & McBride, 2008). Increasing volumes have examined counseling theories and approaches catered to the older minority population (Blando, 2011). Findings of some of these studies showed that older female persons who
belong to an ethnic minority group, widowed or single, might experience added discrimination (Myers, 1994).

**Aging of the Asian population.** In recent decades, many literatures have discussed the transitional circumstances of elderly Asian immigrants in North America (Choudhry, 2001; Kang, 2007; Kobayashi & Preston, 2007; Mackinnon, Gien, & Durst, 1996; Mui & Kang, 2006; Tom, 1999; Yee, 1991). Studies that focused on the transitioning aspects of immigrants highlighted that differences in characteristics of older immigrants, such as education, employment status, and migration history could affect their ways of living and adjustments in their host countries (Angel & Hogan, 2002). A study on the cultural adjustments of elderly female immigrants from Southeast Asia demonstrated that older persons’ feelings of isolation due to language barrier, loneliness, and lack of emotional support are common difficulties (Choudury, 2001). The same study also underscored the stress experienced by older immigrants who came from a culture that practiced collectivistic values, who were transitioning to a culture that highlighted the individualistic way of living, and who were depending on their children on various means of living (Choudury, 2001).

**Aging of the Chinese population.** Some literatures have examined a whole host of parameters concerning the aging of Chinese persons in the United States (Wong, 2001). However, previous studies no longer provide references for the characteristics of Chinese persons who recently or over the couples of decades immigrated to this country, because those studies concentrated largely on Chinese immigrants in the 19th century who came to the United States primarily as laborers working in gold mines, farms, and railroad construction (Markides & Mindel, 1987). Likewise, literatures that discussed
common circumstances experienced by older Chinese immigrants, such as poverty, low educational level, poor language skills, and ill health, (Wong, 2001), cannot be used as references for today’s generation of older Chinese immigrants. More recent studies reported that older Hong Kong immigrants tend to behave in the same manner as they did in their home country (Lee & Tse, 1994). Given the social and economic changes that have taken place in the last couple of decades in China and in other regions of Asia, Asian immigrants’ higher educational standing, and their English proficiency skills, the literature needs an updated version that captures experiences such as the aging of the Chinese population in today’s American society.

**On Baby Boomers**

Baby boomers are members of the cohort of 76 million Americans born after World War II, between 1946 and 1964 (Adams & Blieszner, 1998; Booth & Blow, 2008; Bressoie, Roberto, Willis-Walton, & Reynolds, 2010; Capers, 2003; Cherry, Lucas, & Decker, 2010; DeVaney, 1995; Dixon & Richard, 2003; Dychtwald, 2000; Edlund, Luften, & Franklin, 2003; Fleschner, 2008; Foster, T. W., 2009; Gibson et al., 2010; Maples & Abney, 2006; Matthews et al., 2006; Murphy et al., 2005; Nyce, 2007; Russell, 2004; Taylor, Clark, & Newton, 2008; Smith & Clurman, 2007; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009; Wagnild & Collins, 2009; Walker, 2002; Wolfe, 2004), who have shared similar experiences and have witnessed common political and social events (Blando, 2011). The sheer size of the baby boomer population is one of the major reasons for this cohort to be a common research topic. Volumes of literature have discussed the unparalleled affluence and material comfort enjoyed by the baby boomer generation, which began after the Second World War and the economic depression (Egri
Meanwhile, some literature has underscored the disadvantages of the tremendous size of the baby boomer generation, which led them to compete for the things they desired, such as enrolment in college and application for employment (Dychtwald, 2000). Additionally, many journals illustrated the shared themes experienced by this generation that were perceived to be quite different from the earlier generations (Frey, 2010). Crucial aspects of the shared themes relevant to this study are examined in the coming sections.

**Shared events and activities.** Some of the notable events and activities that took place during the childhood, adolescent, and young adult years of baby boomers consisted of the increases in enrolment rates of college education as well as an upsurge in drug use (Greenblatt, 2007). Beginning in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, male baby boomers were subject to the draft lottery (Adams & Blieszner, 1998). Following that, the boomers witnessed a rise in college enrollment to 12 million, the elimination of the mandatory retirement age, and the Arab oil embargo that triggered the high inflation rate (Greenblatt, 2007).

**Shared attitudes and experiences.** Studies showed the high possibility that people from the same generation would share similar attitudes that were developed in the same era (Burlingame, 1995). Literature has revealed that baby boomers are work-centric, independent, goal-oriented, and competitive (Gelardin & Muscat, 2010). Some studies argued that baby boomers tend to adopt a youthful lifestyle, exhibit vitality and strength, and tend to seek and embrace novelty in their way of living (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Few studies showed an aggregate pattern of the experiences of the baby boomer
generation; however, these boomers’ attitudes and values can be diverse (Smith & Clurman, 2007).

**Shared educational path.** On the educational front, statistical reports exhibited that most of the older baby boomers were first-generation undergraduates (Schaefer, 2010). One-third of the oldest American male boomers held college degrees, representing the most highly educated of all Americans, and female boomers were more educated than females of older generations (Russell, 2004). In regard to technology, baby boomers developed the information technology concept of the internet and most baby boomers were capable of accessing online services (United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Nevertheless, baby boomers do not count on social media as the primary resources for communication (Brossoie et al., 2010). Meanwhile, some literatures reported that aging boomers have used internet services for exploring alternative treatment approaches and availability of generic drugs (Bender, 2004).

**Shared career experiences.** In light of career experiences, close to 50% of baby boomers in the workforce are women, with higher participation rates among oldest female boomers (Russell, 2004), and more women holding higher-ranking positions (Frey, 2010). In addition, research showed that baby boomers have exhibited profound organization loyalty (Murphy et al., 2005). In recent years, dynamics of the labor force are changing in response to the greater economic climate as well as the postponement of retirement as baby boomers age (Russell, 2004). For aging baby boomers who desire to stay in the workforce, some may consider upgrading their credentials and skills, which will elevate the adult student population through reeducation or continuing educational pursuits (Schaefer, 2010). Additionally, with the anticipation of a longer life span, some
boomers may perceive retirement as a less attractive option (Wheelwright, 2010). For some, spending time merely on leisure activities, sitting grandchildren, or traveling will be barely fulfilling when compared to their career-focused lifestyle (Wheelwright, 2010).

**Shared financial status.** Optimistic summaries from research findings showed that the income of the oldest baby boomers went up slightly between 2000 and 2002; these boomers’ homeownership rendered their net worth above the country’s average (Russell, 2004). Additionally, Asians and non-Hispanic white middle-aged householders accounted for the most affluent group of baby boomers (Russell, 2004). Yet, daunting perspectives of baby boomers’ financial standings indicated that the growth of many baby boomers’ debts, made up largely of their mortgages and home equity loans, was increasing at a faster rate than their assets (Russell, 2004). Also, the poverty rate in the United States is likely to increase along with baby boomers’ aging (Russell, 2004).

**Shared desire for youthfulness.** Baby boomers’ feeling and acting young imply this group’s desire to maintain the characteristics of youthfulness, both in appearance and in vitality and drive. This desire resonates with Charlton’s (2006) argument on the psychological properties of *neoteny*, which signifies people’s embrace of the behaviors and attitudes that pertain to their early developmental stages (Charlton, 2006). Studies in *neoteny* showed that the children’s naïveté and flexibility of attitudes and behaviors have shaped the features and the most thriving attributes in adults (Charlton, 2006). *Neos* is a Greek word meaning “young” and *teinein* implies “to extend” (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Meanwhile, the shortcoming of psychological *neoteny* is in the keeping not only the youthful virtues, but also the immature characteristics (Charlton, 2006). As such, society may be typified by hedonism, short-term focus, yearning for newness, emotional and
spiritual superficiality, and briefer span of concentration (Charlton, 2006). There are quite a number of studies that have examined crucial aspects of the baby boomer generation. Very few, however, have explored parameters pertinent to the generation of baby boomers of Chinese descent. As this study investigates the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, it is essential to examine the literatures that discuss parameters relevant to this particular cohort of baby boomers.

**On Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers**

Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers share some collective experiences and traits with their American counterparts. However, cultural differences may incite diversities among these shared generational aspects. Several researches have explored aspects of Chinese baby boomers (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Siu, 1996; Wong, 2002; Xie, Xia, & Liu, 2007). Some writers applauded Hong Kong baby boomers for their efforts in establishing an ethnic identity that is more versatile and more open to other cultures, and these baby boomers perceive themselves as a special group of Chinese—“Hongkongese”—rather than ethnic Chinese (Carroll, 2006; Fournel, 2003).

**Shared cultures and values.** Culture refers to the distinctive history of a certain set of individuals living with a unique array of physical, social, political, and economic circumstances (Alfred, 2002). Studies of the cultural traditions of Hong Kong as a former British colony highlighted that in addition to leaving Hong Kong with a legacy of capitalism (Law & Wong, 1997), the 155 years of British rule of Hong Kong inevitably has generated a hybrid of colonial and local traditions. Volumes of literature have been written about Hong Kong as a city where one can find British endorsement and rigorous authority as well as Chinese strict control and practicality (Fournel, 2003). Some
scholarly articles depict the Hong Kong culture as more appropriately reflected in the richness and diversity of its lifestyle (Tam, 1997).

The majority of the people in Hong Kong are of Chinese descent, endowed with the Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist values and traditions. For thousands of years in China and in other Chinese cultures, Confucianism has dominated the Chinese culture. Filial piety, a prominent pillar of Confucianism, stipulates that elderly people hold the highest ranking in family and society, and young people must respect and honor them (Sun, 2008; Tom, 1999; Xie et al., 2007). Filial piety also mandates high regard for teachers and superiors. Traditionally, the value of filial piety is the seed of aging parents’ expectation of living with their adult children (Mackinnon et al., 1996). Other studies also found that Chinese persons who adhere to the concept of filial piety expect their adult children to be their primary source for a whole host of support (Chou, Ho, & Chi, 2006). Meanwhile, some studies reported that Chinese persons are experiencing a new version of extended family, where children live in independent households in the environs of their parents (Wong, 2001). In addition, since the 1980s, the robust nature of the economic and political changes that took place in mainland China and Hong Kong have brought about powerful transitions in intergenerational values among its inhabitants (Ralston et al., 2006).

**Shared events.** Many academic writings recorded important happenings in Hong Kong that took place around the genesis of the baby boomer generation. These events consisted of the closing of the Anti-Japanese War in 1945, and the beginning of the Nationalist-Communist civil war that led many Chinese from China to flee to Hong Kong for fear of the communist rule (Mark, 2007). Some literature states that nearly 40,000
persons from the mainland ran off to Hong Kong every year in the 1950s (Skeldon, 1996). In late 1956, riots took place in Hong Kong, which were related to the social impact caused by the rising number of refugees (Mark, 2007). For two decades in the 1950s, Hong Kong began to establish its commercial and industrial grounds, where office buildings and factories were built in order to support international trade activities. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, Hong Kong experienced a sequence of socio-political turbulences; these turbulences were the 1967 riots, the anti-corruption measure, the rally seeking to have Chinese as an authorized language, and the dispute over Diaoyutai’s rule (Tam, 1997). Also, the Sino-British talk in 1982 stirred unrest because residents were worried about the political uncertainty that accompanied Hong Kong’s return to the Chinese rule.

Volumes have been written about many transitional aspects in Hong Kong as it approached its return to the Chinese sovereignty in 1997. Many writings delineated the peak of emigration in the 1990s, when individuals with substantial human and financial capital were more likely to have the means and the intention to move and were capable of meeting the admission conditions set by Western countries (Chan, 1997; Li, 2005). Typically, these immigrants’ major destination countries were Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States (Chan, 1997). Many of these Hong Kong Chinese bourgeois immigrants became “transnationals,” frequently traveling substantial distances between the host country and the home origin to get together, part, and reunite with families and friends (Chan, 1997; Kobayashi & Preston, 2007). For these immigrants, the cross-national exchanges seem to have made their living in the host country more pleasing (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007), or became their ways of acculturation.
Shared education and career experiences. Studies demonstrated that Hong Kong baby boomers were raised by the colonial education policies and systems (Sweeting & Vickers, 2007). Two percent of these boomers studied at elite primary and secondary schools run by foreign religious missionary groups (Siu, 1996). Beginning in the 1970s, the majority of the baby boomers entered college, some participated in political activities, and many became a part of Hong Kong’s historical growth (So, 2000).

Shared financial status. Concerning the financial standing of Hong Kong baby boomers, a study on aspects of Asian immigrants revealed that the California real estate agents and the California media categorized Chinese immigrants from Asia in the 1990s as wealthy individuals, as well as the model minority (Ong, 1996). In regard to the need for public monetary support, research findings in 1989 showed that 92% non-Hispanic whites received Social Security benefits as compared to 64% Chinese older persons who received such benefits (Wong, 2001). Implicit in the findings of these studies is the common financial independence among Chinese immigrants.

On Aging of Baby Boomers

Learning about the common traits and backgrounds experienced by the baby boomer generation in Hong Kong and the United States facilitates the comprehension of the perspectives of the ecological as well as the psychosocial developmental trajectories of these boomers. Such perspectives would help establish the backdrop for investigating the variables that are crucial to the aging process of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. To reiterate, the aging of the baby boomer cohort, is a crucial contributor to the rapid aging of the American population. It is worth mentioning that by 2029, all baby boomers will be in the older adult category (Angel & Hogan, 1992; Cornman & Kingson, 1996).
This aging scenario implies the higher chance for clinical counselors to have older adults and their families as clients (Myers & Sweeney, 1990; Myers, 1992). A burgeoning body of research has discussed the significant scenarios of the aging of baby boomers (Briggs et al., 2011; Dychtwald, 2000; Dychtwald & Flower, 1989; Foster, 2009; Maples, 2005; Maples, 2007; Maples & Abney, 2006; Rollins, 2008; Taylor et al., 2008; Wagnild & Collins, 2009; Wheelwright, 2010). Some literature argued that, as baby boomers age, they would tread the same aging paths and have identical needs as their parents (Wolfe, 2004). In contrast, some studies showed that baby boomers felt and behaved more youthfully than their parents did while at a similar age, and baby boomers desire to age in ways unlike their parents (Greenblatt, 2007). Many authors have articulated that the dynamic baby boomers like to stay in their middle ages, strive to maintain their youthful and vigorous spirits, and endeavor to rise above the constraints and stereotypes of old age (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989; Smith & Clurman, 2007).

Scenarios of healthcare needs. Much literature has exposed the positive and negative perspectives of baby boomers’ healthcare demands. Among the positive views, a study demonstrated that baby boomers were open to learning about a variety of aging issues for the benefit of their own aging processes and for their needs of caring for older relatives and friends (Brossoie et al., 2010). Another study reported that baby boomers are sensitive to the way they understand good health, and they embrace vitality as an avenue for coping with their graying processes (Smith & Clurman, 2007). The healthy lifestyles and cognitive patterns baby boomers incorporated in their middle ages would bring them satisfaction with their abilities to have control over their health conditions and the qualities of life as older adults (Hartman-Stein & Potkanowicz, 2003). Moreover,
baby boomers are prudent shoppers who enthusiastically explore alternative approaches for their healthcare needs (Blanchette & Valcour, 1998).

Studies that exhibit less optimistic scenarios reveal that people who are 85 years of age and beyond and the older baby boomers make more visits to doctors for their multiple chronic conditions, for getting recently available medications, and for receiving preventive care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). Statistical data indicate that some baby boomers are living with issues of obesity, smoking, lower back pain, hypertension, and arthritis (Russell, 2004). Close to one-third of the baby boomer generation have obesity, two-thirds has weight issues, and one-quarter have a habit of smoking cigarettes (Russell, 2004). In regard to caregiving, research reveals that there is little guarantee that baby boomers’ children will be as dedicated as their boomer parents have been to their grandparents (Koenig et al., 1994).

**Scenarios of substance abuse.** Data show that as baby boomers age, there will be a considerable rise in the number of older persons with issues of substance abuse, which is likely to raise the demand for treatment (Gfroerer et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010c), as well as the need for general health care. In addition, the treatment needs for older Americans will be close to triple by 2020 if baby boomers’ substance abuse problems persist into their later years (Capers, 2003). Furthermore, substance abuse among baby boomer veterans continues to take up the largest fraction of Veteran Affairs (VA) substance abuse service, and demand for treatment among these users is on the rise (Booth & Blow, 2008).

Research suggests that the healthcare workforce make necessary adaptations to the changing requirements relating to older persons’ healthcare needs, which refers to the
learning of the health risks of these persons (Leveille & Iezzoni, 2004), and the efficient response to the healthcare demands of aging baby boomers (Matthews et al., 2006). Studies demonstrate that baby boomers’ stress about healthcare costs exceeds their stress about their actual states of health (Smith & Clurman, 2007). In a study on healthy aging for the baby boomer generation, Vaillant (as cited in Hartman-Stein & Potkanowicz, 2003) accentuated the crux of physical, social, and emotional health and argued that being able to forgive, to appreciate life, and to live joyfully is one of the ways to gain voluntary control in the aging process.

**Aging scenarios for society.** In the last decade, mounting studies discussed the financial strain relative to baby boomers’ aging, which would create an impact on social services, government budgets, and even the entire economy (Greenblatt, 2007). Given the sheer population size of the baby boomer generation, its aging would create an unbalanced impact on the need for long-term care (Walker, 2002), particularly the healthcare system (Murphy et al., 2005). Medicaid expenditures for long-term care for older adults were projected to rise to $132 billion by 2050 (Walker, 2002). Some researchers projected that by 2029, when all baby boomers become older adults, the predicted challenges to society would include: (a) the implementation of a better payment and insurance systems for long-term care, (b) the use of improved medicine and healthcare services for staying healthy and active, (c) the changes in making community services readily available to prospective users, and (d) the promoting of an unprejudiced view of aging so that people of all ages are treated as members of the community (Knickman & Snell, 2002). Essentially, a great deal of literature has brought attention to the crucial parameters that pertain to the aging of the baby boomer population.
On Aging of Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers

An increasing number of studies have discussed the issues of aging that pertain to the Chinese population and the Chinese culture. Nevertheless, these studies have not focused specifically on the aging of Chinese or Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. In Hong Kong, the government supports the Confucian filial piety tradition by offering tax exemptions to adult children living with and supporting their parents (Cheng & Heller, 2009). According to the findings in a Hong Kong study of older adults’ well-being, the cultural tradition that influences elderly parents’ expectations on adult children’s support can be a source of detrimental impact for the parents, particularly the mothers, if they are living alone (Chou et al., 2006). The same study revealed that the case of women living alone is not an independent element that causes depression, since health, family support, and financial hardship can serve as intervening factors (Chou et al., 2006). A number of studies have been made using quantitative approaches to examine the psychological properties of Chinese older adults. There are growing volumes of literature that have investigated the scientific strengths of some psychometric measurements, particularly the Chinese version of these measurements. No studies have been made to explore the qualitative nature of the existential dimensions of Chinese baby boomers. More specifically, a void exists in the literature that examines the experiential account of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States.

On Relevant Counseling Perspectives

A constellation of articles has addressed issues of older persons and aging in the context of counseling. A wide spectrum of literature discusses the myths, stereotypes, and generational attitudes toward counseling that seem to be the major factors that deter older
adults from seeking counseling (Burlingame, 1995). Some studies specify that Chinese cultural beliefs, in most cases, do not encourage people to find professional help on their issues (Witt, Poulin, Ingersoll, & Deng, 2011). Previous studies have raised the concern that older Chinese-American adults are less likely than other racial and ethnic groups to disclose their intentions of suicide (Tom, 1999). A study of Chinese elderly immigrants showed that those who speak little English, do not have formal education, and do not acculturate to the dominant culture have difficulty in accessing many types of public services (Yee, 1992) such as seeking counseling.

**Demands for counseling services.** Research findings have concluded that older adults seek counseling for a variety of reasons: short-term crisis, chronic issues, regular and atypical predicaments, and personal demands (Stickel & Onedera, 2006). The short and long-term crises experienced by older adults are comprised of medical problems, decline in physical functioning, sudden or expected losses of loved ones, and sudden cessation of employment or activities. These situations can generate sources of stress for older adults, and if these persons have no relevant support, the stress can develop into serious mental health or medical conditions. Studies estimate that the suicide rate among older persons has been six times greater than that of the general population (Stickel & Onedera, 2006).

** Older minority persons.** For counselors working with the elderly minority population, it is essential that they ascertain clients’ potential stress as a result of relocating to a foreign place. These elderly clients, in addition to becoming accustomed to the values, traditions, way of living, and the public systems of the host country, also are affected by their children’s levels of acculturation (Mackinnon et al., 1996). Counselors
need to be aware that the level of stress of these elderly clients could intensify if they have to depend on their children for various means of their living. Such stress may spring from feelings of loneliness, isolation, and lack of emotional support. Loneliness may compound for women who have minimal English proficiency, are laden with household chores, and have to rely on others for transportation (Choudhury, 2001). Some literature has discussed the need for family counselors working with families with older members to conceptualize elderly persons’ issues using a developmental lens in order to comprehend distinctive difficulties that are linked to this phase of life (Bradley, Whiting, Hendricks, & Wheat, 2010).

**Counselor cultural competence.** Multicultural counseling textbooks emphasize cultural competence. Cultural competence implies counselors’ awareness of their own traditional experiences, morals, and ideals that may or may not be compatible with those of their clients (Blando, 2011). Literature that focus on crucial aspects of older minority persons also discuss the importance for multicultural counselors to learn about clients’ cultural heterogeneity that is comprised of language skill, education, employment, and migration history, and clients’ reason for immigrating to the United States (Angel & Hogan, 2002; Yee, 1992). It is essential that counselors working with older adults of Chinese descent familiarize themselves with relevant aspects of the Chinese culture (Blando, 2011). For example, counselors may consider learning about the Taoist values that influence clients’ perceptions of old age, sickness, death, and dying (Blando, 2011).

**Counselor preparedness.** Essentially, literature on gerontological counseling recommends that counselors examine their own opinions and beliefs in regard to aging (Myers & Schwiebert, 1996). Gerontological counselors must develop awareness of their
limitations and potential countertransference issues (Burlingame, 1995) and strive to understand the rich diversities of the graying of the heterogeneous population (Angel & Hogan, 1992). More research and training are needed to help counselors become well versed in working with older adults who are prone to misuse substances as means of coping with their adaptive changes in life (Briggs et al., 2011). A gap exists in the discussion of counseling aspects that relate to the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. The findings of this study will seek to help fill this gap, as the rich information of the aging experiences of the informants will shed light on the concerns and needs that relate to the aging of Chinese and Asian baby boomers in particular.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theories that facilitate the understanding of aging are as diverse as the processes of aging. No single theory fully captures life-span growth and aging (Blando, 2011). For this study, I have chosen Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development, Erikson and Erikson’s (1997) stages of psychosocial development theory, and Atchley’s (1991) continuity theory of aging as the theoretical frameworks that guide my interpretation of the meaning of the aging phenomenon of the participants. Independently, each of these theories has a robustness that offers understanding of certain crucial aspects that relate to diverse phases of human development. Jointly, these theories form a comprehensive perspective of the properties that shape a person’s growth. These theories also guide the exploration and understanding of important transitional factors that intertwine in the process of aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States.
Other developmental theories also were considered prior to deciding on the three selected theories. For instance, Carl Jung’s theory about aging seems relevant in that it considers old age as the part of life when one moves past the preparation and foundation building of life, searching for meaning, and contemplating the philosophical values in life (Blando, 2011). On the surface, the Jungian concept seems to correspond to this study’s aim of exploring the meaning of the aging process. However, the Jungian perception of old age as the second half of life, where the persons’ focus in life is meaning-driven, does not provide the tool for the examination of the root of the intrapersonal and interpersonal make-up of the meaning of aging. Meanwhile, Taoism, an Eastern philosophical system, underscores the strength of old age, facilitating the perspectives of aging as “oneness, dynamic balance, cyclical growth, and harmonious action” (Blando, 2011, p. 202). The Taoist emphasis on harmonizing with nature and seeking a balance between the poles of yin and yang is amenable to the Chinese culture. This balance-driven approach is helpful in perceiving Chinese persons’ desires to seek harmony, to “dance” with the crisis or conflict. Yet, to investigate the “scaffold” of persons’ capacities in dealing with the processes of aging, a framework that facilitates the exploration of diverse developmental properties is warranted, and Taoism does not provide this framework. Given the multifaceted components embedded in the persons’ aging processes, it is crucial to adopt a theoretical framework that endorses the heterogeneities and intricacies of the aging tapestry. It is important also to select the theories whose emphases are compatible with one another. To this end, the ecological theory of human development together with the theory of psychosocial stages of development and the continuity theory of aging.
constitute a more fitting framework for the purpose of the inquiry into the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States.

**On Ecological Theory of Human Development**

An ecological theory of human development brings to light the understanding of the united operationalization of environmental forces and personal traits that influence the human development (Sontag, 1996). Implicit in this perspective of human development is the notion that human growth does not happen in an empty space (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Examining people’s behaviors and their interactions with others and environments would be insufficient to comprehend all of the dynamics that interfere with their developmental processes across their life spans (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological theory offers a comprehensive perspective of human development as it takes into account both the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics that pave the way for the understanding of baby boomers’ interactions with people and situations in their immediate and distant environments. The ecological perspective does not assume a unidirectional view of a person’s growth; neither does it consider a person’s growing capacities and the environment’s impact as individualized items (Sontag, 1996). What happens in the environments beyond the family are possibly the most crucial and universal agents that can upset the family system that relates to a person’s growth throughout the life course (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). In essence, a linear model has its limitations on studying the complex dynamics of human development (Sontag, 1996). The comprehensiveness of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory overcomes this limitation, as this theory captures a myriad of crucial factors that influence a person’s development.
The ecological view that incorporates the multiple settings and the multiple systems of the settings in human growth forms a basis for understanding the numerous forms and layers of the factors that shape the aging process of Hong Kong baby boomers. Such understanding begins with the scrutiny of a person’s developmental characteristics, those vital personal traits that influence intrapersonal and interpersonal growth (Sontag, 1996). Central to the cultivation of these traits are the protective and risk factors. The examination then extends to the set of environmental forces—the environmental system that influences human growth.

**Internal and external protective factors.** Protective factors exist when a person is able to safeguard or have social control over the occurrence of risk (Jessor, Bos, Vanderryn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995). Internal protective factors are strengths which individuals develop that would assist them in tackling conflicts and challenges (Smith, 2006). For aging persons, their abilities to accept the reality of the weakening of physical health will protect them from developing distress. External protective factors that come in the form of support and care from families, teachers, and peers also help individuals nurture their protective strengths. Protective factors work against risk factors because protective factors are the shields that protect people from adversities, and help them deal with and adapt to harsh conditions (Gilgun, 1996). Protective factors are cumulative; Hong Kong baby boomers who have accrued strengths and insights from early life experiences will have the developed attributes to deal with various aging circumstances.

**Internal and external risk factors.** Risk factors are the probability of involving in risky actions (Jessor et al., 1995). Internal and external risk factors accompany people’s development as they shape the way individuals perceive, process, and relate to
occurrences in the environment (Smith, 2006). Individuals’ former experiences in dealing with risk will become their supporting resources when they encounter subsequent risky circumstances. A person’s upbringing in an impoverished neighborhood or deprived household is an example of the exposure to external risk factor (Smith, 2006). Children who have been exposed to crime and violence are at risk of developing behaviors that are against society’s moral norms. In some situations, however, children growing up in unhealthy environments such as neighborhoods where people use alcohol and drugs as a means to deal with distresses, when given adequate resources to assist them in confronting stress in a healthy way, can avoid developing addictive behaviors (Gilgun, 1996). The experience of tackling the risk factors would help these children nurture the strengths that support them in coping with risks in their future years. For some baby boomers, growing up in a poor neighborhood and witnessing their parents’ struggles to make ends meet might have inspired them to cultivate traits such as tolerance, persistence, and work ethic. These traits may have enabled them to nurture a productive and healthy lifestyle. It is likely that these traits would sustain them as they encounter risks in their later years in life.

**Environmental system.** The environmental system is regarded as a hierarchical system that consists of several layers, with each layer consisting of important elements that affect a person’s life-span development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This system encompasses the direct and indirect interactions between the growing person and the changing agents in this person’s immediate and external relational spheres (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). There are four subsystems that make up the environmental
system: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, and (4) macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Microsystem.** A microsystem refers to the activities, roles, and social relations that take place in a particular environment and carry certain substantial meaning to the developing persons (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An environment is the physical location where the developing persons have direct contact with individuals such as immediate family members, caregivers, teachers, and so on. These developing persons assume the active catalytic role that affects the activities in their microsystem (Sontag, 1996). For Hong Kong baby boomers, the microsystemic interactions are their direct contacts with persons in their environments such as home, workplace, church, and other social milieus. Two crucial qualities of the microsystem are worthy of note. The first quality highlights the way persons interpret the events, which affect their growth (Sontag, 1996). A baby boomer who perceives his young neighbor’s help in carrying some heavy boxes to his house as a caring gesture rather than as a challenge to his physical strength, for example, would feel more comfortable with his own aging process. The second quality refers to how the distinctive characteristics of individuals with whom an older person deals create an impact on the growth of the older person (Sontag, 1996). As an illustration, a mother whose son complains a lot about his stressful work would hesitate to ask her son to run errands for her for fear that such errand would add stress to him.

**Mesosystem.** A mesosystem refers to the relations of the social activities which take place in two or more environments and relate to the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The interaction processes of each environment affect both the immediate and intermediate environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). A mother’s
relationship with her family members at home, for example, can affect her performances at work. To examine her aging experience, it is necessary to ascertain her interactions with her family as well as her activities outside of her household.

**Exosystem.** An exosystem refers to the development that is influenced by the occurrences in various settings; one of these settings does not involve the developing person (Sontag, 1996). A mother’s aging process, for instance, can be influenced by her relationship with her son, whose behaviors are shaped by his communications with schoolmates whom his mother has not met.

**Macrosystem.** The macrosystem examines the underlying value or belief system of the macro or larger context of the culture that is consistent with the form and content of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem addresses the differential reality specific to each of the diverse ecological environments. Case in point, the cultural environment of Hong Kong and its people’s way of interacting with others shaped the development of Hong Kong baby boomers, which in turn plays a role in their aging processes.

**Ecological transition.** In addition to the four systems that form part of the ecological framework in learning about aging experiences, another principal force that needs to be examined is the ecological transition. Ecological transition refers to the change of a person’s status and/or location that interferes with his or her involvement in the ecological setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological transition highlights the relational interactions that are principal to the person’s growth while he or she confronts changes in life. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), ecological transitions operate from biological changes and transformed environmental situations, highlighting the dual
processes of adjustments that constitute the crux of the ecology of human development. The concept of ecological transition facilitates the investigation of the changes in the status or environment that accompany the aging process of Hong Kong baby boomers. Transitions experienced by these boomers may include recent immigration to the United States, becoming a grandparent, or becoming a retiree.

**On Stages of Psychosocial Development**

Concerning the understanding of aging, it is important to ponder and observe the role old age plays in today’s context (Erikson & Erikson, 1997; Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnik, 1986). This argument resonates with the exploration of the meaning of aging for baby boomers in that this meaning also must be explored in today’s perspective. Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development accentuate the continuity of growth when individuals are able to resolve the crisis using their adaptive strengths (Atchley, 1991; Erikson et al., 1986). The eight stages of the psychosocial themes are epigenetic in that the moving into a new stage is the reliving of the previous stages in a new mode (Erikson et al., 1986). The emergence of the next psychosocial stage does not mean that personal traits developed previously no longer exist (Blando, 2011); the attributes simply have acquired a new importance (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). A brief overview of Erikson’s eight psychosocial stages is helpful in examining aging persons’ developed stages that help them confront the tensions of the here and now.

**Trust versus mistrust: hope.** The experience older persons have gained in dealing with the tension of trust and mistrust, as well as the birth of hope as the fruit of the resolution of this tension, will help them deal with the upcoming uncertainties and unknowns of life (Erikson et al., 1986). For Hong Kong baby boomers, the aging
experience is informed partly by their former successes and failures in securing hope in relationships, careers, and everyday life activities. Their previous experiences in negotiating trust also furnish them with positive or negative attitudes while dealing with many age specific, unfamiliar circumstances.

**Autonomy versus shame/doubt: will.** The tension that arose in the process of navigating one’s life at an early age will reoccur as one advances in age (Erikson et al., 1986). For older adults, encountering the loss and decline in physical abilities returns their feelings to the toddler’s stage, where they struggled with the tensions between autonomy and shame/doubt. For older persons who are relying on others in daily activities, they need to resolve the sense of conflict between autonomy and shame in order to develop or redevelop their sense of autonomy.

**Initiative versus guilt: purpose.** As persons advance in years, they need to learn to accustom themselves to new ways of engaging in activities without giving in to the guilt tied to their incapacitations. Older adults need to reconcile with their age-appropriate feelings of initiative and guilt, and nourish their senses of meaningfulness which travel back and forth between their previous and current phases of their lives (Erikson et al., 1986). When investigating the lived experiences of aging Hong Kong baby boomers, it is crucial to take heed of the purposefulness in these persons’ experiential account of aging, which reflect their stances in their negotiations of initiative and guilt.

**Industry versus inferiority: competence.** As persons age, they face challenges characterized by biological changes such as the loss of physical strength or the loss or decline in memory. For older persons, referring to their previous experiences and feelings
of accomplishment, competency, and strength would help them redevelop a sense of industriousness while coping with their aging processes. Hong Kong baby boomers’ academic and career achievements, the care and support they provided for their families, and the way they practiced self-care are important sources that offer them a sense of competence in the face of many biological changes that unfold in their aging journey.

**Identity versus identity confusion: fidelity.** For older adults, a sense of self is tied to their own priorities and activities across their lifespans, and the younger generations who will keep these older adults in their thoughts as they proceed along life’s journey (Erikson et al., 1986). With the physiological and social changes that come with age, older adults will re-negotiate the tension of identity and identity confusion similar to those experienced by adolescents (Erikson et al., 1986). For Hong Kong baby boomers, their aging in the United States renders for them an additional layer of the processing of a sense of identity, which springs from their living as minority persons as well as aging persons. Therefore, it is important to learn about these two factors as they play a role in maintaining or altering these baby boomers’ senses of self.

**Intimacy versus isolation: love.** At old age, persons summarize their experiences of close relationships andaloneness, finding love in both of these circumstances, while maintaining their affectionate beings (Erikson et al., 1986). The experiences of separation due to biological changes and physical declines pose challenges to older adults in nurturing and keeping their reciprocated relationships with others. Hong Kong baby boomers, as they age, may find difficulty in keeping close ties with families and friends in other states, in Hong Kong, and in other parts of the world. For instance, taking long flights is costly, physiologically and financially. Internet and telephone services are
favorable alternatives that help them maintain a sense of connectedness with their loved ones. Yet, these communication means can fill only a portion of the void of the physical separation. It is essential that Hong Kong baby boomers establish relationships with people from the local environment while they maintain their connections with families and friends from afar.

**Generativity versus stagnation: care.** As persons advance in age, they need to balance the feelings of generativity and stagnation associated with the support they gave to members of their families, their upbringing of children, their caregiving to parents and grandparents, and their contributions to society in the earlier parts of their lives (Erikson et al., 1986). Older adults must develop a sense of balance between activity and inactivity. Their feelings of generativity may stem from the advice they offer to their adult children on ways to manage lives, and the perceptiveness of life experiences they share with the community. Elderly persons can be inspired by their own wisdom in seeing inactivity in a different light.

**Integrity versus despair: wisdom.** Many older adults reconcile thoughts and feelings associated with their earlier life phases, incorporating them into the recent path of development (Erikson et al., 1986). At old age, persons negotiate the new tensions with the undergirding properties of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, and care. The stage of old age is pulled in the bipolarity of integrity and despair (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Integrity refers to the older person’s intense feeling of wholeness even when his or her physical and mental abilities are weakening (Blando, 2011). Persons who have dealt successfully with the conflict between integrity and despair have cultivated the wisdom to accept both positive and negative realities in connection with old age. On the
other hand, despair refers to a person’s feeling of disintegration, loss of the sense of wholeness, or loss of meaning in his or her life (Blando, 2011). Erikson’s stages help attune to the psychosocial factors that influence the aging experience of Hong Kong baby boomers. The perspective of the resolution of crisis or conflict is particularly supportive to the interpretation of both the adjustments to aging and the acculturating to a non-Hong Kong environment.

**Summarizing the psychosocial themes.** Erikson and Erikson’s (1997) psychosocial themes emphasized the importance of examining the social components that accompany a person’s development when studying the person’s life-span growth. In addition to studying the person’s organismic development, it is crucial to examine the proximal and distal determinants that inform this person’s behaviors (Erikson, 1959). The social impetus of the psychosocial stages of development corresponds to the ecological system, which emphasizes that persons’ growth is not only influenced by the interactions they have with the immediate environment, but also by other facets that are connected to the activities in the immediate and distant environments. In addition, the focus of the psychosocial stages argued that resolution of crisis or conflict serves as a gateway to growth, vitality, and promise (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). This focus on negotiating crisis and conflict as an opportunity for growth is in line with the emphasis of the continuity theory of aging, which is about one’s continuous adaptation to life’s changes (Atchley, 1991).

**On Continuity Theory of Aging**

Continuity theory of aging accentuates the principal adaptive option that persons embrace as the mechanism for coping with aging (Atchley, 1991). Continuity theory
refers to persons’ tendency of applying their persistent traits to deal with unfamiliar or new situations (Atchley, 1991). This is the strategy individuals use to respond to the changes that disrupt the regular functioning of their internal and external entities (Hill, 2005). In addition, continuity theory highlights the crucial factors that nurture a person’s sense of self (Hill, 2005). There are two properties of continuity: internal and external.

**Internal continuity.** Internal continuity is the self-identity in the here and now that originated from the previous sense of self (Hill, 2005). Individuals’ characters tend to persist and remain the same when they grow old. Behaviors are predictable as they operate from the consistent, persistent past of the self. For example, persons who enjoy going to different restaurants, sampling diverse dishes, would continue with this lifestyle as they age. The foods they order may change slightly due to medical conditions, however, they continue their practice of visiting different food outlets. Such continuity offers aging persons a sense of uniformity in the way they live their lives (Hill, 2005). Internal continuity also refers to persons’ ability to use their past experiences to cope with the changing dynamics in the present (Hill, 2005). For example, for some persons, their relationships with particular loved ones are especially important to them. Therefore, as they age, they try to maintain close contact with these loved ones, as a means of internal support for their aging processes. For some Hong Kong baby boomers, as they age, they may choose to live an independent lifestyle as a means for maintaining self-esteem, which would possibly be an internal source for coping with aging.

**External continuity.** External continuity refers to the impact that the environment has on an older person’s growth. Older persons have the tendency to seek ways to “preserve” the external environments, making their environments familiar and
pleasing to their personal ways of living. For instance, a 65-year-old man lost his wife to cancer. His children thought that it might help to alleviate his pain if they remove their mother’s belongings from the father’s bedroom. However, the widower insisted on keeping his late wife’s belongings. His persistent desire to keep the belongings was his means of grieving his loss as well as maintaining an external continuity for himself. For some older persons, maintaining some familiar external variables provides them with a sense of self. Decades ago, older Chinese immigrants liked to live in the local Chinatown because the cultural environment provided them with a sense of familiarity, reminding them of life in the home country. The external continuity of aging provides the lens to perceive the adaptive strategies of Hong Kong baby boomers as they navigate their aging journey.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a bibliographic review of literature that has discussed aspects of aging, aging of the minority population, baby boomers, aging of baby boomers, Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, and relevant counseling perspectives. The chapter also has provided an overview of the theoretical framework that facilitates the interpretation of the lived experiences of aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. There are countless volumes written about the subjects of aging, aging of the minority population, and baby boomers. A growing body of research has focused on many important aspects pertaining to the aging of baby boomers. However, research regarding the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers is absent. The next chapter discusses the research approach used as well as the theoretical framework that guides the inquiry. Van Manen’s (1990)
hermeneutic-phenomenological research method is the approach used to facilitate the investigation of the lived experiences of aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States.
CHAPTER III

Chapter Overview

This study seeks to investigate the lived experiences of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers residing in the United States. The purpose of the study, which is to gain better understanding of a specific experience, namely, the aging experience, is qualitative in nature. I applied van Manen’s hermeneutic-phenomenological method as the guide to the research methodology of this study. This chapter discusses the overarching methodological and theoretical structure that is made up of van Manen’s (1990) phenomenologically oriented approach, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development, Erikson and Erikson’s (1997) psychosocial stages of development, and Atchley’s (1991) aging theory. Specifically, this chapter discusses the methodological assumptions, the research methodology, the research design, the research instrumentation, the data collection and recording, the data analysis, and the limitations of these theories.

Methodological Assumptions

The assumptions of the phenomenologically oriented method of inquiry are informed by the notion of “presuppositionless,” meaning that no determined processes, standards, and theories would preside over the study (van Manen, 1990). Applying this method, schemes or approaches can be designed to conduct the study; however flexibility and openness govern the formation of such schemes or approaches. Since the inception of the phenomenological research method, a myriad of traditions, knowledge, and insights have accumulated as a source for today’s work in human science research. The implied notion of flexibility and openness in phenomenologically oriented methods does not
suggest that scholars disregard the traditions of phenomenology; neither does this notion
demand scholars to conform religiously to its standardized rules or principles (van
Manen, 1990). The five methodological themes van Manen (1990) proposed have
implied flexibility and openness while maintaining the phenomenological traditions.

**Methodological Themes**

The methodological themes proposed by van Manen (1990) constitute the
structure that phenomenologically oriented researchers embrace as they attempt to
discover the meaning of the lived experiences of specific persons. These themes include:
(1) focusing on a specific experience that intrigues the researcher, (2) examining the
experiences that are lived by the participants rather than the experiences they have
conceptualized, (3) discerning the pertinent themes that relate to their experiences, (4)
articulating experiences by means of writing and rewriting, and (5) keeping strong
connections with experiences, and (6) negotiating the context of the study in whole in
addition to compartmentalized units (van Manen, 1990).

**First theme.** This theme, which focuses on a specific experience that intrigues the
researcher, resonates with my passion in learning about aspects pertaining to older adults;
the phenomenon of aging is one of these aspects. The Chinese cultural characteristics that
play a part in aging experiences also have intrigued me. I was most eager to know what it
would be like to experience aging for the Hong Kong Chinese baby boomer population
who currently are residing in the United States. This eagerness furnished me with a sense
of commitment to strive to enter the life world of these baby boomers in their aging
processes.
Second theme. The second theme of examining the aging experiences through my own engagement was both alarming and directive because it cautioned me to have an open mind as I investigated what aging would mean for the participants. Such openness urged me to listen actively in order to be able to uncover the intricacies that are interwoven into the fabrics of the participants’ aging phenomenon. An open attitude has safeguarded me from using my own lens or assumptions to view aging, which could deter me from immersing into participants’ life world.

Third theme. The third theme of relating to the experience calls for deep reflection. According to van Manen (1990), reflecting on lived experience entails mindful, reflective understanding of the constituents of the important meanings of such experience. This theme has facilitated my analytical process, preventing me from sidetracking or going off topic. For instance, the purpose of the study has been to investigate the aging phenomenon, not the acculturation experience. The acculturation experiences were important if they were related to baby boomers’ aging processes. However, this study primarily focuses on the knowledge of the aging experiences of Hong Kong baby boomers rather than their acculturation issues.

Fourth theme. Regarding the theme of writing and rewriting, van Manen (1990) argued that writing is the most important part that unites the researcher with the happenings in the world (van Manen, 2002). The process of writing and rewriting the experiences ensures that the writing reflects and captures the significant meaning of the focus of the phenomenon. According to van Manen (1990), the meaning of human scientific research is a system of writing. The process of writing facilitates the organization, clarification, and articulation of the voluminous data of the research. For
instance, the writing process requires the processing and systematizing of thoughts and organizing and synthesizing these thoughts into a structured written form. This written form has provided me with a basis to more thoroughly reflect on each and every step of design, data collection, and data analysis, eventually generating rich and illuminating account of the aging phenomenon of Hong Kong baby boomers.

The theme of writing and rewriting also is important to the design of the research questions and the interview protocol. When designing the research questions, it is important to come up with relevant content questions that facilitate the exploration of the etymological roots of words. These roots can reveal important historical experiences that are living in the words of the present (van Manen, 1990, 2002). For example, a participant may say, “aging seems to be a lonely thing for me.” Essentially, what does “lonely thing” mean for this person? Is he asking for understanding about the changes or challenges he has been going through while aging? Is he talking about his loneliness because he is living far away from his children and family? What was his early life experience of loneliness? What was his former perspective of loneliness like in connection with older adults? Delving into the etymological origins of words would help reveal the “lonely thing” that is connected with some crucial past that has become this person’s living present, inscribed in his current self (van Manen, 2002). In addition, learning about the source of the meaning of this person’s loneliness may help in understanding the chief reason for him to relate loneliness to his aging experience.

Fifth theme. In regard to keeping a strong connection with the aging experiences, I believe that my “burning desire” to investigate the aging experiences of the participants was integral. This desire furnished me with the steadfast interest and eagerness to
negotiate many demanding processes relating to this study. I followed van Manen’s (1990) spirit, to enter the life world of participants, and to strive to get a sense of their experiences. This living “with” participants was an evidence of my strong connection with the studied phenomenon.

**Sixth theme.** In regard to the sixth phenomenological theme, I made an effort to be sensitive to the methodological procedures as they related to the context of the study in individual units as well as in an overall functioning capacity. Maintaining such sensitivity helped me stay focused on the goal of the study while taking heed of the important meanings that came from individual units of data. As van Manen (1990) stated, phenomenological human science is a taxing form of qualitative research. I recognized the potentiality of “getting lost” or becoming confused in the face of listing, organizing, and categorizing piles of raw data. This recognition served as a reminder for me to examine the data in their parts and in entirety. Therefore, examining the themes of the methodological assumptions served as the basis for me to explore the research methodology of this study.

**Research Methodology**

The descriptive title of the lived experiences of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers reflects the purpose of this study, which seeks to investigate the “whatness,” the “What is it?” or the “*qualis*” of the aging phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). In essence, this study sought to acquire a genre of in-depth and sense-making knowledge, which informed the very nature of this inquiry—qualitative.
Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative research “consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Qualitative research is about “the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (Berg, 2009, p. 3). “The word qualitative accentuates the qualities of the variables and the courses and significances that are not investigated or assessed scientifically (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Research studies using qualitative methods emphasize the quality, the richness that is derived from the inquiry, rather than the quantity or the significant numerical representation of the population. In addition, implicit in the qualitative nature is the assumption of a meager or partial understanding of a given situation (Shank & Brown, 2007) which calls for a deeper and broader exploration. Qualitative inquiry entails flexibility that accommodates novel and unanticipated empirical constituents and increasing intricacies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In essence, qualitative research attempts to explore the meaning and understanding of a specific phenomenon (Merriam, 2002); it is predominantly concerned with “exploration, discovery, and inductive logic” (Patton, 2002, p. 55). To the point, qualitative researchers hope to explore, discover, and make sense of the world in which persons live and interact with their social domains (Merriam, 2002).

In qualitative inquiry, data collected through interviews, observations, and documentations will be organized and analyzed. The findings of the analyses of the transcribed data will shed light on the interpretation of what it would be like for persons to be in a particular setting or situation. Hence, qualitative researchers “emphasize the value of analytic strategies that remain as close as possible to the symbolic system in
which that sense-making occurs” (Smith, 2008, p. 2). Essentially, researchers using qualitative inquiry as a research methodology endeavor to perceive a certain phenomenon in accordance with the meaning that participants assign to their own experiences (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). To gather the meanings of the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, I have borrowed van Manen’s (1990) hermeneutic-phenomenological method, one of the methods informed by the philosophical tradition of phenomenology.

**Phenomenology**

The heart of this study is to explore, discover, and make sense of the aging experiences of Hong Kong baby boomers currently residing in the United States. The meaning of the account of aging of this particular group of informants forms the pillar of this inquiry, which illuminates the concreteness of a particular life stage of these informants. This inquiry has entailed the investigation of the richness of baby boomers’ aging experiences. The phenomenological research method, which is oriented to the examination of the life world horizon of the participants (Teloni, 2010; van Manen, 1990), facilitates the collection of a host of rich data. The hermeneutic-phenomenological method is a subdivision of phenomenology. While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss phenomenology, it is important to explore three key aspects: science, method, and lived experiences as they relate to the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach used in this study.

**As a science.** Phenomenology is a science that was founded with the phenomenological method (Kockelmans, 1994). Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher, is the father and founder of this robust scientific approach of
inquiry (Patton, 2002; Teloni, 2010). Husserl desired to create a science of phenomena that would elucidate how situations or settings are experienced and manifested in the human consciousness (Spinelli, 2005). Phenomenology is a branch of the philosophical tradition (Patton, 2002) that articulates “what is behind an appearance in the way we experience it, and the going behind is always a going within, that is, within the experience itself to disclose its meaning” (Darroch & Silvers, 1980, p. 115).

Phenomenology relocates people in their right locale: the world in which people travel and live (Kruger, 1979). Phenomenology entails people to view others as delve into the core of their understanding as “the biographical, cultural and historical formulations that they are” (Darroch & Silvers, 1980, p. 131). The centrality of phenomenology is “to ground radically the foundations of knowledge so that skeptical attacks on rationality and its procedures could be overcome” (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p. 26).

**As a method.** Phenomenology is a method or attitude that facilitates “the world to disclose itself to one in all its manifestness and complexity” (Kruger, 1979, p. 113). Phenomenology is an exploratory method that incorporates a constellation of common views whose issues can be accommodated appropriately by a thematic framework that addresses the lived experience (Spinelli, 2005). The phenomenological philosophy offers a wealth of concepts that facilitate the exploring and understanding of lived experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

**As lived experiences.** Functioning as a hermeneutic-phenomenological method, phenomenology inspires meticulous investigation of the lived experiences of persons (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In the spirit of van Manen (1990), phenomenology focuses on the “lived-through quality of lived experience” and the “description of meaning of the
expressions of lived experience” (p. 25). Essentially, an inquiry using this hermeneutic-phenomenological method focuses on a lived situation or event which has become historical. Persons who have experienced a specific situation or event articulate the experiential account, which is embedded in the meaning they give to their experience. Thus, the phenomenologically oriented approach facilitates the gathering of the recollective, reflective sense of the experience. That is, this approach supports the gathering of rich, meticulous, first person descriptions of experiences (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, this approach aspires to perceive the uncommonness in the common (van Manen, 2002), and the similarities among the differences in an experience (van Manen, 1990). It is worth mentioning that phenomenology prohibits generalization, and a phenomenologically oriented approach alludes to the dissuasion of generalization (van Manen, 1990). Therefore, investigating the lived experiences of persons entails researchers’ use of their unique lens to understand the participants’ perceived life world. Researchers need to attune to such life world with intentionality.

As lived dimensions. The life world is a complex whole that is made up of the four lived existentials—lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived relation (van Manen, 1990). The existential dimension of the lived body refers to a person’s somatic or physical experiences. Hong Kong baby boomers may get a sense of aging when they notice some physical changes that include weakening of vision or back pain. Lived space is about the existential felt space, the space that influences the way persons feel about themselves (van Manen, 1990). Some Hong Kong baby boomers may believe that the space that offers them a home feeling is the place where they are close to their families. Lived time is the person’s aging experience as it associates with time. Hong Kong baby
boomers may desire to engage in some activities that will keep them occupied rather than
doing nothing and watching the time pass. Lived relation refers to the person’s
interpretation of his or her aging as it connects with his or her relationships with others.
For Hong Kong baby boomers, their lived relations are associated with their loved ones
who accompany them as they travel along their aging journey.

Tuning. To pave the way for collecting information on participants’ unique
experiences of their lived dimensions of aging, it is important, first of all, for the
researchers to orient to the phenomenon. According to van Manen (1990), lived
experience is the heartbeat of the exploration of the meaning since it begins and closes
the locus of the phenomenological research. A crucial goal of the concept of
phenomenology is to uncover the common and uncommon threads among the shared
experiences. Following this goal, phenomenological researchers must first attune to what
seems to be common (van Manen, 2002). When investigating Hong Kong baby boomers’
aging experiences, I strived to take heed of what appeared to be reported prevalently.
Then, among those commonly expressed account, I identified the distinct shared aspects.
Thus, examining the common or trivial existence sets the stage for identifying the
uncommon or unusual (van Manen, 2002). Such tuning to the common and uncommon,
the ordinary and the unusual relates to Husserl’s emphasis of intentionality (Spinelli,
2005).

Being intentional. In the phenomenological context, intentionality underscores
the awareness of an aspect, which entails exclusive attention to a particular experience
(Ashworth & Chung, 2010). Intentionality is the attitude that enables the unfolding of the
meaning of the circumstance for each person (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). An
important aspect of the phenomenological method that relates to intentionality is the “bracketing” of biases or presuppositions of a situation or circumstance, in order to come close to the essence of the investigation (Spinelli, 2005). In bracketing, there will be no theoretical creeds, presumptions, and suppositions that lead to the misrepresentation of the participants’ point of view (Pollio et al., 1997). For this study, when interpreting the collected data, essentially, I bracketed my own beliefs and ideas that stemmed from my own experiences or prior knowledge about aging, about the Hong Kong Chinese culture, about the baby boomer generation, and about foreign persons living in the United States. Furthermore, it was important that I set aside biases toward the perspectives of any of the above aspects. This bracketing freed my heart and mind, enabled me to focus fully on the crux of this study—the experiential account of aging of the participants rather than the account that represent my perspectives of aging. This bracketing speaks to the essence of the phenomenologically oriented approach of the lived experience, which was to discover the meaning of aging as it is being lived through the experiences of the participants.

**Research Design**

A research design delineates a strategy that links important theoretical constituents to investigating approaches and to data-collecting methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Specifically, the design, which is informed by the research question and adhered to the theoretical framework, is the blueprint. This blueprint guides the steps toward identifying the methods of sourcing participants, gathering raw data from participants, processing these data, and channeling them into findings that respond to the intent of a study. The primary purpose of this study, which was to examine the experiences of aging lived by Hong Kong baby boomers of Chinese descent, called for a
research design that is qualitative in nature. This section discusses the two purposes associated with the qualitative inquiry of this study, followed by its design strategies and research instrumentation.

**Primary and Secondary Purposes**

The purpose of a study is the chief variable that informs the research design. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit the two purposes of this study. The primary purpose was to generate knowledge from the findings of the experiences of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers who are residing in the United States. This knowledge captured the meaning of aging that represented the participants’ experiences and interpretations of their life world in the processes of aging. This primary purpose parallels the goal of basic research, which is to explore the ways the participants’ world functions (Patton, 2002).

The secondary purpose of this study sought to shed light on the professional counselor’s knowledge base that relates to the experiences of aging of baby boomers of Chinese descent. This purpose reflects to the goal of “applied research,” which is to illuminate a social concern (Patton, 2002). The findings from applied research offer knowledge of the nature of a particular concern and inspire possible interceding activities (Patton, 2002). In light of this purpose, the findings derived from this study may furnish counseling professionals with insights which they can incorporate into their future work, including curriculum planning and research. The findings also may illuminate future strategic planning of policy makers, social workers, financiers, and other organizations whose services are informed by the relevant aging demographic realities.
Design Strategies

Another crucial aspect of a research design is its strategy. Design strategies are about the setting into motion of the intricate concepts of interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Design strategies guide researchers to make use of particular means and techniques to gather and process research materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Patton (2002) discussed the components of naturalistic inquiry, emergent design flexibility, and purposeful sampling as the design strategies relevant to qualitative inquiry. In addition to using a purposeful sampling method to recruit participants, I have integrated the snowball sampling method as an additional means of sourcing participants.

Naturalistic inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry suggests the preservation of the naturalness of the setting, and that the researcher does not control or manipulate the setting (Patton, 2002). This naturalness refers to the use of a setting that reflects the organic form of things. Data gathering that takes place in an inartificial, real life circumstance, where participants are not assigned to any controlled or manipulated location or condition, is an example of the use of a setting in its organic form. In addition, the essence of naturalness implies that the researcher account for changes or incidents that may occur in the setting. In this study, interviews took place either in participants’ offices or church offices, settings that were convenient to participants, and they appeared comfortable in engaging in the interviewing process in these private, undisturbed and familiar settings. The only unnaturalness I sensed was participants’ cautious way of structuring their verbal responses in the beginning of the interviews. However, as the interviews proceeded, participants seemed to grow more relaxed and natural. I perceived this unnaturalness as the natural response because it seems to be human nature to be
cautious or less at ease in the beginning of an interview or a conversation with a person one meets for the first time.

**Emergent design flexibility.** Emergent design flexibility underscores the researcher’s open attitude toward reshaping the research questions sensitive to participant’s responses (Patton, 2002). When I collected data for this study, I made an attempt to avoid following the interview protocol in a rigid manner. For instance, a participant indicated that he did not know how to respond to a particular question. First, I remained silent for a while, to see if he would come up with something. When he reiterated that he did not know what to say, I listed a certain situation as an example of a response to the question. It was important that I nurtured the sensitivity and skills in integrating probing questions where necessary. I was aware of the essence of the qualitative method, which highlights flexibility. I practiced prudence in posing questions that inspired meaningful and natural responses. Additionally, I adhered to the theme of the assumptions of the phenomenologically oriented approach which accentuates presuppositionlessness.

**Purposeful sampling.** For studies that are qualitative in nature, the emphasis is on the collection of data that offers breadth and depth. Therefore, the recruitment of participants or sampling method needs to be theoretically in line with this emphasis. For this study, purposeful sampling was fitting to the phenomenologically oriented approach in that it facilitated the recruitment of prospective participants based on their ability to offer pertinent information on a particular experience (Smith et al., 2009). The purpose of this study informed the use of purposeful sampling, whose emphasis was on the gathering of insights about a specific phenomenon rather than the yielding of a significant
representation of the population. In effect, it was the participants’ insights rather than their quantitative representation of the population that would matter (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009). Persons who are Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers living in the United States were recruited as participants as they belong to the population whose phenomenon of aging was being investigated.

Snowballing method. In addition to using the purposeful sampling method to recruit participants, I used the snowball sampling method. Snowballing is a chain referral method for identifying participants with traits or characteristics germane to the study (Berg, 2009). The researcher asks the recruited participants to refer people they know are eligible to participate in the study. Following this sampling method, I asked participants to refer to me Hong Kong Chinese persons they knew who were born between 1946 and 1964, now residing in the United States. I found this recruitment approach to be an efficient tool to reach participants because of the cultural trait: collectivism. Hong Kong people tend to feel more at ease with doing something that they know that their friends or family members already have done. Nearly 50% of the participants were recruited using the snowballing method.

Research Instrumentation

The next aspect that is crucial to the research design is research instrumentation. Research instrumentation refers to the tools or instruments the researcher uses to gather data. For this study, I have used three instruments that I perceived as effective in enabling me to gather information that was qualitative in nature: (1) interview, (2) close observation, and (3) documentation (Patton, 2002). This triangulation approach ensures confidence in the findings (Patton, 2002); the three instruments helped me to capture the
nuances manifested in the verbal and nonverbal expressions that were pertinent to this study. Each of these instruments formed a crucial contributor to my data collection and analysis procedure. The following section discusses the relevant qualities of these contributors. The rationales for selecting these instruments and the way these instruments assisted me in generating and interpreting the richness of data also are illustrated.

**Private interview.** According to van Manen (1990), the interview is an effective data-gathering instrument because its data-generating capacity helps achieve the precise goals of the hermeneutic-phenomenological human science. One of these goals is to gather in-depth and rich data from participants that relate to a specific phenomenon. Another goal is to use the interview to establish a conversational tie with the interviewee that relates to the meaning they make of a certain crucial experience (van Manen, 1990).

For this study, I used a face-to-face private interview as the sole interviewing tool to gather information in answer to the research questions. I decided to use private interviews because I was aware of and sensitive to Hong Kong Chinese persons’ hesitancy to share personal experiences when they are in groups. I perceived that the arrangement of a private interview would inspire responses that were more natural and personal, as Hong Kong Chinese persons tend to feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences in individual rather than group communication. Culturally, Chinese people are sensitive about their public image and are mindful of the way others perceive them (Chen & Mak, 2008). Also, they are concerned about their “saving face,” which relates to the social image and social worth in connection with one’s appearance and interaction in a group setting (Mak, Chen, Lam, & Yiu, 2009). Chinese people’s concern for face is collectivistic because they are concerned about both their own face and the face of their
families and communities (Sun, 2008). For instance, Chinese people do not want to disclose personal or family matters in public, for fear that their families or communities may lose face. Referring to the literature that highlights the higher educational standing of Hong Kong baby boomers and their accustoming to the western lifestyle after residing in the United States for some time, the aspect of face may not be a concern for these boomers. In my experiences, however, in teaching and conducting groups in Hong Kong, I noticed that Chinese persons were in general less eager to express their opinions or talk about personal matters such as their experiential account. These experiences informed me that a private interview would be a more fitting approach to solicit the aging experiences of Hong Kong baby boomers.

During the interviews, I used semi-structured questions to gather data about the participants’ aging experiences. The semi-structured nature served two objectives. First, the structured format provided a basic direction for the beginning of the interview protocol. Second, the partially systematized feature provided flexibility, allowing me to reshape or rephrase questions when necessary. Essentially, the partly regulated format of this interview furnished me with the space for probing in accordance with the participants’ responses and the situations, and this ultimately facilitated the generating of rich and meaningful information.

**Observation.** The second instrument I used to collect data was close observation. Close observation is an indirect means of gathering experiential account from participants (van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) maintained that close observation facilitates the researcher to “enter the lifeworld of the persons whose experiences are relevant study material” (p. 69). Entering persons’ life world enhances the researcher’s sensual lenses to
recognize the nuanced nonverbal expressions that are central to the participants’ experiences of a particular phenomenon. Another value that close observation provides to the researcher is the opportunity to step in and out of the life world of the participants. That is, the researcher assumes a reflective attitude to safeguard against the scheming and synthetic elements that find their way into a social circumstance and relation (van Manen, 1990). I realized that closely observing the participants and the interviewing processes were effective means that allowed me to witness the intricacies central to Hong Kong baby boomers’ aging experiences.

When I sat with the 11 participants in the interviewing process, I paid attention to their nonverbal behaviors, which stemmed from both noticeable and subtle gestures they made in response to some questions or remarks. Additionally, I took heed of the conditions of the settings because these aspects might have affected participants’ responses and nonverbal gestures. As a Hong Kong Chinese person, I share some cultural traits of the participants. In our culture, nonverbal behaviors and gestures play an important role in social dialogues. Raised in the Hong Kong Chinese culture, I cultivated my sensitivity to recognize and understand cultural nuances of facial and body gestures. In the Chinese culture, indirect communications imply people’s respectful motive rather than the concealing of some altruistic contents (Weaver, 2011). Essentially, I perceive my fluency with this Chinese cultural trait helpful in establishing a communicative rapport that enhanced the interviewing processes.

**Documentation.** The third instrument I used to gather data was documentation. Written materials such as correspondence, official announcements, personal notes taken before, during, and immediately after the interview, and the researcher’s journal make up
the entire portfolio of documentation for this study (Patton, 2002). In this study, the letter to participants, the informed consent forms, the demographic data sheet, the notes taken during the interviewing processes, together with my own reflective writing formed the instruments of my documentation. Written documents are important because writing is the heart of the phenomenologically oriented approach. I recognize that writing facilitated my cognitive processing of pertinent insights, channeling into rich information.

An inquiry using the qualitative method demands tedious and arduous effort in gathering data. Yet, the caliber of the end product will be worth such hard work (Patton, 2002). In the discussions on research instrumentations, I have underscored the three tools, private interviews, observations, and documentations, for gathering data for this study. These tools are principal avenues that help generate meaningful responses. Other operational procedures which I administered were sourcing, identifying, and coordinating with participants; informing them about all relevant information for this study, such as the protection of their rights and privileges as participants, interviewing questions, assumptions and biases, and ethical concerns. These operational procedures are examined in the next section.

**Data Collection and Recording**

I began to solicit prospective participants upon receipt of the written approval notice from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Duquesne University. My preliminary plan was to identify the important sources of referral, contact those sources, and seek help in finding referrals for prospective participants. That is, I tried to get in touch with persons whom I believe could refer me to Hong Kong Chinese persons born between 1946 and 1964, who are currently residing in the United States. I reckoned that I
would begin by sourcing referrals who are connected with churches in areas that seem to have a substantial Chinese population. If that source were not helpful, I would turn to the next sources: universities. If that did not lead to enough prospective participants, I would contact the Hong Kong Schools’ Alumni Federation.

I went online to look for names and contact details of persons from various churches on the East and the West Coasts. Some websites listed names of pastors and assistant pastors. With that information, I made calls to introduce myself, to explain the purpose of my call, and to talk briefly about this study. I was able to reach a couple of pastors or assistant pastors of churches. Some persons from a couple of churches gave me the names and telephone numbers of their active members. I telephoned those active members immediately.

Two of the active members from different churches furnished me with a list of prospective participants. Some participants referred their friends while others told me that their spouses might be able to participate. I recognized the efficiency of the snowball sampling method. I interviewed nine Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers on the West Coast and two from the East Coast.

While I was on the West Coast, a prospective participant, a lady from one of the states on the East Coast telephoned me, telling me that an assistant pastor from her church told her about my study. She told me she was interested and she could also introduce several participants to me from her group of peers. I informed her that I would get back to her in a few days. I wondered if participants’ church-connected background would influence the information they might give about their aging experiences. At the time I spoke with this caller, I had already interviewed four persons. The majority of the
baby boomers on my list of participants are connected with churches. I thought that I would wait to examine the data I was about to collect and let the saturation factor help me decide if I needed to pursue further options. I was very aware of my need to make every attempt to enroll all eligible participants until data saturation and redundancy were met.

I realized that my portfolio of informants was gender-balanced. However, some of the participants’ demographic data seem to be in common. For instance, all of them are married and have children. All of them are currently employed, and almost all of them have a faith tradition. After I interviewed nine baby boomers, and having arranged to interview at least two more on the East Coast, I believed I had a solid basis that would offer me rich and in-depth account of these boomers’ aging experiences. I telephoned the referring caller from another state, thanked her and informed her that I already had enough data to support my study.

Within a week after the interviews, I came up with the drafts of the transcribed data. I sent the copies of the verbatim transcription to participants via email, asking them for assistance in verifying the contents of the transcription. Some participants replied rather speedily, reporting that everything looked fine to them. A few participants emailed me back and inserted their comments or additional insights.

All of my interviews took place at settings that were private and undisturbed, and convenient to the participants. Such settings were church offices and private offices of some of the participants. Each session of the informed consent briefing with interview lasted approximately 55 to 90 minutes, and the interviews were audio recorded. English was used as the language medium for the interview. In addition to the discussions in Chapter I that highlighted the feasibility of using English rather than Chinese as the
language for the interview, I realized that English serves as the common language used among people who are of Chinese descent, who speak different dialects. For instance, some Hong Kong baby boomer participants have moved to Hong Kong from China for some years prior to immigrating to the United States. These participants’ native languages might be Mandarin, Hakka, Chiu Chow, or other Chinese dialects. As these participants are professionals currently working in the United States, for the interviewing process, English functioned as the common language.

During the interviewing process, I paid attention to things I have observed that were germane to the collection of quality data. I took notes of aspects such as participants’ nonverbal gestures, the remarks they made about this study or the interview before or after the recording and any minor interruptions in the setting. I also took notes of my brief reflection after each interview. The reflection notes facilitated my sighting of the saturation in most of the themes that emerged in the interviews. The detection of the saturating point was important, as it served as the indicator of the closing of the data collection process.

**Processing of the Informed Consent Items**

Shortly before each interview, I reviewed the details of the informed consent documents with participants (see Appendix B). First, I introduced myself, and I talked about my need to conduct this study, which is the partial requirement of my enrolment in the counselor education and supervision doctoral program. Second, I informed participants of the nature and purpose of this study, the format of the interview, the recording of the interview, and the length (of approximately 55 to 65 minutes) of each interview. Participants might have remembered reading about these aspects in the letter I
sent to them in our initial communication. Yet, it was important that I reiterated these aspects to ensure that they were clear to the participants. Also, I provided participants with samples of protocol questions. As is essential, during the interviews, I discussed issues such as privileges, risks and benefits, compensation and cost, and privacy and confidentiality.

In addition, I highlighted that participation was purely voluntary; no coercion, explicit or implicit, was used to obtain or maintain cooperation, and participants had the autonomy to withdraw anytime they desired. In regard to risk, I informed participants that their risk was minimal, where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the interview were not greater than those they encountered in their daily life activities. Meanwhile, I discussed the benefit of participating, which might stem from a rewarding sense of the contribution of participants’ insights to the counseling profession and perhaps to other helping professions. I stated that there was no financial compensation for the participation. In addition, I highlighted participants’ privilege to withdraw anytime they did not desire to pursue further.

Concerning privacy, I informed participants about their control over the extent, timing, and circumstances of their intellectual sharing of themselves with others. Also, I explained to participants about the ways their identities would be protected. For instance, I would be the only person who listened to the recordings, I would not insert their names in the transcripts, and their identities would not be revealed in the published documents. In addition, I notified the participants that the recordings would be destroyed once this study is completed. To comply with federal policy in conducting research studies, I have
to keep the signed informed consent forms and other written documents for five years, in
strict confidence, in a secure place.

**Assumptions and Biases**

Knowing that I was the sole investigator in this inquiry, it was incumbent on my
part to be sensitive to my own biases and prejudices toward the participants. The fact that
I share the cultural background with the participants might have posed a challenge to my
maintaining an objective perspective. This biased perspective could have influenced the
interviewing process. For example, I might have thought that I was familiar with the
culture, and my questions could have prompted participants to go toward a certain
direction, or, I might have provided answers to some questions, as I believed I “knew”
those answers. Essentially, my biasness would have filtered with my observations.
Recognizing this likelihood, I sought advice and second opinions from seasoned
researchers as well as my dissertation chair.

On the other hand, the sharing of a cultural background with the participants was
an advantage to the establishing rapport with them. Persons seemed to feel comfortable
and less intimidated speaking with someone who shared their cultural heritage. Also,
because I am used to some cultural nonverbal gestures, I was able to get a sense of when
to delve deeper or when to stop probing during the interviews.

**Ethical Concerns**

Another crucial item that deserves attention is the ethical concerns. In regard to
the data collection procedure, it was important that I observed as well as practiced ethical
codes. For instance, my vigilance about crossing boundaries inspired me to act in a
professional manner. In addition, I was conscious of protecting the participants from
harm. To this end, I was careful about my probing questions that possibly might create emotional pain. Essentially, it was crucial that I developed sensitivity to research ethics and live my professional codes as a researcher and as a counselor educator.

**Interview Questions**

In an interpretative protocol inquiry, the interviewing focuses on the process and the meaning of a certain experience (Smith et al., 2009). To prepare for the interview, I used the lived dimensions as well as the theoretical framework as my guiding theme as I designed the interviewing protocol. Both the lived dimensions and the theoretical framework were informed by the purpose of this study. Since this study sought to investigate the lived experiences of the aging Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers, the questions addressed the aspects of aging, such as perspectives of aging, concerns of aging, feeling toward aging, aging as a minority person, aging with or without family support, aging while living apart from families, and so forth. Some of the protocol questions were: What does aging mean for you? Is there anything you do differently as a result of realizing that you are in the aging process? Tell me about those things. What seems to be your way of coping with aging? Who are the people or what are the things that help you the most as you deal with aging? The focus of the interview questions facilitated informants’ sharing of their diverse experiences. Some of these experiences may not be new to the informants, but their articulating of these experiences may offer something different or add new meanings to those experiences. This circumstance resonates with van Manen’s argument that people “form new possibilities of experiencing the world in terms of space, time, body, and relationships” (2002, p. 97).
The interviewees were given adequate time to provide responses. For instance, one participant kept saying, “I don’t know how to respond to this question.” After a minute or two, he was able to offer some meaningful insights. There were times when the immediate responses sounded ambiguous or lacked clarity, I asked for clarification or elaboration. Or, I used prompt questions such as, “Can you please give an example of that?” “Can you please say more about that?” I took heed of the content of the responses. As soon as I noticed that most of the aging experiences in answer to the questions had been articulated, I asked the following question: “Do you have any other relevant aspects of your aging experience you would like to insert that you have not yet talked about?”

As I was the only investigator who interviewed participants, to avoid the risk of losing data, I took notes of some keywords and vocabulary. When I took notes, I documented my observations on pages that have headings such as verbal and nonverbal behaviors, “favorable” expressions, frequencies of pauses, and noticeable changes in the setting during the interviews.

Data Analysis

According to van Manen (1990), “openness—in the sense of interpretive availability—is a sustaining motive in all qualitative inquiry” (p. 23). In addition to this motive, I adhered to the purpose of this inquiry, which has inspired me to use van Manen’s phenomenologically oriented method, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of human development, Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development, and Atchley’s continuity theory of aging to form the guiding theme for the analysis of the transcribed data. Van Manen’s (1990) hermeneutic-phenomenological method of systemic inquiry has helped to me discover and delineate the structure, the internal meaning, and the
essentiality of the lived phenomena of the participants. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of development has offered me a holistic lens to examine the relevant variables that influence persons’ experiences of aging, such as the risk factors and protective factors. Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development have facilitated me to attune to participants’ resolution of previous conflicts that were related to the current needs and demands relating to their aging process. Atchley’s continuity theory of aging has furnished me with the perspective of baby boomers’ adaptive strengths as they navigate their aging journeys. The following section delineates the ways the phenomenologically oriented approach and the theoretical framework have guided my data analysis.

**Hermeneutic Phenomenological Reflection**

The analysis of the transcribed interviews was informed by the third theme of van Manen’s (1990) methodological framework—hermeneutic phenomenological reflection. This reflection is guided by the intricate alliance of the fundamental essences of lived experiences; lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived relation (van Manen, 1990). To help gain insight into the meaning of a phenomenon, van Manen (1990) developed a process of “reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (p. 77). The five steps of reflection are: (1) analyzing themes, (2) finding meaning, (3) unearthing thematic aspects, (4) uncovering thematic account, and (5) verifying incidental and essential themes (van Manen, 1990).

Another core item in analyzing data is the discovery of the extraordinary among the ordinary (van Manen, 2002). This concept has inspired me to pay attention to participants’ precise and detailed descriptions of their aging experiences, and their unique experiential account while detecting the similarities that exist between their experiences.
and experiences of other participants (van Manen, 2002). For instance, it would be difficult for someone who does not have a hearing problem to understand what it would be like to lose the hearing ability. Rather than focusing on the lack of real life experience in the loss of the hearing ability, I would try to take heed of the familiar thoughts and feelings of missing something. For instance, communicating in a noisy environment would provide me with a closer sense of losing the ability to hear another person talking. Such focus on the similarities would help bring the aging phenomenon into my experiential proximity.

**Analyzing themes.** When studying a phenomenon, I try to identify the themes, the empirical constituents that form a specific experience (van Manen, 1990). It is crucial to grasp the notion of themes in the context of discovering the essence of lived experience. Van Manen (1990) offered perspectives that exemplify various phenomenological essentials of the experience of themes as developing lived meanings: theme being the yearning for making sense, theme being the meaning we can derive from something, theme being the opening of oneself, and theme being the course of perceptive creation, uncovering, revelation.

Van Manen (1990) argued that theme is the instrument for unfolding the notion. Following van Manen’s perspective in uncovering lived meanings from participants’ responses, I identified a theme that related to the meaning of getting older from expressions such as “feeling respected” and “being able to understand the older generation more.” I also made an effort to identify statements such as “I’m too young to be a grandmother even though I am [age] years old.” I have identified the lived temporality from this expression, which enabled me to generate a theme-like expression.
Next, I abided by the theme of openness, which allowed me to detect the uniqueness among similarities. Several participants already talked about their gray hair, which was a similar theme. However, one person stated something different. This participant said, “But for me, appearance is not that big a deal. I don’t like to dye my hair…I think I can deal with this [gray hair].” Finally, I endeavored to attain some thematic insights, which is a product of the factors of “invention, discovery, disclosure” (van Manen, 1990, p. 88). Identifying the themes, uncovering the diversities and homogeneities among them, and listing them under different categories would be an example of this product. Working on the processing of the voluminous data required arduous effort. Reflection facilitated me to sifting the data, making interpretation, dialoguing with them, and uncovering the meaning from the interpretative product.

**Finding meanings.** The way to find meaning or make sense of an experience is to uncover things that appear to be revealing, important, and specific, and to let the theme surface (van Manen, 1990). When listening to the audio-recorded data and reading the typed transcriptions, I paid utmost attention to words, expressions, and statements, identifying the existential meanings of space, body, time, and relation in participants’ experiential account.

**Unearthing thematic aspects.** The way to go about unearthing thematic aspects would be to reflect on the threads of words, expressions, and statements participants made. What are the common themes? What seems to be different among these themes? In this study, several participants discussed the retirement issue. Some of them expressed that they would like to retire some years later, while others said that they would continue to work. Two of them made this remark more than once but they did not elaborate
further. It was my task to find the thematic aspects among the threads of the responses. What exactly does retirement mean for these participants? What does work mean for them currently and in the future? What is the essence in this lived time for these participants? According to van Manen (1990), no concepts or single remark can unravel the unknowingness of the experiential account. Thematic expressions can indicate only a facet of the experience. Reaching the mystery of the experience is both intriguing and taxing. Still, this mystery contains a rich source of meanings that is worth the uncovering effort.

**Uncovering thematic statements.** When a person talks about a particular experience, there are indeed some deeper aspects about this experience that can be uncovered. There are three ways van Manen (1990) recommended to discover thematic statements: (1) the wholistic approach, (2) the selective approach, and (3) the detailed approach. These approaches suggest the identifying of themes from words, phrases, or statements participants make and unearth the principal meaning from these figures of speech. In this study, participants have used various expressions to describe their aging experiences. One of the ways of uncovering the themes of these experiences was to identify the principal meaning among the themes. I have used the four lived existentials as a means of identification.

**Verifying incidental and essential themes.** While I have gathered several themes, my next step was to determine which themes were incidentally connected with the phenomenon, and which were essential. In doing so, I uncovered the important elements that constituted the phenomenon. For example, a biological experience such as having gray hair was associated to the aging phenomenon. The key issue was to examine
the meaning of having gray hair for the participants. Determining the incidental and essential qualities of themes is a complex matter, as van Manen (1990) argued that themes that seem to hold essential meanings are usually influenced by historical or cultural properties. For instance, in the Hong Kong culture today, people tend to promote youthfulness rather than old age. It was important to discover the meaning of having gray hair as it relates to aging. It also was essential to uncover the meaning of having gray hair as it relates to the aging process of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. Specifically, I explored the parameters of the lived existentials of space, body, time, and relation as they relate to the graying of hair.

**Ecological Theory of Human Development**

The ecological theory of human development facilitated the exploring of the intricacies of the pertinent interactions that have taken place in the life world of the baby boomer participants. All of these interactions have played a part in the aging experience of these participants. Meanwhile, the ecological developmental lens has helped me to examine the risk and protective factors that encountered in the participant’s developmental processes. For example, a baby boomer stated, “I try to do things slowly, not too fast, try to avoid injury. From the risk factors and protective factors’ perspective, the cautious movement of this participant operated from his previous experience in protecting himself from encountering getting injured.

**Psychosocial Stages of Development**

The stages of adulthood and old age entail negotiating with the polarities of generativity and stagnation, and integrity and despair. This theory of development offered a developmental lens to analyze participants’ statements, identifying the meaning of the
aging experience that associated with their psychosocial stages. For example, a participant said, “I always look forward to aging one more year. Usually people like to tell their age until they actually hit that birthday. But I’m the opposite.” From the psychosocial perspective, this participant’s personal strength has helped her develop a sense of integrity that was important to her aging journey.

**Continuity Theory of Aging**

The continuity theory of aging has offered me the lens to examine the aging process, discovering the coping means participants use to preserve their internal or external continuity. For instance, a participant stated, “That will be my wife…and knowing that we are going through this [aging] together, she definitely understands more about what I am going through…” Continuity theory has offered me the analytical lens of unearthing the internal continuity this person has embraced, which renders his aging journey an affectionate one.

**Limitations**

I have noticed two limitations in the research method for this study. First, the sample size of 11 participants may not produce a generalizable effect, as the perspectives of 11 persons would not be sufficient to represent the majority of the aging perspectives of all Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. Neither would the responses of 11 participants be enough to represent other Chinese or Asian baby boomers. Furthermore, as the majority of the participants have Christian faiths and actively participate in their church activities, this faith-related situation might have skewed the participants’ responses. Nevertheless, the participants are primary stakeholders who are “experiential experts” of the aging process of their life world (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, the goal of this
study is to investigate quality representations of perspectives of aging, and to investigate “convergence and divergence in some detail” (Smith et al., 2009) rather than drawing inferences about the wider baby boomer population. Even though there were only 11 participants, each and every individual account of aging experience was invaluable and rich.

Another foreseeable limitation relates to the claiming of unique standing for the insights gained using the interpretive phenomenological inquiry. That is, I need to be vigilant of the reality that such inquiry will not be extensive, the exploration of meaning will not be ultimate, and the insights gained were far from being unchallengeable (van Manen, 2002). However, the importance culminates in the values that the findings offer to counseling, which would broaden their insightfulness and enhance sensitivity to the aging phenomena of the participants.

**Chapter Summary**

This study seeks to examine the experiential account of aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers living in the United States. This chapter has discussed the qualitative and explorative nature of the purpose of this study, which has informed the phenomenologically oriented choice of research method. Specifically, van Manen’s (1990) phenomenological approach was the primary compass that guided the methodological journey of the study. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development, Erikson and Erikson’s (1997) psychosocial stages of development theory, and Atchley’s (1991) continuity aging theory constituted the theoretical framework that intertwined as the methodological paradigm for this inquiry.
CHAPTER IV

Findings of this Study

In this chapter, I provide an in-depth account of the processed data, which serves as the basis for qualitative analysis and illustration (Patton, 2002). I have analyzed the collected information, based on the directions of two parameters: (1) the subsidiary questions, which were developed previously; and (2) the reasoned discernments and elucidations that surfaced along with the data collection process (Patton, 2002). The documents that support my analytical efforts include the word-for-word transcribed data that relate to the participants’ responses to the protocol questions and the notes that I took before, during, and immediately after the interviews. In addition to presenting the findings, I provide a reflection of my experience in collecting, transcribing, and analyzing the data. Specifically, the six sections in this chapter include the following: (1) mapping the layout, (2) participants’ demographic data, (3) data collected from each of the interviews, (4) cross-case analyses of the aging themes, (5) reflections of my data collection and analysis efforts, and (6) chapter summary.

Mapping the Layout

The purpose of this mapping is to illustrate the layout I use to present the findings. I begin with an exhibit of the demographic information of the 11 participants. Next, I present the collected data. This presentation follows two formats: a written synopsis and a table. I report the participants’ responses following the four subsidiary questions. The subsidiary questions are guided by: (1) the lived existential dimensions that consist of the lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived relation (van Manen, 1990); (2) the ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); (3) the psychosocial
stages of development (Erikson & Erikson, 1997) and (4) the continuity theory of aging (Atchley, 1991). These questions are: (1) What meaning is derived from the process of aging? (2) What makes up the factors that enable these baby boomers to navigate their aging journeys? (3) In what way does the lifestyle of Hong Kong help or pose challenges to the aging experiences as they live in the United States? and, (4) What risk factors are associated with the aging of these baby boomers?

For the collected data, I use textual expressions to describe the participants’ responses relevant to the four subsidiary questions. I insert relevant excerpts of the participants’ verbatim dialogues. Additionally, I provide details such as the way I recruited participants, the setting used, the length of the meeting, and the subsequent communications with participants for the purpose of verification of the transcribed data. Subsequent to the written presentation of each interview, I present a table of the themes that emerged in the accounts of the participants’ aging experiences, followed by a written summary of the interviews.

After presenting the important information pertaining to the interviews, I provide two cross-case analyses to illustrate the common and uncommon themes that relate to the aging experiences of the participants. As in the presentation of the individual interviews, I use tables and text to describe the shared and unique themes.

**Demographic Information of Participants**

The information of the demographic data is important to the collection of data for two reasons. First, the information elucidates the backgrounds of the participants, which are relevant to the responses they provided. Second, during the interviewing process, as I examined some brief demographics of the participants, it gave me an idea about my
recruitment needs, because I endeavored to attain maximum variation among the recruited participants. For this study, I interviewed a total of 11 Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers; nine of them currently are living on the West Coast, and two on the East Coast. All of the participants are married and have children, and there are two couples in the pool of the participants. Moreover, all of them reported that they were employed. Two participants were working part-time. Regarding their length of stay in the United States, three participants came to the United States for college studies and settled in the United States since then. Meanwhile, seven informants belonged to the cohort of immigrants who moved to this country close to the year when Hong Kong’s sovereignty was returned to China.

All of the informants told me that this was their first time participating in a study that requested them to talk about their aging experiences. Concerning their faith traditions, only one person reported that she does not have a faith belief, while the rest reported that they are Christians. Table 1 summarizes the rest of the relevant demographic details:
Table 1: Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number of Years in the United States</th>
<th>Mean Years in the United States</th>
<th>Living with Parent(s)</th>
<th>Living with Children</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49 - 62</td>
<td>Accounting, Medical, Sales and Administration</td>
<td>15 to 40</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>High School: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>College: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50 - 57</td>
<td>Engineering, Computer Technology, Electrical</td>
<td>17 to 33</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>College: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintenance, Medical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To maintain privacy and for identification, participants have been assigned code numbers preceded by a letter to indicate a male (M) or female (F) participant. In terms of the order of the presentation, I illustrate the relevant excerpts of the interviews with the female participants, followed by the excerpts of the interviews with the male participants. The total meeting time with each participant ranged from 55 to 90 minutes. In general, I spent the first 10 to 15 minutes processing with participants the essentials of the informed consent form and gathering relevant demographic information.

**Data Collected from the 11 Interviews**

In this section, I provide pertinent details of the recruitment processes, the verbatim texts of the interviews, and the tables that summarize the patterns and themes that relate to the aging experiences of the participants. Regarding the interviews, I present a written account of each interview followed by the table of patterns and themes.
Recruitment Processes

After receiving the written approval of my study from Duquesne University’s IRB, I started soliciting participants. I first used the purposeful sampling method to recruit Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers who are living in the United States as participants. Referring to what I stated in the IRB documents, churches would be one of the sources from which I planned to recruit participants. I reckoned that if this source did not help me find participants, I would proceed to a second possible source: universities.

I went online to look for names and relevant contact details of the pastors and assistant pastors of churches on the East Coast and on the West Coast. I made over a dozen telephone calls to different churches, to introduce myself, to provide the purpose of my call, and to ask to speak to the pastor or assistant pastor. I was able to speak to only a couple of pastors and assistant pastors. They asked me to email them some information about my study. They indicated that they would follow up with me soon. I emailed them a copy of my invitation letter to prospective participants. With some churches, the persons with whom I spoke gave me the names and telephone numbers of their active council members or representatives. Some church personnel also furnished me with those members’ email addresses. I proceeded to call those church representatives. I only reached one of them that afternoon and left messages for the others to return my call. A woman with whom I had spoken at one of the parishes asked me to send her the invitation letter. I emailed her a copy of my invitation letter to prospective participants. At the same time, I emailed the other active members the same invitation letter.

That evening, one church representative from the West Coast returned my call. He told me that he received my invitation letter and said that he would help me find
participants from his church. He stated that there are many Hong Kong baby boomers who are members of his church. In addition, he mentioned that some of those members have relatives and friends who were also born between 1946 and 1964. Referral of participants conforms to the snowball sampling method. As I reflected on that telephone conversation, I reckoned that I might have enough participants from the West Coast.

The following day, I received two return calls, one from another person who is an active member of a church on the East Coast, another one from an assistant pastor of a church also on the East Coast. We talked about some relevant details of the participants and the study. Both of them told me that they would try to help me find participants. In the evening, the active church member from the West Coast who provided referrals the previous day telephoned me. He gave me five names and telephone numbers of persons who expressed interest in participating in the interview. After recruiting four participants from the West Coast, I made my travel arrangements. The day before my departure, I scheduled six appointments. Two prospective participants reported that their spouses or their friends might be able to participate. In addition, I scheduled an appointment with a woman on the East Coast, who was referred to me by her church member. This woman told me that she could help me recruit one or two more participants.

After I arrived to the West Coast, I secured meetings with three more Hong Kong baby boomers. While I was on the West Coast, a lady from the East Coast telephoned me, informing me that the assistant pastor of her church emailed her a copy of my invitation letter. She said that she was able to participate, and she indicated that she could help me find a few church members to participate. I was not sure if I needed more participants who were connected with churches. Participants’ shared faith belief might produce a
skewed effect to their responses. I thanked her for her interest and informed her that I would telephone her in a couple of days.

The recruitment processes resulted in 11 people participating: six female and five male. I recruited six participants using the purposeful sampling method, and five participants using the snowball sampling method. I made every attempt to enroll Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers until data saturation and redundancy were met. As I was gathering input from the eighth participant, I began to notice the repetition of some of the information. I speculated that their shared faith background and marital status might have contributed to the similarities of the data. I interviewed another eligible participant, to see if this person’s demographics or her insights varied from what I already gathered. This participant’s length of stay was comparatively longer, and she reported not having any faith belief. Nevertheless, the majority of the information she provided had more commonalities than differences. I understood that to be a stronger indicator of the saturation of data. I decided to conclude my data collection on the West Coast. Two days later, I interviewed two persons on the East Coast. Their demographic details also were similar, and the responses they provided did not deviate much from the information I had gathered previously. I took that as my marker that my recruitment process had come to a close.

**Report of the Data Collection**

The three instruments that facilitated my data collection consisted of private interviews, close observations, field notes, reflection journals, and correspondences with participants. I now present relevant excerpts of the transcribed data and important information of the interviews. I organize the interviews around the protocol questions and
I present the data following the lived dimensions, the ecological factors, the psychosocial themes, and the continuity of aging. The 10 protocol questions are listed in Appendix C.

In reporting each interview, I specify the recruitment method used, the setting of the interview, the informed consent procedure, the gathering of demographic data, and other relevant information. Then, I explore the primary focus of the study—participants’ experiential accounts of aging. In presenting the interviews, I list some of the protocol questions I used and the participants’ responses. I also insert several probing questions that helped participants provide additional information about a certain topic. After providing the written description of each interview, I demarcate the total time of the interview meeting. Then, I present a table to summarize the themes that capture the participants’ aging experiences. The five headings in each table correspond to the patterns I identified as I worked through the collected data. These patterns represent the convergences that emerged in the interviews. Subsequent to presenting the table, I discuss the information about my request of the participants to verify the transcribed data. Finally, I provide a summary of my interview with the participant.

Interview with F1

A church member I contacted referred F1 to me. I met F1 at a church office which she had arranged prior to our meeting. F1 came from work. As soon as she sat down, she said that she was ready for the interview. I went through the informed consent form and collected some relevant demographic information from her. Then, I invited her to read the protocol questions. After a minute or two, I asked her if she had any questions about the interviewing process or the questions. She smiled and said, “No. I don’t have any questions.” I mentioned to her that I would not mention her name during the recording,
and I would be taking notes. She said, “Okay. No problem.” So I started the recording and we began the interviewing process.

**The lived dimensions.** When I asked F1, “What does aging mean for you?” She gave a succinct response: “Getting old. Yea. That’s about it.” She chuckled and asked if I wanted her to elaborate. I invited her to offer more. She went on to articulate her meaning of aging, which reflected her corporal, temporal, spatial, and relational experiences.

**Lived body.** One of the responses that F1 gave which relates to the question of the meaning of aging was: “Aging means that you’re not as energetic. You’ll not be able to do things that you used to be able to do.” F1 mentioned a couple of times that she had not been paying much attention to her aging process. “I don’t really think about aging that much. I only know that I’m getting old. That’s about it.” However, F1 expressed her awareness of some bodily changes that relate to the aging process. “Of course, I will start paying attention to things like changes in my body, getting those…uh…veins…spider veins. I’ll pay more attention to…” Some other physiological changes F1 noticed about herself were:

I start seeing wrinkles…and I cannot see that well. Cause the older you get, you have to…what do they call that…bifocal…uh…reading glasses. I don’t need reading glasses but I have to take off my glasses in order to read small prints….of course, women always like to be pretty, to be in good shape. So now I'm paying attention to this [appearance] a little bit more.
These were the accounts F1 gave regarding the signs of aging she noticed. When asked if there was anything she would do differently realizing that she was in the aging process, F1’s responses also revealed her bodily sense in the world:

Definitely…cause when I realize that my body doesn’t function as well as before, I pay more attention to my health, pay more attention to what I eat. Cause I know that if I don’t eat properly, the fat will grow in areas that I don’t like. So definitely, I pay more attention to my health, more attention to the food I consume…I will make extra effort to exercise a little bit more…

**Lived space.** When F1 gave account of her children becoming young adults, she talked about the physical and emotional space she and her husband have because their children have moved out. They may come back to visit from time to time, but on a daily basis, they are not in the house. “It’s just that the family style has changed; the kids are gone.” The availability of the emotional space had inspired F1 to examine the things she desires to do for herself. “I will start thinking about myself, like about the things I like to do.” When F1 talked about growing old in the United States, she expressed her appreciation of the spacious environment in this country. “I guess the good thing about living in the U.S. is, we do have physical space.”

An example of the physical spaciousness relates to the breathing space that F1 and her mother-in-law can have. “If I feel that I cannot take it, I can go to my room. I can watch my own TV, read my books, and she can do her own thing.” In addition, when F1 talked about her relationship with others, she said that the older she gets, the more
tolerance she seems to have. “I think I have more tolerance, and I will give people more space.”

*Lived time.* One of the things that reminded F1 about her aging process was, “…you don’t spend a lot of time with them [children], doing things with them…now I don’t see them. So physically, mentally, and psychologically, I don’t have to spend so much time with them and for them.” Because her children have grown up and are working or studying in another state, it leads her to ponder the passing of time and to see that she is growing older as a mother. She inserted another statement that indicated her temporal consideration. “When I was younger I don’t think about this [aging] that much…” These were scenarios that demonstrated F1’s subjective time. Concerning F1’s felt future, she said that she would want to spend more time offering help to others rather than “to spend more time for myself and not give much service as before.”

*Lived relation.* In various statements F1 made, relationship with family and friends was demonstrated to be high on her priority list. For F1, aging had a positive impact on the relationships she has with children, mother-in-law, husband, and God.

“I guess when I get older, especially with children, now you don’t have to give so much time to your children, and they are not living with you, even though you still worry about them, the worries are not as much as when you were with them, seeing what they were doing…I think it [my relationship with children] is actually better. When they come home, you treasure the time a little more than when they were living with you.

F1 is living with her mother-in-law. Based on the vignettes she shared about her observations of her mother-in-law’s aging journey, it seems that this elderly family
member is in many ways influencing F1’s aging. At several junctures of our conversation, F1 mentioned her mother-in-law:

I think she likes to follow a routine or pattern so she will feel more secure, and that will be her comfort zone…like I mentioned before, my relationship with my mother-in-law, when the kids were home, maybe there’s lots of distraction, so I pay less attention to my mother-in-law.

F1 did not directly mention her relationship with her husband. Yet, in various responses she gave, her deep relationship with her husband was implied. For instance, she said, “We [my husband and I] do things together…” like playing tennis and participating in church activities and charitable work. She looked cheerful when she talked about her husband. Then, F1 expressed the unknown scenario she might have to deal with if her husband goes before her. “What if he’s not there…once in a while, I will ask myself, ‘if he’s not around, who’s doing things together with me?’” When F1 talked about her spiritual life, she uttered, “I always talk to my husband that we had strong faith [since] we were young…”

Another figure F1 mentioned that she thought about that related to her aging process was God. Several times, F1 talked about her religious faith and the way she lives her faith.

I will also think about…like…okay, now I'm getting older, that means I’m getting closer to seeing God. Have I really prepared myself in seeing Him…I don’t want to lose my close relationship with the Lord when I get older…or I [do not want to] spend more time for myself and not give much service as before.
Ecological factors. In F1’s microsystem, on a daily basis, other than her husband, she is interacting with her mother-in-law. Because F1 is living with and taking care of her mother-in-law, F1 reported her observations in her mother-in-law’s actions that made her think about some changes that might be related to aging.

I see how her behaviors have changed. So I always think about one thing.

It’s not because of my aging, rather, it’s because of what I saw in her life.

I notice that the older she gets…she has some kind of habits…the time she needs to eat…

F1’s mother-in-law has become a crucial ecological factor in F1’s microsystem that influences F1, especially in her thoughts about her own aging path. For instance, when F1 thinks about her mother-in-law’s current lifestyle, she can imagine what it would be like for an elderly person to live in a foreign place dealing with an entirely new culture. These perspectives seem to enable F1 to consider the potential risk factors of aging while she cultivates her protective factors.

I’ll definitely not move to a country where I don’t understand the language or I am not mobile…I will definitely not go to a place that I’m not familiar with. I will have to start things all over again especially when I don’t speak the language, don’t know about [the] culture. I think it will be pretty difficult [for me].

F1 talked about playing tennis with her husband, and she mentioned that at times she thought about how overwhelming it would be if her husband were gone. She smiled each time she spoke of her husband and she looked slightly miserable when she articulated that she would not know what to do when her husband is
gone. Implicit in her narrative is her husband being an intimate partner in her life and her aging journey. Her husband also is a protective factor and an active part of her microsystem. In addition, F1 often talked about her children even though they are not living with her. F1’s children come back to visit her periodically. Therefore, her children form another factor that is active in her aging journey.

Based on F1’s narrative, both her colleagues and her church members also are in her microsystem. She works full-time, however, she did not talk about her colleagues or her work during the interview. Neither did she mention her relationship with people from her church.

**Psychosocial themes.** Examining F1’s experiential account of aging, the psychosocial themes of integrity, intimacy, generativity, identity, and autonomy seem to be compelling forces in her current life phase. Her narrative in which the theme of integrity surfaced follows:

I will consider that aging is also uh…you’re getting more mature, you think things in a more holistic way instead of being naïve. [You would] look at things from different perspectives…I’ll give more room…[be] more forgiving, and I will be more considerate.

Implicit in F1’s account was the positive perspective that comes with aging. In addition, her conviction is that the way she interacts with others has changed as she has become older. “As people grow older, they have more experience, they understand others better. So I think I have more tolerance, and I will give people more space.” In regard to the theme of generativity, F1 talked about the things she has acquired so far in her life.
Like I mentioned before, I think the way I look at life is different. Cause you have gone through a lot more than when you were young…in a positive way, the older I get, the more I have acquired. I mean acquiring knowledge, experience…so actually, I will see my life fuller than before.

F1’s illustrations of the physiological changes such as growing of wrinkles, gray hair, and spider veins, and the decline in energy level suggested that she is negotiating her identity as an aging person. This negotiation resonates with her being at the initial stage of her aging journey. “The only thing…that I don’t like is I start seeing wrinkles, and I cannot see that well…I don’t need reading glasses but I have to take off my glass in order to read small prints.” Despite these negatives changes, F1 seems to display acceptance of her new identity. “I think for people who come here [United States] later in life, I think it’s harder for them to cope with aging. I think in a way they lose their identity as well.”

The psychosocial theme of autonomy is another important aspect for F1. For instance, she emphasized her concern for mobility and she highlighted the importance of engagement in some activities. “When I get older, I’ll definitely not move to a country where I don’t understand the language or I am not mobile…I will definitely not go to a place that I’m not familiar with…I will suggest people to try to go out…”

**Continuity factors.** For F1, the internal adaptive approaches to aging consist of “…try to go out, have fun with friends, contribute back to society, spend time with family, watch your health but at the same time don’t be over concerned about not wanting to eat unhealthily…have a diversified lifestyle…a balanced lifestyle.” F1 emphasized the
importance of family and social life, helping others, and watching one’s physical and mental health. She went on to say:

Definitely, family, friends, close friends…when someone has a good social life and is able to share [thoughts] with other people, and do things together, like playing tennis, going out to eat…have friends and family in your life…so you don’t always think about yourself…you also pay attention to the needs of people in your life…that will keep me young, and it allows me to share my resources with them…pay attention to my health. Cause when people start to age, their mood might change. I have to remind myself not to be too stressed out. If you’re stressed out, you’re kind of negative. Keep myself busy and keep myself positive.

In addition to the internal ways of adapting to the aging process, F1 talked about the external factors that seem to carry some weight on her aging process. “I think the older you are, the more comfortable you are with the food you grew up with…even though I live here for some years, I still feel some cultural difference” As discussed formerly, F1 emphasized that as she grows older, she hopes to live in a familiar place rather than a place where she needs to adjust to a new culture, language, and environment. Correspondingly, the language, culture, and environment are the external continuity factors that are important to F1. Moreover, F1’s internal continuity source is the familiarity of culture, language, and environment. Overall, the insights F1 shared imply that both her internal and external forces have immense impacts on her aging process. Yet, F1 would count on her internal supportive sources more than the external
sources. “I think as long as you have good friends, a social life…that can help compensate for the food and the familiar culture.”

**Aging in the United States.** I asked F1 about the possible differences she imagined between growing old in the United States and Hong Kong. She said that she thought about this question previously. For her, language and culture were the two major differences. Even though she has been living in the United States for quite some time, from time to time she thinks about some Hong Kong cultural features: “If I turn on the TV, if there are Cantonese and Chinese channels, I tend to watch the Cantonese programs…” Additionally, F1 expressed that she missed the authentic Chinese foods in Hong Kong. Furthermore, she stated that growing old in Hong Kong, one of the conveniences would be getting helpers to clean the house. “…It’s cheaper too.” Yet, she seemed to enjoy the air quality, the space, and the environment in the United States.

I was amazed at F1’s organized speech. The responses she gave sounded like she knew my questions beforehand. Arriving at this part of the interview, I believed that I had gathered an in-depth collection of information that corresponded to my research question. I asked F1 if there were other facets about aging that she would like to add. She talked about the centrality of faith belief in her life. She contended, “I want my faith to be better and better until I die, instead of going downhill.” Additionally, she expressed that the interview inspired her to organize her thoughts more about aging. She reiterated that aging “doesn’t affect me much.” Then, she added, “One thing I thought about is, aging or getting older, I’ll think about…what if I lose my husband…when you are younger, you don’t think about that because when you were younger, you had a lot to deal with…you were pretty occupied.” I sensed that F1’s account provided me with sufficient data on
which to work. I stopped the recording and thanked F1. Smilingly, she said, “I hope my answers are helpful to your study.” I was touched by her genuine concern and, at that moment, I felt the importance of the relationship between the investigator and the participant. This interviewing process lasted about 65 minutes.
Table 2: Themes Reflecting F1’s Account of Her Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Lower energy level</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Loss of independence</td>
<td>Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Weakening of vision</td>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td>Moving to a foreign place</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to lifestyle issues</td>
<td>Wrinkles</td>
<td>Watching my diet</td>
<td>Developing “weird” habits</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to financial issues</td>
<td>Weight gain</td>
<td>Avoiding over stressing myself</td>
<td>Putting things off</td>
<td>Mother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to retirement issues</td>
<td>Spider veins</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more time for myself</td>
<td>Change in personality attribute: become irritated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking at life from different perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>Staying active / keeping busy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brevity of life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoying life more</td>
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<td>Getting older</td>
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<td>Being considerate</td>
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<td>Being positive</td>
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<td>Contributing to society / doing volunteer work</td>
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<td>Nurturing a relationship with God</td>
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Two days following my meeting with F1, I processed the verbatim transcription. I emailed F1 the transcribed information and asked her to go through it, to see if there was anything she liked to add, delete, or change. Within two days, she responded and told me that she had read the content and seen that “everything looks good” to her. Then, she asked me to let her know if there were other ways she could help me regarding this study.

**Summary of Interview with F1.** In a succinct fashion, F1 gave quite a holistic account of her aging experiences. F1 mentioned that she needs reading glasses, and she is aware of the changes in her physical appearance. These experiential accounts imply that F1 began her negotiation of her aging journey not long ago. For F1, her meanings of aging consist of: (a) a decline in physical health, (b) a sensitivity to health issues, (c) a sensitivity to lifestyle issues, (d) a sensitivity to financial issues, (e) a sensitivity to retirement issues, (f) getting old, (g) having more time for herself, and (h) looking at life from different perspectives. F1’s response to the questions about aging issues was reflected in her list of the physical, mental, and social changes she had gone through, and the relevant risks she would anticipate to experience. Her collection of means of coping with aging is diversified. For instance, she would practice preventive healthcare, engage in physical exercise, not stress herself out, watch her diet, strengthen family relationships, maintain a social life, enjoy life more, stay active, be considerate, contribute to society, and nurture her faith. In addition, she would maintain a positive attitude. The persons (figures) who have a role in her aging process consist of God, husband, children, mother-in-law, and friends. F1 would hope to avoid developing “weird habits” or patterns, moving to a foreign place, losing independence, and putting things off. F1 mentioned
that, “Aging doesn’t play a big role in my life.” The positive elements reflected in her aging account are in line with this statement.

**Interview with F2**

F2 was one of the participants I recruited using the snowball sampling method. F2 works part-time, and she came for the interview after she finished her day’s work. We met at a private office. With a warm smile, the first thing F2 said was her eagerness to participate in this study. She said that she was glad to share her perspectives of aging, and she hoped to see that her sharing would become a source of help to people. The initial remarks F2 gave struck me because in my experience, people of the Chinese culture tend to be less verbal. Later on, as I gathered F2’s demographic information, I discovered that she had been in the United States for some time. Perhaps she had adopted some westernized cultural traits over the years of her stay. Following the opening gestures, we proceeded to the interviewing process. I asked F2 if she had received the invitation letter and read it. She said that she had received the letter, and she admitted that she had not gone through the details before she came for the interview. Upon hearing this, I went through the letter with her, processed the informed consent form, and asked her about the relevant demographic information. I showed her a copy of the protocol questions and asked her to look at those questions before we began the interview. I expressed to F2 that I would be taking notes during our conversation. In addition, I mentioned to her that I would not say her name throughout the interview. She seemed fine with the two conditions and she told me that I could start the interview. F2 spoke quickly and, like F1, gave substantial information about her aging account.
**Lived dimensions.** I asked F2 to say something about her meaning of aging. This question opened the door for me to enter into F2’s aging existential life world. As F2 used “timeline” as a spontaneous descriptor to begin her aging account, I had re-arranged the presentation of the order of the four lived dimensions.

**Lived time.** “Aging is a timeline. Everybody’s timeline is very different.” For F2, the numbers bear certain connotations. For instance, she said, “Numbers represent your experience, your maturity.” She went on to say that numbers mean different things for different persons. “Of course…55 years old for one person may not be the same to another person. But more or less they fall into a certain range.” F2 looks forward to getting older. She sees that:

Each milestone gives me a lot of positive things. I couldn’t have known as much if I were 20, 30, 40, [or] 50. So when I see someone who’s 70 or 80, I highly respect them cause I believe that when one has traveled to that part of life, there are lots of things they know but I don’t….there are certain things in life that come with experiences rather than education. But we hope that education would benefit our way in looking at aging.

Based on F2’s account, the chronological age has a positive meaning for her. In addition, her temporal sensitivity was reflected in the free time she appreciates having because her children had grown up.

My children are in college. So I'm able to find more time for myself…I set aside more time for [physical] exercises. I find that those exercises uh…make me gain more energy…In the past I might not have that opportunity and time [to attend to nutritional needs]….
F2 elaborated her sensitivity to time when she talked about her past and present foci. In the past, when she was raising her children, she had less time to do things such as physical exercise. “[Exercise] certainly would take away a lot of time from my family and my regular daily duties.” Furthermore, F2 articulated another perspective of her felt time:

Nowadays, life expectancy is quite long especially among Asians. So I think this aging process will be a very long process. It’ll be even longer than raising the kids. Because I think, for kids, you give them 18 or 20 years, they’re ready and they are on their own…but for aging, for 30 or 30 some years, it will be a long time.

F2’s experience of time inspires her to perceive the potentially long process of aging. Apart from this account of her sense of time, she talked about other important things she would do in accordance with her temporal availability:

And also I try to visit my parents [in Hong Kong] a little bit more often whenever I can. I feel like I miss their birthdays for many years.

Um…many holidays and occasions we couldn’t get together because I was busy over here.

F2 recollected the times she felt she overlooked some important milestones she could have celebrated with her parents. These are F2’s account of her sense of time that relates to her aging journey.

Lived body. F2’s narrative about her physical health revealed that she is bodily in her life world. For instance, she talked about her back problem, the deteriorating of two of the discs in her spinal cord, which seemed to inform her about her aging process. She
approaches this medical issue with a positive attitude. For instance, when she continued
to talk about her back problem, she said that it is “…not really the negative side [of
aging], but just the fact.” When asked to say something she would do differently as a
result of realizing that she was aging, F2 spontaneously said, “That’s the perfect question
because uh…it reminds me to say what I want to say about my back…” F2 also accepted
the reality that with the progress in age, she needs to do things at a slower pace, as she
feels tired easily. She would not force herself to do things that are beyond her physical
capacity. She reported that she used to be able to wash two cars. “Now, I cannot. I have
to take them to someone to help me wash [them].

Lived space. In F2’s narrative about her perspective of getting older, she had
displayed security in her becoming an older person. That is, she lives in her own space in
a comfortable way now that she is growing older.

I become more confident, and financially, I'm more secure. That part is a
big plus. Life experience is certainly a good thing as I age. That’s why I
always look forward to aging one more year. Usually people don’t like to
tell their age until they actually hit that birthday…when I was around
[age], I felt that it was a great opportunity to celebrate…

When asked about the differences she would perceive between growing old in the
United States and Hong Kong, F2’s response reflected her spatial sensitivity. Such space
relates to the lifestyle, air quality, and environment she enjoys in the United States. “I
guess I'm more accustomed to the lifestyle here…I feel that the air is better here. I feel
the lifestyle and the pace here are calmer. When you are out on the street, I feel I’m
calmer here.” Concerning the space F2 needs, she indicated that she would try not to press herself.

I feel that I just have to spread things out a little bit more, give myself more time to accomplish something, even [accomplishing] less than before. Then I’ll be okay. If I expect myself to handle or produce the same [thing], I’ll be dissatisfied.

**Lived relation.** Aging had led F2 to cherish her relationships with family and friends. She mentioned that it is important to “connect with your loved ones, including both my parents, they’re in their [age], my siblings, my friends from elementary to high school.” Regarding her relationships with her parents, siblings, and friends, F2 said, I try to visit my parents a little bit more often whenever I can…in the past they came to visit me. But now they can’t because it’s a little far. So I feel that it’s time for me to travel back. So, I do what I can to connect with them because whatever is going on today will become memories tomorrow…same thing I do with my siblings…Maybe [with friends], we didn’t keep in touch for a long time. Now I try to make a little more effort…I call them up, visit them, and even travel [some distance] to see them, or invite them to visit me if they pass by [city].

F2 intends to catch up nourishing her relationships with good friends at this life phase. “There are friends whom you grew up with, friends who struggled with you in college. These are friends that age with you together…we’re all stepping into that [golden] age.” These friends also have families and children. So previously, their conversations were mostly about raising children. “But now we’ll talk about what’s
aching and what we can do about it.” Living in the world of friendship is another key existential for F2 as she navigates her aging journey.

**Ecological factors.** From the ecological perspective, both of F2’s parents have been actively influencing F2 within her microsystem. F2’s parents had facilitated her development of protective factors in her coping with aging. For instance, she reported that her father has been living a healthy lifestyle. He is a model for healthy living for F2. On the contrary, F2’s mother is a model that alerts F2 to take heed of the risk factors in her aging process.

He [father] plays Tai Chi for years. He swims twice a week…on the contrary, my mom also in a way helps me because of the things she did not do right when she was my age. She didn’t exercise much; she didn’t have a good [healthy] diet…she’s overweight.

Because F2’s mother has gained weight, she does not feel like moving around. Consequently, her mother has more health complications and is becoming dependent on others for daily living activities. “Seeing someone that is so close to me, I can project what can be the worst…I believe that’s the least we should do.” F2 was conscious about the need to develop sensible eating habits and integrate physical exercise into her lifestyle. In addition, F2 stated that she is learning things from her nieces, who had discussed women’s health with F2. Recollecting the discussions she had with her nieces, F2 realized that “menopause can affect women in a very short timeframe.” Currently, under the guidance of her physician, F2 is taking vitamin supplements as a way to cope with the physiological changes that come with age.
In regard to F2’s macrosystem, she seems to have become accustomed to the western culture after living in the United States for some time. She also highlighted the air quality, the space, and the lifestyle she embraces in this country as compared with Hong Kong. Therefore, these external properties form the macrosystem about which F2 feels comfortable as she ages.

**Psychosocial themes.** According to F2’s narrative about her aging journey, she is currently dealing with the psychosocial themes of generativity, integrity, intimacy, and autonomy. For instance, integrity and generativity are reflected in F2’s perspectives of herself as she ages. “The positive side is, as I get older, I become more confident, and financially, I’m more secure.” A deep sense of F2’s relishing of her life experience and of the things she has accomplished also was reflected in her affirming attitude and perspectives toward her advancement in years of life. She said, “I always look forward to aging one more year…we won’t be fearful to move forward.” In addition, although F2 stated that she had begun her aging process not long ago, she appeared to be prepared for the rest of her aging journey with a hopeful spirit. She said:

I do prepare for aging…in a very positive way…I try to have a good time with them [children], connect with them…now I’m an aging mom, not a young mommy anymore. So I make that a little distinguished. But yet, I don’t want them to look at me as if I’m aging, I’m hopeless, they need to do all the things for me. I want to let them know that I’m still very capable and I can still do a lot. I even offered to take care of their children in the future if they need me to. This also gives me incentive to stay healthy.
When there’s hope, a person is more energetic. When there’s hope, a person is more positive.

F2’s embrace of intimacy is connected with the statement she made about visiting her family and spending more time with friends. In addition, F2’s emphasis on making visits to family and friends, and maintaining an exercise regime as ways of coping with aging relate to her desire for autonomy. In addition to witnessing the dependency her mother has on others, F2 recognizes the reality of losing this free-spirited lifestyle when she becomes older. “One day we cannot cope, we cannot be independent.”

**Continuity factors.** For F2, internal adaptive factors seem to play a more important part in her aging journey than the external factors. Her positive outlook on life and her willingness to accept her aging process are examples of the chief role operated by her internal adaptive strengths.

When you hear someone very young has cancer or some other problems, I feel that I'm rather lucky, that I have lived to this current age, and everything is still intact. I still have my feet, you know. So I think I am very thankful.

Additionally, F2’s internal adaptive strength supports her eagerness to comfort people who have difficulty in dealing with aging. She would tell others, “don’t let fear control your future…we can’t control our aging…we can have a positive attitude to face it. Make everyday a happy day.”

Concerning the external continuity factor that helps her deal with aging, F2 expressed that she is “more accustomed to the lifestyle here,” since she has been living in the United States for a number of years. F2 believes that her children are going to stay in
the United States. That would be another major reason for her to desire to grow old in this country, even though she did not expect her children to live very close to her. Moreover, F2 mentioned one minor issue about living in the United States that poses challenges to her. Because of her petite build, it has been difficult for her to find clothes that fit her. Nevertheless, she has resolved this issue because she has the luxury of shopping for clothes each time she travels back to Hong Kong to visit her parents.

**Aging in the United States.** When asked about the differences she perceived in growing old in the United States as compared to Hong Kong, F2 believed that she would prefer to grow old in the United States. The chief reason for her to have this belief is her children, some of her siblings, and her friends. These people are all living in the United States. Other reasons include her familiarity with the culture, the lifestyle, and the environment. In addition, F2 stated that the price of real estate and everyday necessities in this country are more affordable.

You just cannot afford a nice place in Hong Kong as here. Here, everybody can afford a car, a desirable home. Grocery prices are very decent, and the social expenses are not as high. Hong Kong is still a home to me, but…I feel that retiring in Hong Kong is simply impossible.

Arriving at this point, I felt that the interview had generated insights that respond to the theoretical framework as well as the four lived dimensions. I asked F2 if there was anything else she would like to share about her aging account. She added that her previous dream was to do volunteer work in some rural cities in China. Unfortunately, her back problem deterred her from realizing this dream. She had resorted to other avenues to help her fulfill her dream. Next, I asked F2 to talk about her interview
experience. She said that she liked this interview: “I definitely feel that it [this interview] has a lot of benefits for me. Cause I never analyzed it [aging] fully…the questions help me look at what I have been doing subconsciously…now, I’m expressing things verbally.” With that delightful note, we ended our conversation. This conversation lasted approximately 75 minutes.

Table 3 exhibits the themes that were extracted from the interview with F2. Some of these themes were similar to F1’s, while others differed.
Table 3: Themes Reflecting F2’s Account of Her Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Aches and pain</td>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td>Leaving problems for the next generation</td>
<td>Children</td>
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<td>Memory decline</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
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<td>Friends</td>
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<td>Sensitivity to financial issues</td>
<td>Change in personality attribute: become more understanding</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
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<td>Sensitivity to retirement issues</td>
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<td>Being more organized</td>
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<td>Having more time for myself</td>
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<td>Being financially prepared</td>
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<td>Looking at life from different perspectives</td>
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<td>Cherishing my days more</td>
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<td>Changing conversational topics with friends</td>
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<td>Being relaxed</td>
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<td>A timeline</td>
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<td>Being positive</td>
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<td>A blessing</td>
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<td>Accepting aging</td>
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<tr>
<td>A long process</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being thankful for what I have</td>
<td>Contributing to society / doing volunteer work</td>
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A few days after my interview with F2, I emailed her the transcript, seeking her help to verify the content. I also asked her to let me know if she would like to insert additional insights or alter some of the things I transcribed. She replied in a speedy manner, telling me that she was pleased with the transcription. In addition, she said that it was her pleasure to be a part of this study.

**Summary of Interview with F2.** F2 provided rich and in-depth information about her aging account. Based on her narrative of her aging experiences, she is seeing and feeling changes in her physical self, and she is realizing the decline in her mental capacity. Additionally, F2 is becoming more aware and accepting of her physical and mental limitations. F2’s meanings of aging include: (a) a decline in physical health, (b) a decline in mental health, (c) “a timeline,” (d) looking at life from different perspectives, (e) having more time for herself, (f) a sensitivity to health issues, (g) a sensitivity to lifestyle issues, (h) a sensitivity to financial issues, and (i) a long process. The aging symptoms F2 mentioned were lower energy level, back pain, weight gain, change in personality attribute such as becoming more patient, and decline in memory. Concerning means of coping with aging, F2 expressed that she would pay more attention to her physical health, exercise more, watch her diet, strengthen family relationships, maintain a social life, be financially prepared, be relaxed, be more organized, cherish her days more, be positive, be thankful for what she has, and contribute to society. Regarding persons who have a role in F2’s aging, based on her account, her parents, children, siblings, and friends influence her aging process. In regard to F2’s concern about further aging, she specified that she would not like to trouble or burden her children or anyone if she were
to become immobile or when she dies. Losing independence and not accepting her own limitations are also the scenarios about which she is concerned.

**Interview with F3**

F3 was another informant I recruited by means of the snowball sampling method. The day before we met, I telephoned F3 to reconfirm our appointment. The interview was at a private office. F3 was serious about maintaining an undisturbed ambience. Before we began the interview, she made sure that someone would attend to the telephone and not direct any calls to her during our meeting. As soon as she returned to her seat, she told me that she received the invitation letter and she was aware of the information listed in the letter. Then, we went through the informed consent procedure and completed the signatures. After I gathered the pertinent demographic data from her, I showed her a copy of the protocol questions. I asked her to read the questions. Then, I asked if she had any questions before we began the interview. She indicated that she did not have any questions and she was ready to begin. After mentioning to her some crucial aspects of the interviewing procedure and my conscious protection of her identity, I began the recording.

**Lived dimensions.** I started the interview with the open-ended question, “What does aging mean for you?” Similar to F1 and F2’s responses, F3’s immediate response contained a succinct remark about aging: “Aging to me is a process of life.”

**Lived body.** Several sections of F3’s account of the meaning of aging reflected her corporal sensitivity. F3 stated, “…what comes to mind [about aging] is, when we grow old, we will have deterioration in physical health as well as mental status.” When F3
articulated her means of coping with aging, her account was associated with her bodily sense in the world.

Probably take better care of myself, physically. I know I should do exercise, but I'm not doing [chuckled] as much as I should. Also, I realize that I have to follow a more healthy diet in order to take good care of my body…for example, eating less salt and fat. Before, my husband and I enjoyed eating. So we would eat whatever we wanted. But now I’m paying more attention to my diet, whether it is healthy or not…I see myself not as an old lady but someone who is growing old physically…

In addition to her mindfulness about taking better care of her physical self, F3 talked about seeing and feeling some somatic differences as a result of aging. “I think physically of course, you know, you have more white hair, more wrinkles, aches and pain here and there, and these…peri-menopausal symptoms, like sometimes not being able to sleep kind of make me…feel that I’m aging.” With all these negative changes, F3 said, “so I see myself, in a way, physically I’m going downhill…” In addition, F3 mentioned her consciousness of her weight and body size: “no matter how careful I am with my diet I still gain weight in certain areas I don’t want to. For example, the belly and other areas…” Furthermore, she said, “…I really have not seen myself as an older lady. I try to keep…uh physically fit.”

**Lived space.** In F3’s account of her aging, she mentioned several times that she would not interfere with her children’s lives as she grows older, and she desires to lead an independent life. F3’s spatial entity seems to be the emotional, if not the physical proximity that she can have with her children.
But if I retire in the U.S., I would have my children at least within traveling distance easily, and hope that they would come and visit me from time to time. But if I retire and go back to Hong Kong or China, that means I might not see my children as much. But I'm okay with either way… I’m not saying that they [children] would need to be there… I’m not saying that I need them to be around me to help me as I grow old. I believe that I… they have their own lives… so I'm not expecting them to be around me and help me [as I] grow old.… So I really… believe that growing old in the United States means that I should be living a very independent life and not interfere with my children’s own family life. So in that sense also I do not expect them to take care of me… I do believe that I have to live my life growing old and dealing with it myself rather than um… imposing on other people’s lives, such as my children’s.

In addition to embracing the space of an individualistic lifestyle, F3’s spatial sensitivity also relates to her volunteer work, at present and in the future. “So I’m doing a lot of… starting to do some medical mission…” She also talked about her missionary work in China and India, and her plan to continue doing this in the days to come.

Lived time. When asked about her meaning of aging, one of the things F3 mentioned reflected her sense of temporality: “It’s [aging is] also sometimes associated with sunset.” In addition, it appeared to F3 that aging is “a different stage of life.” The process of aging probably made F3 want to “enjoy as much as I can, the time with my children and eventually grandchildren… have more time to live my own life…” Another occasion when F3 expressed her spatial feeling was when she talked about the length of
time elderly people have immigrated to the United States. According to F3, culturally, some elderly people who had moved to the United States recently are very traditional, which may create conflicts with their lives in the host country.

   My thinking is more westernized when compared with people who have just immigrated here…I met people who just immigrated to the U.S. few years ago. They still kind of expected their children to take care of them while they were growing old…

   Implicit in F3’s account was the difference it might make to people’s way of perceiving things given a longer period of time staying in a country that emphasizes individualism rather than collectivism. F3’s perception contained her sense of temporality.

   *Lived relation.* Relation seemed to be a prominent part of F3’s life world. On several occasions, her anecdote of aging reflected the relationship she has with her husband, parents, children, friends, and people from her church. In regard to her care and support for her family, F3 is currently taking care of her aging parents, while she does not have to care for her children, since they have become adults. F3 emphasized her desire to continue nurturing her relationship with her children, and eventually her grandchildren. She smiled as she spoke of her relationship with her daughter. “I think my daughter is very supportive of me. She’s my best friend. So I think she helps me sort out a lot of things at times. As we’re very good friends, we talk a lot…” Although F3 did not explicitly describe her relationship with her husband, when she talked about her lifestyle, she mentioned her husband. “Before, my husband and I really enjoyed eating. So we would eat whatever we wanted…” Beyond her domestic sphere, F3 has been
experiencing respect from younger people. “Sometimes people would respect my opinion…younger people from church would come to me for some advice, not all the time, occasionally.” Concerning her social circle, F3’s embrace of her relationships with friends was revealed in her expressed desire to be “surrounded by friends.” Furthermore, for F3, “…the most important thing is my relationship with the creator…”

**Ecological factors.** For F3, her relationship with her children, especially her daughter, forms the crucial components that influence her developmental stages, and would continue to inform her aging process as demonstrated by her statement that she would prefer to live in the United States in order to be able to see her children more. “…My children in a way are close to me…” F3’s living with and taking care of her own parents reflect the influential factors that her parents may have on her aging process. F3’s husband is another active member in her microsystem who accompanies her on her aging journey. Furthermore, F3’s sensitivity to diseases and sufferings has become her protective factor, physically and emotionally.

I strongly believe in prevention, which is better than um…treatment…I’m very passionate about disease prevention and health promotion…we know that we’ll be…our physical health will deteriorate no matter what. But early diagnosis and treatment would definitely reduce suffering.

Concerning F3’s macrosystem, similar to F2, F3 has lived in the United States for many years. She is comfortable with the environment, and she had become accustomed to the western culture. She mentioned that growing old in Hong Kong would have the advantage of proximity to her volunteer work. Otherwise, she prefers living in the United States. Apparently, her key priority is her children. She believes that her children will
stay in the United States. Therefore, growing old in this country would allow her to see her children often.

**Psychosocial themes.** Based on F3’s narrative of her aging experiences, she is currently negotiating the psychosocial properties of integrity, generativity, intimacy, identity, and autonomy. For instance, in regard to the notion of integrity, F3 stated that aging “is a different stage in one’s life as we grow old,” and she hopes to cope with aging in a positive way. “So I would age with dignity and purpose, or meaningfulness.” Concerning F3’s negotiation of her identity, bringing together what she expressed, she stated that she was not yet at the stage of old age. “I’m in the beginning of the aging process, at the age of [age].” In regard to her chronological meaning of old age, F3 talked about her becoming a grandmother at the age of [age], and expressed that she did not really see herself as a grandmother. “But I think I am still too young to be a grandmother.” Implicit in F3’s account was her relating old age to the identity of grandmother. In addition, F3’s account of her realization of bodily changes such as weight gain, graying of hair, and growing of wrinkles suggested her discernment of an identity for becoming an older person. In respect to the psychosocial theme of autonomy, F3’s concern about maintaining independence reflected her sensitivity to her capability of doing things on her own. Regarding the psychosocial theme of generativity, F3 seems to be at the phase where she is embracing her generative qualities, which was evidenced by this account: “…but I think I gained a lot of wisdom with experiences in life. So I think I could help other people, whether it is on marital problem, or on raising children, or on physical health…” Other evidence of F3’s generative qualities was reflected in her verbal account of some of her milestones.
When we were young, we focused on studying, pursuing career, um…and when we were in the second stage, we focused on raising the family. Now all these responsibilities are gone. So I would search for things that have a meaning and purpose for the rest of my life…so what I’m looking forward to do is to have something that has more meaning. Like helping other people…um…kind of searching for the purpose of life in this stage…there were things that I cannot do when I was taking care of my family…for the past [number] of years, I’ve been taking care of and raising the family [my children]…I’m looking and exploring opportunities that I could use my education, my professional experience to help other people. Yea. My experience in life would help me to help other people.

**Continuity factors.** Based on F3’s narrative, there is only one external continuity factor that relates to her living in the United States. That is, living in this country offers her the luxury of seeing her children more often. Internally, F3 was aware of the strengths she developed in the past that are helping her navigate her life journey. For instance, in her recollection of her milestones, she highlighted some of the things she accomplished across her life span. Moreover, she reckoned that her accumulated knowledge and experience would help her cope with aging. “…I see myself also as a wiser person because of my life experience. I learned a lot of things in my life. There were things I used to care about very much…now, if things don’t go my way…it’s okay…” Based on F3’s statements of her strengths, her life experience has enabled her to develop the internal strengths that enhance her aging process, as well as the wisdom to discontinue
using the approaches that are not beneficial to her aging process. Another set of internal strengths which support F3’s aging process stems from her relationship with friends.

It’s important to have a group of people who can grow with you while you are dealing with aging. Have friends whom you can travel with, just have fun, going out to eat. In our [worship place] having [relationship] with other people, talking to other people, knowing that they are going through the same thing [aging] with you, that you’re not alone, and just go out and do a lot of things rather than isolate yourself would be a good way to deal with aging…I always believe that you’re the only one who can take good care of yourself.

**Aging in the United States.** F3 stated, “I’m okay either way,” living and aging in the United States or Hong Kong. As she mentioned a couple of times, she has been living in the United States for some time, she has become acculturated to the western lifestyle, and she feels fine growing old in this country. Based on her account, two key aspects had informed her of the place where she would desire to live as she grows old. The first aspect is her mission to help people in China. This aspect makes Hong Kong a better or more convenient place for her to grow old. However, living in Hong Kong contradicts with the second aspect, which is the opportunity of visiting with her children. F3 speculates that her children will stay in the United States. Therefore, if she chooses to grow old in Hong Kong, her opportunity cost will be restrictions on visiting with her children. F3 seems to be prepared for her “independent lifestyle” as she grows older. She expressed that she would not anticipate relying on her children’s care. Nevertheless, her
desire to see her children often suggests that her children’s spiritual and emotional care are important to her.

As our dialogue reached this point, I noticed that we had addressed all of the crucial aspects of the protocol questions. The data F3 offered in response to my questions appeared to be saturating. I asked F3 if there were other things she would like to talk about with regard to aging. She paused briefly and said, “I never sat down to think about the aging process…I really have not thought about the aging process that much yet. Probably if I have more time to process this I’ll…” She went on to say that she appreciated research like this:

…That kind of shed light on the Chinese aging population, although there might be differences in elderly people who have lived here for a long time who have um…assimilated into the culture versus people who have just immigrated to this country for the last few years…I met some people who just immigrated to the U.S. few years ago. They all kind of expected their children to take good care of them while they were growing old, and also the challenges of language, culture, food, and transportation…

F3 continued to share her recollections of her observations and her empathy for the struggles of elderly new immigrants. When she finished with that, I expressed my gratitude for her participation. Next, I asked F3 to articulate her thoughts and feelings toward this interview. F3 said:

I never really thought about what it would be like [to grow old] and what I have to deal with, or cope with when I grow old. So this interview kind
of...probably started...initiated this thinking. All these questions will probably help me start this process. And hopefully I can get ready for it.

After turning off the recorder, I expressed my gratitude to F3 for the informative account she gave. Additionally, I informed F3 that I would send her the verbatim transcription in a couple of days. This interview lasted nearly 70 minutes. The following table displays the themes that relate to F3’s account of her aging experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Aches and pain</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Loss of independence</td>
<td>Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in mental health</td>
<td>Gray hair</td>
<td>Watching my diet</td>
<td>Seeing my children less</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more time for myself</td>
<td>Wrinkles</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td>Forcing my opinion on others</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A process of life</td>
<td>Weight gain</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td>Being a burden to others</td>
<td>God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing in wisdom</td>
<td>Menopause</td>
<td>Living an independent life</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Sunset of life”</td>
<td>Change in personality attribute: become mellow</td>
<td>Taking good care of myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking at life from different perspectives</td>
<td>Being positive</td>
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Accepting aging

Aging with dignity and purpose

Contributing to society

Nurturing a relationship with God
Within a week after the interview, I emailed the transcription to F3 and invited her to help me verify the contents. I also asked F3 to let me know if the transcribed information appeared fine to her. I invited her to offer additional insights if she desired. The next day, she emailed me back to tell me that the transcribed document looked good to her. I thanked her for taking the time and effort to help me verify the transcription.

**Summary of Interview with F3.** F3’s responses furnished this study with another set of rich information. F3’s report of her aging experiences reveals the stage where she is seeing and feeling the changes in her physical appearance and capacities. Recollecting the themes that associate with her aging experiences, her understanding of aging is embodied in the following expressions: decline in physical and mental health, having more time for herself, a process of life, growing in wisdom, and “sunset of life.” Her signs of aging were aches and pain, gray hair, weight gain, wrinkles, change in personality attributes such as becoming mellow, and menopausal symptoms. For her physical wellness, F3 would advocate for having regular physical check-ups, maintaining a sensible diet, keeping a good relationship with family and friends, contributing to society, nurturing a relationship with God, living an independent life, being positive, taking good care of herself, accepting aging, and aging with dignity and purpose. Persons and figures that play an influential role in F3’s aging process are God, children, husband, friends, and the people she helps. In addition, F3’s concerns about aging are being a burden to her children, seeing her children less often, forcing her opinions on others, and not maintaining her independence when she grows old.
Interview with F4

F4 was an informant referred by a church member. Upon receipt of F4’s contact details, I telephoned her to discuss the time and venue for the interview. F4 offered to arrange an office for our meeting. The interview took place in a private work setting. F4 indicated that she had received a copy of my invitation letter and that she had already read it. I went through the informed consent procedure with F4 and we signed the form. After gathering the pertinent demographic data, I showed F4 a copy of the protocol questions and asked her to read the questions. After studying the questions for a minute or so, she told me that she was ready for the interview. I explained to F4 that during the interview I would not say her name and I would be taking notes. She said, “I’m fine with that.” I turned on the recorder and began the interview.

Lived dimensions. I used the same open-ended question, “What does aging mean for you?” as a starter for the interview. Spontaneously, F4 asserted, “It [aging] means getting old, approaching death…um…eventually, one will die.” She added, “Aging is a natural stage of life, one has to accept its coming, one should remain to have a positive attitude in life.”

Lived body. F4 talked about the general bodily changes that come with age. “Physically and mentally…one will start experiencing some changes…one’s alertness may be slowing down. You will do things more slowly, health-wise one may start to have some problems, like cataracts, joint pains, high blood pressure, cholesterol.” F4 emphasized that she expected to experience physiological changes and she is not fearful of growing old. She then provided her rationale for staying healthy. “Because if one is not healthy, the quality of life is affected.” She added, “So just enjoy what you have.
Keep healthy so you can do what you want to do…” In addition, F4 articulated one of the key reasons for maintaining her physical health:

Well, if you have to take care of older people while you are aging, while you are 60, 70, or 80 and you still have parents to take care of, maybe your parents are 90 or 100. Then you have to do some special planning on how you can take care of your parents. Physically, if you yourself have limitation, then you have to think about alternative ways to take care of them.

**Lived space.** F4 was another informant who repeatedly mentioned her desire to maintain an independent life when she becomes older. She stated that she might have to depend on her children to take care of her. She stated, however, that she would be fine if her children were unable to be her source of support. F4 did not want to be a burden to others. “I do not want to come to a situation that I have to burden others to take care of me. Also, sometimes you may feel disappointed and frustrated if you have to depend on other people.” On a couple of occasions, F4 emphasized the importance of maintaining an independent life. “What I mean is to remain independent.” F4 also said, “I am thankful I am healthy. So I can be independent.” Independence appears to be the existential space where F4 would find comfort in her aging journey.

F4 talked about hiring a caregiver to assist her elderly mother with her daily needs. Implicit in this vignette is F4’s sense of space for aging. Perhaps growing old at home also would be the preferred space for F4’s elderly mother.

If financially it’s feasible, it’s good that you can get a caregiver or helper to help take care of your parents. But if financially, it’s difficult for you to
do that, you may have to put them in elderly homes. This will not be that ideal as you would have thought…but still…uh…just try to plan ahead and do what would be the best for your parents.

For her own later-life needs, F4 mentioned two options. One option would be to stay at home and have her children care for her. Another option would be to move to an elderly home.

If I’m getting old and getting to be weak and have to depend on somebody…I am prepared to enter into those nursing homes. Although it’s something I don’t like, buy psychologically I have prepared myself for that, that one day I have to go to a nursing home if nobody [at home] can take care of me.

According to F4’s statements, elderly homes and nursing homes do not appear to be the space she would prefer spending her later years of life. She would, however, accept the reality of transitioning to one of those facilities because she would not like to burden others.

**Lived time.** F4 made several remarks that conveyed her temporal sensitivity. For instance, when she talked about her meaning of aging, one of the expressions she used was “approaching death.” F4 also mentioned that when she retires, “I have to plan what to do to make life more meaningful instead of just staying at home all the time.” F4 said often that she is currently busy with work and “I have not really thought about this [aging] matter thoroughly yet…I don’t know yet because um…because it’s still too early for me to tell since I am still occupied with working full time.” F4’s sense of time focuses on the quality rather then the quantity. “It doesn’t mean that I want to live long to 80, 90,
or 100…I just want to be healthy. I don’t mind dying early, as long as I have quality of life and can well take care of myself…”

**Lived relation.** F4’s experiential account revealed that her sense of relations is important to her aging journey. She is sensitive to the changes that have taken place in the domestic sphere because those changes have an impact on her relations with her family. For instance, one of the aspects she brought up when she talked about her meaning of aging was the change in her family lifestyle:

Family-wise, maybe entering into another stage…my son and daughter have moved out. They’re on their own. Now, only with my husband and my mother in the house…so there are changes in the family…so sometimes I can travel with him [husband], and to visit some new places.

F4’s relational sensitivity also applies to her social life. “My friends in my age group often discuss about healthy living and healthy eating.” Adding to that, F4 emphasized the importance of friendship as she stated, “…Maintain social life, have friends around so you can share things with, keep yourself active.” Another relational piece relates to F4 and her mother. F4 currently is taking care of her elderly mother. F4 underscored the importance of taking the responsibility to care for her elderly parent. She expressed that she would endeavor to do what would be the best for her parent.

**Ecological factors.** There are two aspects that pertain to the values with which F4 grew up in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is the macro environment where F4 developed her protective factor in her aging journey. For instance, her current busy schedule parallels the hectic lifestyle prevalent among people in Hong Kong. When asked about her way of coping with aging, F4 mentioned that she has not yet thought about that, “Cause currently
I’m still busy with work. I have not really thought about this [aging] matter thoroughly yet.” F4’s response to my question of “How does aging affect the way you see yourself?” was, “I didn’t notice anything yet [chuckled]. So, uh…I don’t know yet because um…because it’s still too early for me to tell since I am still occupied with working full time.” In addition to full-time employment, F4 is caring for her elderly parent, who is living with her and her husband. In a couple of instances, F4 highlighted that “keeping oneself busy” or to “keep yourself occupied” would be the things she encouraged people to do when growing older. She added, “…just staying at home all the time…just doing daily household chores” would not be something to which F4 looks forward when she becomes older. “I have to plan what to do to make life more meaningful instead of just staying at home all the time.” Keeping busy has been F4’s lifestyle, which is consistent with her way of coping with aging, which also implies the protective factor of aging she highlighted. “Oh…keeping oneself busy, doing something meaningful, talk with friends…”

Another factor that seems to protect F4 in her aging journey is the cultural tradition of filial piety that she practices. Her support and care for her elderly mother is an example of her practice of filial piety. F4’s adherence to the traditional Chinese value of filial piety can be a source that supports her aging. For instance, her parent’s dependence on her might have led her to desire to maintain an independent life. Seeing the aging signs and experiences of her mother might have portrayed the scenario of being old and being dependent on others. Quite the opposite, F4’s embrace of the filial piety value can be a risk factor for her because she does not know if her children will follow the same value. F4 stated that she “may have to depend on my son or daughter to take
care of me.” Then F4 said, “Psychologically, I am prepared to enter into those nursing homes. Although it’s something I don’t like, but psychologically I have prepared myself for that, that one day I have to go to nursing home if nobody [at home] can take care of me…” In the social sphere, F4’s growing old with friends would be another factor that safeguards F4 in her aging process. “My friends in my age group often discuss about healthy living and healthy eating. Health and quality of life are major concerns for most people [chuckled] who are aging.” F4’s aging with her husband also is a supportive source for her. “My husband and I have been talking about aging from time to time…I can travel with him, and to visit some new places.”

**Psychosocial themes.** F4’s hectic lifestyle, sensitivity to health concerns, and preliminary plans about her future form the generative components that accompany her in her aging journey. For instance, F4 reiterated that her busy way of living has deterred her from thinking about aging. “Cause I don’t know yet because um…because it’s still too early for me to tell since I am still occupied with working full time.” When asked about the ways to cope with aging, F4 said, “Do preventive healthcare, so keep yourself healthy.” Additionally, F4 expressed her gratitude for maintaining her sound health. “…I am thankful I am healthy, so I can be independent. I don’t encounter anything [inconvenience] yet.” F4’s statement also reflected her embrace of integrity, rejoicing over her healthy status. Furthermore, F4’s account of her hectic lifestyle is associated with generativity rather than stagnation. She continues to live in the embrace of intimacy with her elderly mother, her husband, her children, and her friends. F4 did not see anything different in her relationship with friends that relates to her aging. The differences she had noticed were changes in the topics that she and her friends shared.
“Maybe sometimes conversation topics have shifted to talk more about health, retirement, retirement finance, senior housing, travel, retirement hobbies.” Furthermore, as stated previously, remaining busy and being independent are important to F4, as she mentioned these two aspects a couple of times during the interview. Therefore, autonomy is another principal psychosocial theme F4 strives to keep while she navigates her aging journey.

**Continuity factors.** Internal rather than external factors seem to be the sources that support F4 in her aging process. Her internal adaptive means are consistent with the protective ecological factor discussed previously. For instance, F4 repeated stated that she has been living a hectic lifestyle. Her busy lifestyle and her reiteration of keeping herself occupied would be the internal strength that supports her while she treads her aging path. Another crucial adaptive source is F4’s relationship with her family members such as her husband. F4’s husband is an internal source of growth for her. Friendship is another internal adaptive source for F4. The discontinuity factor F4 presented consists of the change in the discussion topics she had with friends and the change in the familial pattern because her children are no longer living with her. However, the discontinued factor does not affect F4’s aging because the discontinuity is counterbalanced by her busy lifestyle and her positive attitude.

**Aging in the United States.** When responding to the question about growing old in Hong Kong or the United States, F4 named a list of items she perceived would be more advantageous for people who are growing old in Hong Kong as compared to the United States. The advantages include: (a) affordable medical expenses, lower cost and accessibility of caregivers, convenience of shops, and efficiency of the public transportation system:
Well, in the U.S, one hears a lot about high healthcare cost and high medical insurance cost. In Hong Kong the situation maybe better. The medical expenses maybe lower. Living in Hong Kong you can get caregivers more easily. In the U.S., it’s not easy to find [caregivers], and also caregiving costs are expensive. About convenience, in Hong Kong, there are shops near you. You can walk to get your necessities more easily. You don’t need a car. In the U.S., you have to think about a place where’s it’s convenient for you to get your daily needs. You have to live in an area where you have access to public transportation.

As the interview arrived at this stage, I sensed that the information I gathered from F4 was saturating. So I asked if she would like to make any additional remarks about the topic of aging. She highlighted the conveniences and inconveniences of growing old. “Maybe those discounted tickets for seniors at museums, concerts [chuckled]. Sometimes restaurants, there are discounts for seniors. These are the conveniences…I don’t encounter anything [inconvenient] yet…no, not yet.” Then, I asked F4 to articulate her feeling toward this interview. She paused and responded,

I feel fine. I won’t feel depressed or I won’t feel sad about getting old. Some people feel…it will be a sad thing [to be old]. I don’t feel that. I know it’s a natural path that one will get into eventually. So why think about something that you cannot change? You just try to be positive and try to cope with things. It’s [aging] something that you cannot change…my husband and I have been talking about aging from time to time. And we are in a way prepared, psychologically.
F4 went on to talk briefly about her perspectives of suffering and dying. She seemed to have given thoughts about end-of-life issues. When she finished with her articulation, I stopped the recording and thanked her for her insights. She said that for some reason, she thought that she would be asked to talk about her experiences that relate to her immigration or her process of acculturation in the host country. The entire meeting lasted 60 minutes. There were some noises in the background occasionally, and we experienced a brief interruption when someone unknowingly walked into the area where we had the interview. However, these interludes did not hinder the interviewing process. Both of us were focused on our conversation. I summarize in Table 5 below the themes I gathered from my interview with F4 that associate with her aging experiences.
Table 5: Themes Reflecting F4’s Account of her Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Aches and pain</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Loss of independence</td>
<td>Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Cataracts</td>
<td>Watching my diet</td>
<td>Being a burden to others</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting older</td>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td>Doing only household chores</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A process of life</td>
<td>High cholesterol</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A different stage of life</td>
<td>Remaining in the workforce</td>
<td>Being financially prepared Staying active / keep busy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doing something meaningful Accepting aging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being thankful for what I have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately five days after the interview, I emailed F4 the verbatim transcript. I asked her to examine the content and to help me resolve any ambiguities that might exist. She responded in two weeks, sending me some added remarks corresponding to her aging perspectives. I appreciated her for taking the time and effort to insert her new thoughts and insights.
Summary of Interview with F4. F4’s account of her aging experiences consists of pertinent information. Some of the themes that emerged in F4’s responses parallel the themes that emerged in other participants’ inputs. F4’s narrative reveals her acceptance of her aging. F4’s meanings of aging include: a decline in physical health, a sensitivity to health issues, getting older, a different stage of life, and a natural path. Physically, some symptoms that relate to the weakening of capacity are what F4 had experienced so far and what she would anticipate to encounter when she grows older. According to F4, when a person grows older, there is a risk of losing autonomy. Adding to that would be F4’s concern about being a burden to others and doing only household chores. F4’s ways to cope with aging are diverse. Her perceived coping strategies include: (a) having preventive healthcare, (b) watching her diet; (c) strengthening family relationships, (d) maintaining a social life; (e) being financially prepared, (f) remaining in the workforce, (g) keeping busy, (h) doing something meaningful, (j) staying positive, (k) accepting the aging process, and (l) being thankful for what she has. The persons who are important to F4’s aging journey are her husband, mother, children, friends, and her mother’s caregiver.

Interview with F5

An active member from F5’s church introduced her to me. I telephoned F5 and we talked about the schedule, time, and venue for the interview. F5 told me that her husband was interested in participating, and she offered to arrange the time for me to meet her husband for the interview. I met F5 at an office in the church where she and her husband attend fellowship and other activities. F5 was cheerful throughout the entire meeting. She told me that she received the invitation letter via email and she had read the
letter. I suggested that we spend some time processing the informed consent documents. Following the signing of the form, I gathered some demographic information from F5 and I showed her the protocol questions. I asked her to read the questions and let me know if she needed any clarifications. She spent a short while examining the questions. With a light spirit, she said that she did not have any questions and gestured for me to start the interview.

**Lived dimensions.** I began the interview with an open-ended question. I asked F5 about her meaning of aging. She responded:

I haven’t anticipated much about aging. So I’m not that worried [about aging]…to me, I think aging is…when I reach a certain age…probably it has to be about 65 [chuckled], I get retired…uh…have grandchildren, and have a lot of um…maybe have some physical limitations, probably not as active as I am now [smiled].

**Lived body.** Reviewing F5’s response to the question about the meaning of aging, physical health is one of the important items on her list. For instance, F5 said: “Some people have more problems as they get older, such as health issues.” I asked F5 to elaborate those problems. F5 expressed that she witnessed many elderly people having physical limitations, which led her to recognize the issues of aging. F5 talked about the ways physical limitations could affect her lifestyle. “Like, maybe I may not be able to drive around, having lots of parties [gatherings], meeting people, running, go hiking, swimming…those are the things that I think I may not be so actively involved.” Despite F5’s account of those limitations, she foresaw that when she becomes older, she would have more time to exercise. “But I think maybe I will have more time to stay in the gym.
doing other activities.” Another note about the subjective experience of the body that I
gathered from F5’s remarks was, “…stay healthy…exercise” and she added that it is
important to have a balanced diet.

_Lived time._ I recall that a noticeable piece from F5’s account of the meaning of
aging was her temporal sensitivity. For instance, she perceived that growing old would
mean that a person has retired and would have more time to engage in volunteer
activities. At her church, F5 had seen older persons participating in volunteer work. She
stated that elderly persons could offer their help in various ways:

They can serve in different levels…because they have more time. So they
can spend more time in prayers to support people in need…when I have
something I need, I always ask senior people in the church to pray for me.
They will remember and they have time to pray for me.

I asked F5 how she would relate time to being an older person, and her response
reflected the value of an older person’s experience and the availability of time. “…My
experience and my time, being a senior or an elder.”

_Lived space._ F5’s sense of space emerged in her active lifestyle. For instance,
when she talked about older adults having physical limitations, she emphasized that she
would not be able to engage in many activities:

…not be able to drive around, having lots of parties, meeting people,
running, go hiking, swimming…those are the things that I think I may not
be so actively involved. But I think maybe I will have more time to stay in
the gym doing other activities…just maybe keep up with my current
activities. I hope I can still keep active…
Another spatial element for F5 takes place in her church. It’s the place where she currently meets elderly people who have set good examples for her. “They are all cheerful…I think they are my models.” When F5 talked about doing volunteer work as a means of coping with aging, she mentioned that older persons have more time to help others and to pray for others. In addition, when asked about growing old in the United States or Hong Kong, F5 said that she would retire in the United States because “I can still be around with them [children and friends] because for sure they will stay in the U.S…” For F5, her spatial sensitivity is associated with the place where she could be with her children and friends, where she could live her active lifestyle, and where she could be her “cheerful” self.

Lived relation. In F5’s sketch of aging, she mentioned her children, her friends, and the elderly persons at church. In regard to my question of the impact that aging has on her relationship with others, F5 used the metaphor of a “bridge” to describe the relationship that she believed she would have with the younger generation when she becomes older.

I’ll see myself as a bridge…yea…between my children and my grandchildren…kind of because I can be the link between them. What I experienced, I can explain to them to help them see things in a different way…hopefully in a more proactive way because I can share my life experience with them.

On the whole, F5 perceived that her relationship with others would remain the same despite her aging. “I don’t think it [aging] will affect my relationship with others because I hope I will remain the same. I have friends and relationships with people and I
hope it [aging] won’t affect that [my relationship] much.” In addition, F5 could see that aging might enhance her relationship with others as a result of her becoming more understanding and accepting. She highlighted that it would be important to “keep a good relationship with friends [smile].” F5 declared that she desired to be close to her children and their families when she grows old. “For sure, they [children] will stay in the U.S. So if I stay here, they will be around and vice versa; we see each other more often.”

Ecological factors. According to F5, the senior people at her church had influenced the way she perceived aging. Observing the way these elderly persons live their later years of life had caused F5 to develop a sense of protection for her old age. They are all 65; the oldest ones are probably close to 100. They have regular meetings…they are all cheerful…when I see them having such a happy life at their golden ages, I think they are my models. And I can share my problems with them because what they have experienced can be good references for me.

F5’s relationship with her children is another protective factor for her aging journey. When asked to talk about aging in the United States or in Hong Kong, F5 emphasized that she had desired to stay in the United States because it is likely that her children will be living in this country. “…My children will be around me. We can still see each other often.” There are other persons crucial to F5’s life. Her children and the older persons in her church, however, were the ones that F5 frequently mentioned.

Psychosocial themes. When asked about the meaning of aging, one of the things F5 mentioned was…”probably not as active as I am now.” Later on, when F5 talked about the things she might do differently realizing that she was in the process of aging,
she articulated a list of the things she would not be able to do. She stated, “Probably I don’t think there will be much difference. Just maybe keep up with my current activities.” F5’s current dynamic lifestyle, an active social circle, and a healthy exercise scheme reflect her being in the generative life phase, enjoying intimate relationships with family and friends, and embracing autonomy. Implicit in F5’s desire to “keep up with my current activities” is her hope to be generative rather than stagnant, to be in intimate relationships with loved ones rather than to be isolated, and to live with autonomy rather than to face shame and doubt.

Continuity factors. F5’s continuity factors of aging consist of both her internal and external sources. Her active lifestyle, positive attitude, relationships with family, friends, and people from her church represent F5’s internal sources. F5 referred twice to staying active. “Just maybe keep up with my current activities. I hope I can still keep active.” Additionally, F5 foresaw that when she becomes older, she might have some physical limitations that would hinder her active lifestyle. She anticipated that she would be “…probably not as active as I am now.” Despite the anticipation of the decline in physical capacity, she expressed little worry:

So I’m not worried [about aging]. I think when I get older…I think I still will be an active and very cheerful person. Aging to me is not a miserable thing. It’s just a normal process. I suppose when I get older, I will be wiser probably. [I] can help other people [who are] going through this [aging] process, or [I] can help the young guys, my children or my grandchildren.

Helping others would be an internal source of support for F5 when she grows older. F5 believed that it is important to “be prepared psychologically, physically,
financially, and socially, and accept whatever that comes along…just take it as it is and deal with it, no need to complain. Be faithful [to one’s belief] and be grateful for each day.” F5 reported that if she were to grow old in the United States, “…I will have better social support, community services; I am close to my children and their family…” F5 did not mention the external adaptive sources, yet her preference of living in the United States (as it would mean that she could be closer to her children) would be her external source of continuity that supports her as she continues with her aging path.

**Aging in the United States.** I asked F5 about her opinion regarding aging in the United States and in Hong Kong. She paused for a fleeting moment before saying, “the difference will be um…I think I will be better uh…to grow old in the United States because…” As reported previously, F5’s adaptive support stems from her family and social circle, in addition to an active lifestyle. F5 stated twice that living in the United States would allow her to “…be around with them [children] and vice versa, we see each other more often.” F5 did not mention the environment, medical system, convenience, or any other external aspects. She only underscored the value of her family, social circle, and lifestyle.

When the interview arrived at this juncture, I did not probe further as I sensed the richness of the information which F5 had provided. I asked F5 if she had other comments she would like to make. She said, “No, I don’t think so. We have covered everything.” The last question I asked F5 was about her experience of the interview. She replied, “I feel great. Nothing really worries me. I am still very positive. I just foresee that I’ll have a very happy life even when I get older. So…” Another cheerful note F5 added was, “some people may not get to the old age because they die at a young age. So I think it’s a
blessing to be old.” Our dialogue lasted close to 60 minutes. After I stopped the recording, F5 told me that she was expecting me to ask her questions about her immigration experiences. I expressed my gratefulness for her participation and her thoughtfulness. The summary of F5’s themes pertaining to her aging experiences is shown in Table 6 below:
Table 6: Themes Reflecting F5’s Account of Her Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Physical limitations</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Loss of independence</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Decreased activity</td>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td>Complaining about aging</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more time for myself</td>
<td></td>
<td>Watching my diet</td>
<td>Seeing my children less</td>
<td>People from church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A liaison person between my children and grandchildren</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>The older generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing in wisdom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A profess of life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Staying active / keeping busy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A blessing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being a miserable thing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting aging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading books about aging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contributing to society / doing volunteer work</td>
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</table>

Two days after the interview, I emailed the transcribed draft to F5 and asked her to help me examine the content of our conversation, to see if there were any gaps in the statements she made. I also suggested F5 offer additional input or delete whatever she thought was unnecessary. She returned my email on the same day, telling me that she was pleased with the draft.
Summary of Interview with F5. My meeting with F5 was another delightful one. She gave succinct and insightful account of her meanings of aging, perceived signs of aging, coping strategies, persons who had made an impact on her aging process, and her concerns about aging. Her meanings of aging include: (a) a decline in physical health, (b) a sensitivity to health issues, (c) a process of life, (d) a blessing, (e) not being a miserable thing, (f) having more time for herself, (g) opportunity to be a liaison person between her children and her grandchildren, and (h) growing in wisdom. In regard to physical changes that relate to aging, F5 mentioned physical limitations and decreased activity. Concerning ways of coping with aging, F5 would practice preventive healthcare, engage in physical exercise, watch her diet, strengthen family relationships, maintain a social life, be prepared financially, stay active, accept the aging process, be positive, read books about aging, contribute to society, and participate in church work. F5’s important persons in her aging journey would be her children, friends, people from her church, and God. The two things that F5 expressed concerns about as she becomes older are making complaints about aging and losing independence.

Interview with F6

F6 was an informant referred to me by her active church member. I telephoned her as soon as I received the information that contained her name and contact details. Over the telephone, F6 told me, “I don’t know if the information I provide is going to help you. But I am happy to participate.” She offered to arrange a room at her church for the interview. When we met, I asked F6 if she had read the invitation letter. She showed me the copy of the letter and said that she believed she understood what was written in the letter. Then, I processed the informed consent form with her. After we both signed the
form, I asked her a few questions about her demographic characteristics. Then, I asked her to read the list of protocol questions. After spending about a minute reading the question, F6 expressed that she would try to answer the questions. She smiled and said, “Oh…very nervous.” I smiled back and said, “I think you will enjoy this.” Then, I signaled her that I was starting the recording. She chuckled and nodded.

**Lived dimensions.** My first question for F6 was the same open question I had for the other participants. “What does aging mean for you?” F6 responded right away. Aging means a lot of stuff, like getting a lot of wrinkles, gray hair…um I need bifocal glasses when I read…um…absentminded [ness]…gaining a lot of weight even though I watch my diet very carefully. [My] health [is] going downhill…um…menopause, have difficulty in knowing your stuff. In general, I would say I’m changing mentally and physically. Everything is getting worse [chuckled].

**Lived body.** From the list of physical and mental changes F6 gave in response to the question about the meaning of aging, it is clear that most of the changes reflected her bodily experiences in the world. I requested F6 to say more about her physical changes. She stated, “…energy level is really low…yea. Not energetic anymore.” I asked F6 what she had been doing for her physical wellness as she realized that she was in the aging process. She said:

Um…I exercise more. But when I exercise, I don’t do exercise that really requires a lot of energy. I used to play basketball or tennis with my husband. But now we changed the exercise…like just go
hiking…um…not really hiking but just walking for around 30 minutes a day. Whatever I do, I need to take a longer time.

When I asked F6 about the things she would suggest people to do to cope with aging, one of the things she mentioned was: “just ask them to do more exercises, to keep in good shape…I mentioned already…exercise more and take care of your health.” When I invited F6 to talk about how aging seemed to have affected the way she saw herself, F6’s response again related to her corporal experience: “I put on a lot of weight recently [laughed]. Now I’m [age] years old. But I remember when I turned [age], every year I gained like two pounds or something…” Concerning the changes that connect with F6’s physical appearance, I asked if her wanted to say more. She stated, “I noticed that I have more gray hair now, I need to dye my hair twice a year [chuckled]…and [I have] a lot of wrinkles.” F6 also stated, “I have eye bags.” When she talked about her way of coping with aging, in addition to “just try to do more exercise,” F6 added that “maybe do facial [chuckled] to improve my skin condition.” These are all the bodily existentials reflected in F6’s account of her aging experiences.

*Lived space.* In response to my question of “Is there anything you do differently as a result of realizing that you are in the aging process?” One of the aspects F6 talked about was “Now my kids…they’re older. So the two of us can go on vacation without taking them…in the old days, probably I just devoted my time in taking care of them, put everything else aside…um…you know, I had different priorities then.” F6 and her husband can have more space because their children have become adults. F6’s spatial sensitivity had shifted, from spending time raising children to traveling. Another example of existential space F6 had mentioned related to her socializing. “I try to um…treasure
the relationship, or just rebuild the relationship with friends…” F6 mentioned exercising, traveling, and gardening being the list of things she would like to do when she grows older. When she becomes an older person, her existential space would be the places where she would have her physical exercise, visit with family and friends, and do her gardening.

**Lived time.** F6’s temporal being in the world was reflected in her account of her awareness of life’s brevity. She reported that she might do things differently because of her aging. She underscored that “I realized that life is really short and it’s really out of your control. So we just want to try to enjoy life.” In addition, F6 said, “So we’ve already [lived] past [number of years]. You don’t know how long you’re going to live.” Furthermore, F6 stated, “Because life is too short, right? You don’t know when you’re going to die….”

**Lived relation.** F6’s existential relations were revealed in her narrative of her engagement in physical exercise and playing basketball and tennis with her husband. Additionally, throughout the interview, F6 talked about her children, her mother, and her friends several times. F6 mentioned her children growing older and not traveling with her and her husband. “Actually, they [children] don’t want to travel with us.” When F6 described the type of things she would do more when she eventually becomes older, her response was related to her children: “I was thinking to work part-time maybe five years later, when my kids graduate from college.” When I asked F6 to illustrate the differences she perceived between growing old in the United States and Hong Kong, part of her responses were associated with her children:
And also here, I have two children. When they graduate from college, I
don’t know where they’re going to live. Maybe they’ll move to [another
coast]. So it seems like that I don’t see them quite often. But in Hong
Kong, it’s such a small place, even though one lives in New Territories,
and one lives in Hong Kong Island, maybe once a week you can still see
them. Maybe from time to time…yea…”

Another existential relation that is important to F6 was reflected in the account
she gave about the influence her mother’s aging had on her. F6 talked about her mother a
couple of times during the interview. “And also my mother…she’s living with us. She is
[age] years old now. So I can…” When F6 talked about her hair turning gray, she
mentioned her mother again. “I think I get this from my mom. Yes, because of my genes.
My mom’s hair is just like silver [chuckled].” In addition, F6 stated that aging had helped
her see the challenges her mother went through while growing older. “And also it [aging]
helps me understand my mom…um…she’s old and she had experienced a stroke before,
though now she’s okay. She can walk by herself…no problem, and she can still take care
of herself.”

Another relational property that is crucial to F6’s aging journey consists of her
relationships with relatives and friends. On a couple of occasions, F6 spoke of her visits
with relatives and friends:

So I treasure my relationships with friends and relatives. So just like in the
past few years, I did a lot of traveling. I went all the way to visit some
relatives that I haven’t seen for a while. So I would say um…I try
to…um…treasure the relationship, or just rebuild the relationships with
my friends and my relatives...most of my friends are about the same age as me. So probably when we get together, we’ll share good tips about how we can cope with aging.

**Ecological factors.** F6’s husband, mother, children, and friends constitute the protective factor that is in her microsystem. Throughout our conversation, I noticed F6 mentioned her mother several times. F6 said that aging had helped her to understand her mother more. Living with her mother and seeing her go through aging inspired F6 to learn about aging:

So I can...just from seeing her I can see...uh...you know...aging process...it just gives me something that when I look at aging, I try to do something more now...I know that one day I’ll be like her. So I’ll understand her more and I won’t get made easily...

When I asked F6 to talk about people who had helped her most as she dealt with aging, F6 said, “I think my husband...um...he provides me company. When we go exercising, we go together. And I think maybe doctor. If my health goes downhill, maybe the doctor can help me improve my health.” Furthermore, F6 talked about growing old in the United States or in Hong Kong. Her account implied her embrace of the macrosystem in Hong Kong with which she is familiar. F6 said, “So it seems like that I don’t see them [children] quite often” as she grows old in the United States. F6 said that the geographical size of the United States is enormous. If her children move to a state that is farther away from her, it would be difficult for her to see them as often as she would desire. Because Hong Kong is a small city, it would take less time for F6 to travel to meet with her
children and vice versa. For that reason, F6 believed that she would prefer to grow old in Hong Kong.

**Psychosocial themes.** Based on F6’s aging account, she is currently negotiating the psychosocial themes of identity, generativity, integrity, intimacy, and autonomy. Her recollection of the physical changes such as gray hair, eye bags, wrinkles, and the need for reading glasses relate to her negotiation of the aging identity. In regard to the psychosocial theme of generativity, one of the things F6 mentioned was revealed in her desire to remain generative. “…Work part-time, maybe five years later when my kids graduate from college. So I’ll have less financial burden…” This statement suggested that F6 is generating financial resources which would allow her to provide support for her children. When F6 gets older, her plan is to continue to be generative, as she mentioned that she would work part-time.

Concerning integrity, F6 had articulated her appreciation for her life experience as revealed by a conversation she had with her children. “Sometimes I do mention to my kids [chuckled]. I told them, ‘mom is getting older and older…so…um…[chuckled]. I think that’s about it. Just try to share what difficulty we have faced, and the way we tried to find solutions.” Another psychosocial property F6 embraces is intimacy. Based on F6’s narrative about her relationships with her husband, mother, children, relatives, and friends, intimacy has been an important property not only during F6’s course of aging, but also across her life span. Moreover, aging inspires F6 to cherish her relationships with her loved ones.

When F6 talked about the difference between growing old in the United States and Hong Kong, she underscored the efficiency of the public transportation system in
Hong Kong. In the United States, “when we get older, we need to get rides from younger people.” F6’s statement of the convenience of the public transportation system in Hong Kong revealed her concern about her autonomy as she lives her later years of life. Because the transportation system in the United States is less efficient, older persons have to rely on others to take them to places, which would hinder their sense of autonomy.

**Continuity factors.** Despite her awareness of the convenience of many public facilities in Hong Kong, F6 stated, “I think if I retire, I prefer to stay here [United States], to spend the rest of my life here.” The environment and lifestyle in the United States provide her with the external factor that supports her aging. The internal sources for F6 form the major supporting factor that helps her navigate her aging journey. These sources are comprised of her positive attitudes, which were manifested in the way she perceived herself. “I don’t see myself like an old lady.” Supplementing that was her expression of her desire: “So we just want to try to enjoy life.” In addition, F6’s relationships with her mother, her husband, her children, her relatives, and her friends are internal sources that assist F6 to cope with the negative changes that relate to aging.

**Aging in the United States.** I asked F6 what she believed would be the difference between growing old in the United States and Hong Kong. She listed several advantages and disadvantages that relate to living in both places. F6 seemed to prefer living in Hong Kong primarily because she imagined that she would be able to see her children more often if they lived there as well. However, F6’s children might continue living in the United States. In addition, F6 seemed to enjoy the lifestyle and the environment in the host country. Therefore, she believed that it would be likely that she will grow old in the United States.
I think here, because now we can drive. But when we get older, we need to get rides from younger people...because here, the public transportation is not that good. But in Hong Kong, it’s totally different. The transportation is so good...everything is conveniently located....I have two children...it seems like I don’t see them quite often. But in Hong Kong, it’s such a small place...maybe once a week you can still see them...I think here...the benefit is pretty good. Since we have been working for so long, so when we retire, we have the social security and also...but in Hong Kong, we don’t have a house there. There’s no way we can go back and live there. Rent is so expensive, so high.

As the interview reached this point, I reckoned that we had covered many questions and that the information I gathered seemed to imply saturation. I asked F6 if she had other things to add. She stated:

To be honest, this is the first time I participate in this kind of interview...my experience with this interview is interesting and exciting. I hope this study can help Asian elderly in getting something helpful. It’s [aging] something you experienced but you don’t verbalize…

I thanked F6 and told her that I would send her the transcribed draft in a few days. She said that she did not think she needed to verify anything because she trusted that I would come up with a fine transcript. I explained to her that it was important for her to help me verify the content. I checked the total time it took for this meeting; it was close to 65 minutes. I had summarized the themes that relate to F6’s account of her aging experiences in Table 7 below:
Table 7: Themes Reflecting F6’s Account of Her Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Lower energy level</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Being rigid</td>
<td>Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline of mental health</td>
<td>Weakening of vision</td>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td>Seeing children less often</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Wrinkles</td>
<td>Watching my diet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to retirement issues</td>
<td>Weight gain</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a better understanding of the older generation</td>
<td>Gray hair</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more time for myself</td>
<td>Change in personality attribute: become patient</td>
<td>Remaining in the workforce</td>
<td></td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Everything is getting worse”</td>
<td>Menopause</td>
<td>Enjoying life more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brevity of life</td>
<td>Memory decline</td>
<td>Having facial treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eye bags</td>
<td>Being considerate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being positive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being forgiving</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A few days after my interview with F6, I emailed her the transcribed draft of our dialogue. I suggested F6 make comments, add insights, or change anything she thought necessary. She emailed me the next day to tell me that she did not have anything to add, and she believed that the written materials were accurate. I thanked her again for her participation and for her help in reading and verifying the transcribed draft.

**Summary of Interview with F6.** F6’s cheerful demeanor amazed me. Initially, when she said that she was nervous, I felt that she was actually excited. When she gave responses to my questions, I saw her sometimes reading something she wrote before she came for the interview. After I stopped the recording, she told me that after she read the invitation letter, she began to think about her aging experiences. She just wanted to be more prepared for the interview.

Referring to F6’s narrative of her aging experiences, the aging symptoms she reported were gray hair, wrinkles, eye bags, weight gain, menopause, decline in memory, lower energy level, weakening of vision, and change in personality attribute such as becoming patient. A summary of F6’s themes that relate to her meanings of aging include: (a) a decline in physical health, (b) a decline in mental health, (c) a sensitivity to health issues, (d) having more time for herself, (e) “everything is getting worse,” (f) brevity of life, (g) having a better understanding of the older generation, and (h) sensitivity to retirement issues. F6’s means of coping with aging consist of having physical exercise, watching diet, strengthening family relationships, maintaining a social life, remaining in the workforce, enjoying life more, having facial treatments, being forgiving, being positive, being relaxed, and being considerate. The only concern about
aging F6 mentioned was “being rigid.” The persons who would play an important role in F6’s aging would be her husband, children, mother, relatives, friends, and physician.

**Interview with M1**

M1 was referred to me by one of the participants. M1 already received a copy of the invitation letter before I spoke with him over the telephone. The participant who referred M1 to me helped me arrange the meeting place, date, and time with M1. I met M1 at the entrance of a church complex. We entered into one of the buildings and M1 said that we could use one of the offices in the basement. As soon as we sat down, I asked M1 if he had any questions about the invitation letter and about this interviewing process. He said, “No…I don’t think I have any questions.” So we proceeded to examine the informed consent documents. I went through with M1 all of the necessary and important aspects pertaining to the interview. After we signed the informed consent forms, I requested M1 to complete the demographic information sheet. I then showed M1 the protocol questions and invited him to examine them. M1 took a quick look at the questions and told me they looked “okay” to him. I asked M1 if he was ready to begin. He said, “Yes. I’m ready.” Then I switched on the recorder and asked the first question.

**Lived dimensions.** Upon hearing the question, “What does aging mean for you?” M1 said, “This is something that I have to go through in life, that I never expected that it will come so soon, but it is inevitable. I think that’s all I have to say for this.” After a brief pause, M1 smiled and remarked, “Yes. These are the meanings.”

**Lived body.** When asked if there was anything he would do differently realizing that he was in the aging process, M1 stated: “My physical capacity…capability is decreasing.” When M1 talked about his ways of coping with aging, he stated: “Knowing
that my physical capability is decreasing, I am trying to maintain my health as much as I can by watching more closely on my diet, getting enough rest, getting regular exercise. These are the things I do physically.”

**Lived time.** M1’s temporal sensitivity was revealed in his response to one of the questions. The statements he made implied the temporality in his life world:

It makes me start to think about what I need to adjust in my life, for the next 20 or 30 years...what other things? Um...actually, it gets me to treasure the amount of time that I can spend with family, my friends, time that I can serve in the church, time that I can enjoy things that I want to do that are more valuable than before.

Further into the conversation, M1 talked about the way he approached the changes that relate to aging. He made another statement that indicated the dimension of his sense of temporality.

It [aging] is a slow process for me to realize that I am getting old. It’s a natural tendency to try to fight that process as much as I can, trying to maintain the lifestyle that I was used to for the last 20 or 30 years.

When I asked M1 about the things he would suggest people to do to cope with aging, M1’s temporal landscape surfaced in his response.

You need to do as much as you can now. Putting off things that need to be done today is not going to help. Time is the main issue. With each day you spend, you are taking that day off the rest of your lifespan.
Toward the latter part of our conversation, I asked M1 if he would like to add any other comments about his aging experiences. His remarks also conveyed his subjective temporality: “It took me a while to come to terms that actually I am getting old.”

**Lived space.** M1’s existential space was reflected in his account of his relationships with his wife, his mother, his children, his relatives, the older generation, and his friends. His spatial sensitivity was embodied in his interactions with these people. In addition, M1 talked about his engagement in his church when he said, “…it gets me to treasure the amount of time that I can serve in the church…” M1’s subjective space for his aging would continue to take place in the church and in the things he would do to help others. “I am focusing more on how I can utilize my existing conditions, physical and mental conditions so that I can help people that really need the help.” M1’s lifestyle also revealed his sense of space. “I think that’s pretty much what I have been utilizing to help me maintain my lifestyle.” Maintaining his lifestyle appears to be the space where M1 could embrace his sense of self. Furthermore, when he talked about the differences that exist between growing old in the United States and in Hong Kong, he said: “…I never thought about growing old in Hong Kong.” For M1, the United States is the space where he would experience his sense of self as he continues with this life journey.

**Lived relation.** In answer to two of my questions about aging, M1’s responses reflected the lived relation he had maintained with his loved ones. For instance, when asked to talk about people who seemed to have helped him deal with aging, he stated spontaneously: “That will be my wife…and knowing that we are going through this [aging] together, she definitely understands more about what I am going through.” When
M1 mentioned the way aging had affected his relationships with others, his account had consisted of his mother, wife, children, relatives, and friends.

Well, I think…um…first of all…relationship with my mother (my father passed away), the older generation, my friends and relatives. I get to understand more what they [older generation] actually had gone through in the aging process, understanding that they were losing their physical capability and mental capability. That [aging] helps me to appreciate more what they have done for my generation. And for my immediate family, especially my wife, I would say, it gets me to re-evaluate how we interact with each other and to value more the relationship that we have with each other…for my children, I would say um…that I don’t feel any difference five or 10 years ago as of today.

**Ecological factors.** From M1’s narrative, it is apparent that his relationships with persons in his microsystem had furnished him with the crucial support on his aging journey. M1 expressed that his wife was the person who has been helping him confront aging. “She [my wife] is being more patient with me. She also helps me to watch my diet.” In addition, M1 expressed that his own aging had inspired him to appreciate what his parents and other older relatives had done for him. “That [aging] helps me to appreciate more what they have done for my generation.” Therefore, M1’s wife, his parents, and the older generation constitute the protective factor for his aging.

**Psychosocial themes.** Summarizing M1’s experiential account of aging, the psychosocial themes that are active in his aging journey are intimacy, generativity, integrity, and identity. When asked to talk about people who had helped him deal with
aging, M1 highlighted his wife’s help. “That will be my wife…she definitely understands more about…” As M1 talked about the impact that aging has had on his relationships with his mother, wife, children, relatives, and friends. Relationship has a noticeable weight on M1’s aging process and he is enjoying the intimacy of his relational properties. He also spoke of the qualities he had developed as he had arrived at this life phase.

I am supposed to be wiser but I think I will look at it [aging] as I actually have more experience in life. And also my outlook in life is not the same. I am focusing more on how I can utilize my existing condition…so that I can help people that really need the help. Also, How I can enjoy the rest of my life.

From the perspective of the chronological age that corresponds to Erikson’s psychosocial stage of “old age,” M1 is too young to be classified as “old age.” M1’s narrative, however, suggested that he is navigating the psychosocial stages of generativity and integrity. For example, his indicated desire to use his personal resources to help others implied his making use of his generative capacities. Moreover, M1 stated that he is not stagnant or incapacitated. “I haven’t got to that point that they [children] need to consider taking care of us.” In regard to M1’s negotiation of his identity, one of the aspects he mentioned was, “…I am sensing that I am getting old but I guess I have not fully come to terms with this yet.” In addition, M1 said, “…I never expected that it [aging] will come so soon…” On another occasion, M1 articulated, “It also took me a while to come to terms that actually I am getting old.” All of these statements implied M1’s awareness of his aging process. M1 is in the course of becoming accustomed to a new status of life.
Continuity factors. When asked about the perceived differences between growing old in the United States and growing old in Hong Kong, M1 responded, “I think I can only say what are the things I see in the U.S. that’s actually uh…or that help people grow old.” This response seemed to display M1’s intention of growing old in the United States. Hence, this country resembles the external factor M1 embraces on his aging journey. Regarding the internal continuity factor, as stated previously, his relationships with his loved ones would serve as the source on which he would continue to rely as he proceeds with his aging journey. M1’s inner strengths would furnish him with additional internal forces.

…You need to know that it’s [aging is] coming, it’s inevitable, you can’t change it. The best approach is to know how to deal with it from a positive angle…that’s [aging is] the process that I need to get used to. So far I’m doing okay. I think I’m doing okay.

Aging in the United States. As the interview arrived at this stage, I shifted to the question concerning the difference M1 would perceive between growing old in the United States and Hong Kong. M1 paused for a while and said:

That’s an interesting question…I have been here for over [number] decades. I never thought about growing old in Hong Kong. I guess the accessibility to different facilities, such as healthcare services and social support…it’s probably easier to access these facilities here in the United States.

I tried to probe further by asking M1 to say more about his perceived differences. He responded, “I think I can only say what are the things I see in the U.S…I think these
are the only things.” I sensed that the interview had come to a point of saturation. I asked M1 if there were other perspectives he would like to add, and he said, “Um…no, I can’t think of anything.” Then I invited him to articulate his thoughts and feelings toward the interviewing process. He responded, “It helps me to move a step closer to realizing that actually I’m getting older, that I’m in the aging process. Yea. I mean…it gets me to think.” I asked M1 if he meant that he did not think much about aging previously. He said, “Not much. I know I’m getting older, like forgetting things…physically, I’m sensing that I am getting old, but I guess I have not fully come to terms with this yet.” M1’s nonverbal gesture seemed to imply that he had no other comments to make. I stopped the recording and thanked him. I informed him that in a few days I would email him the written draft of the interview. The entire meeting lasted approximately 55 minutes. Table 8 summarizes the themes that relate to M1’s experiential account of his aging.
Table 8: Themes Reflecting M1’s Account of His Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Memory decline</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Putting things off</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in mental health</td>
<td>Weakening of vision</td>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Watching my diet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to lifestyle issues</td>
<td>Staying mentally active: learning new things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a better understanding of the older generation</td>
<td>Using memory aids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The older generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing in wisdom</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at life from different perspectives</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brevity of life</td>
<td>Enjoying life more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A slow process</td>
<td>Being aware of aging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting older</td>
<td>Adjusting to the aging process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A process of life</td>
<td>Being positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contributing to society / do volunteer work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Three days after I met with M1, I emailed him the draft of the verbatim transcript. I invited him to help me verify the content and to deepen the responses he made. In a couple of days, he sent me the version with a few additional inputs.

**Summary of Interview with M1.** M1’s responses were succinct. Yet, the information he offered on his aging experiences was fairly unique. Implicit in his narrative was his being in the early part of his aging journey. For instance, he mentioned the devices that he uses to help him remember things, such as “getting reading glasses, getting myself a PDA [personal digital assistant], notebooks that I can jot down things I need to do…” M1 stated a couple of times that he was still trying to accept his aging process. The meanings of aging for M1 are a decline in physical health, a decline in mental health, having a better understanding of the older generation, growing in wisdom, a slow process, a process of life, looking at life from different perspectives, a sensitivity to health issues, a sensitivity to lifestyle issues, getting old, and brevity of life. There are 12 approaches M1 uses to cope with aging. These approaches include: (a) practicing preventive healthcare, (b) engaging in physical exercise, (c) watching his diet, (d) staying mentally active, (e) using memory aids, (f) strengthening family relationships, (g) maintaining a social life, (h) enjoying life more, (i) being aware of aging, (j) accepting aging, (k) being positive, and (l) adjusting to the aging process. Important persons for M1’s aging are his mother and the older generation, wife, children, relatives, and friends. The only concern M1 had when he becomes older would be “putting things off.”

**Interview with M2**

M2’s peer from his church referred M2 to me. Over the telephone, we discussed the appointment date and time, and M2 mentioned that he would look for an office space
for the interview. A day before our meeting, M2 telephoned to reconfirm the time and gave me the address of the office where the interview was going to take place. We met at a private office. After giving a brief introduction of myself, I asked M2 if he had read the invitation letter. He said that he had read the letter. Then, we went through the informed consent form and completed the signatures. Following that, I collected the relevant demographic data. Next, I showed M2 a copy of the protocol questions and requested him to study the questions. Then, I asked him if he needed any clarifications for the questions. M2 said that the questions seemed to be clear to him. As a formality, I mentioned to M2 that I would not mention his name during the recording, and I would be taking notes from time to time. He said, “Yea. That’s okay.” I started the interview.

**Lived dimensions.** I began with the usual question, “What does aging mean for you?” M2 gave a very detailed account of his meanings of aging. Initially, he said, “Actually, just these couple of years I’m starting to experience that I’m really getting old. Before, maybe five or six years ago, I never thought about this problem…”

**Lived body.** Concerning M2’s sense of corporality world, he said, “…This last year I started to feel my shoulder pain, leg pain. Physically, I am not the person I used to be…physically, I may not be able to do the same thing I could do before.” M2 went on to describe the somatic symptoms and signs that made him realize that he was in the aging process:

Like before I can play [badminton] everyday without any pain. But right now, every time I play, I need to rest for a couple of days before I can play again…I mentioned already, physically, previously…I like sports, I played badminton and I played a lot. But right now, it’s getting to the point that I
cannot play a lot…like last year I went on a vacation and didn’t play for three or four weeks. When I came back, I tried to play [badminton]. My shoulders hurt. Since that time, after getting one thing [pain] healed, another [physical] problem happened. Then I felt pain in my knees and ankles. It was nonstop. So I had to look for a Chinese massage therapist. They gave me a massage therapy. Once you get old, after playing [badminton] for one night, the next day, my muscles were tightened.

Before, I recovered quite fast, but now, the muscles tighten all the same. It never seems that my muscles could ever relax again…it’s tight all the time…since then, I know that I can’t play that much again because if I keep doing that, things will get worse.

In addition to articulating the deteriorating conditions of his physical health, M2 articulated another evidence of aging. His narrative also reflected his bodily experience:

Also, I need to use bifocal glasses. Before I could see very well but right now, when I read a book, I need to take off my glasses. Even with bifocal [glasses] I still need to take them off before I can read.

Another corporal sensitivity M2 talked about related to a change in his physical appearance, which informed him of his aging. He spoke of his perspective of this change:

Uh…to me, appearance is not that big a deal, you know…these few years my white hair is growing fast. So my wife said that I should dye my hair. She said, ‘You make me look old also’ [chuckled]…but for me…I don’t like to dye my hair. This [my gray hair] is natural. I think I can deal with this [gray hair]…
The next narrative M2 provided also implied his sense of corporality. The vignette revealed his perspectives toward the decline in his physical capacity. He offered another in-depth illustration:

I think the [physical] ability is more of my concern. Just for these past few years, I’m getting to the point that physically, I’m starting to feel uh…just three or four years ago, I thought I was in a pretty good shape. Before, I could stay up for the whole day without taking a nap. But right now, after maybe…during the day, if I have a lot of meetings, unless I drink coffee, otherwise I need to take naps [chuckled]. So I can see the differences now.

M2 repeatedly mentioned his awareness of the decline in his physical strength. He expressed that this negative change signified his aging. He described the somatic changes he felt:

When I tried to play badminton with some teenagers, maybe I can still win them. I know eventually they will beat me because they’re young and physically they are much better…Oh, I also go to gym and do weightlifting…maybe I got the [joint and back] pain from going to the gym. Also, I need to vacuum the floor. Now, I need to try to maybe…I cannot finish [vacuuming] the whole house all at one time. I will have back pain…

All of these experiences of the physical changes evidenced M2’s aging. These accounts conveyed M2’s corporal sensitivity as a result of aging.

*Lived time.* In M2’s response to the question of what aging means for him, some of the items he listed exemplified the notion of his sense of temporality. For instance, he
said, “When you have kids, your kids start getting old, you’ll know that you’re getting to that age…looking at your daughter, that they’re growing up, going to college, the older one also started dating, then you know you’re old.” Additionally, there were other dialogues in which M2 revealed his temporal way of being in the world. For example, when I asked him to talk more about accepting the reality of aging, he said:

I never needed to worry about it [aging]. I never needed to. [I thought] I had so much time, you know, that I could spend on this [accepting the reality of aging]. But right now I seem to have limited time…when I was young, I thought the future was some distance away and I still had a long way to go. But right now, I may not have that long time. I don’t know how much time I have left. Before, I never thought about how many years of life I have. Right now…

Aging had inspired M2 to be sensitive about the brevity of life. Implicit in his account was the meaning of time that comes with his aging. In addition, M2 talked about the changes he perceived in the way he approached his responsibilities at work. His narrative also reflected his sense of time.

Before, I would spend a lot of time [solving problems] and doing all that sort of thing. But right now it seems…I spent so much time just to [solve] one problem. A lot of times I tried to push myself. I [thought] I have that much of experiences, so I am supposed to be efficient and finish [solving a problem] within a short period of time. Before, it seemed that the feeling was different. I spent a long time, trying to…before I could get very focused for a long period of time. I could stay up maybe for a whole week,
just maybe sleeping for a couple of hours every night, trying to solve the problem, trying to uh…meet the deadline. But right now, I cannot do the same anymore. I can only maybe stay focused for a [short] period of time. Then, I get very tired. I cannot think and I cannot…so…that means I have to use my time better. So this is…sometimes it takes a long time…before I had the confidence that I could always meet the deadline…I cannot continue to try meeting deadlines, working day and night. I can’t do that anymore.

M2’s sensitivity to time had changed as a result of his awareness of the changes he noticed about his physical capabilities. Toward the latter part of this interview, I asked M2 if he had more insights to share, he gave account of his experience with older persons. He expressed that as we were discussing the topic of aging, he seemed to be getting a different perspective of the attitude of older persons. His temporal landscape also was reflected in this account.

They [older people] always want to finish it [chores] fast, and we always kind of wonder why, thinking, ‘Oh, you have that much time, or you’re retired. Why you need to rush?’ So when I was young, I didn’t know why people were like that. Like when I dealt with my parents, seemed like whenever they wanted something, they wanted to do that right away, and in a rush, and they didn’t want to wait. We always said, ‘You’re retired. There’s no need for you to rush. Just relax.’ But now I can maybe feel that. I think maybe it’s because you don’t know, you think they have a lot of times, but for them, they think that their time is very limited. So maybe
because of that, they had the tendency to rush...previously, you thought
you had a long way to go, but now you don’t seem to have much time, and
you only have a short period of time. So you just try to accomplish things.
You want to save some time to do other things. So you try to rush to finish
that so that you have time to do other things…

As M2 was recollecting the older generation’s outlook of the time factor, he
realized that older persons tend to rush things. Now that M2 is in the course of aging, he
seems to be able to sense the life world of elderly people. He also began to pay attention
to his own temporal sensitivity.

Lived space. Based on the information M2 offered, his sense of space was
reflected in his narrative of his home, workplace, gym, and church. The space where he
would find himself “at home” was reflected in the account he gave about his parents,
wife, and children. M2’s spatial sensitivity seemed to relate to his feelings toward his
parents, as he stated that he was still trying to process his feelings toward the passing of
his parents. M2 also mentioned that he has developed better understanding for older
people, such as his wife’s parents.

So when I looked at the way my wife dealt with her parents, most of the
time they are like that [trying to rush things]. At that time we didn’t
understand, but now I start to get a feel of that.

In addition, M2 talked about his wife’s journeying with him on his aging
journey, which had rendered a sense of support. M2 mentioned that his children
liked to tease him and his wife about their aging. His nonverbal gesture displayed
a sense of joy when he talked about this experience. Implicit in this account was
the intimate space that caused him to feel “at home.” “Also, sometimes my little kids try to tease my wife and me…that we’re getting old.”

Another aspect that related to M2’s spatial property was reflected in his gatherings with friends. “…Maybe some friends…sometimes we go out…Because my friends are also in the same age range, when we hang out, we talk, we joke with one another…that will help too.” The camaraderie that M2 had enjoyed as he visited with his peers revealed M2’s relational space. In addition, M2’s workplace provides another sense of space that is important to him in his aging process.

I always tried to take the difficult task because I knew I could do that, but now I tend to be less ambitious…so now, we have some younger people in the office and we can dedicate. We can just maybe let them know how to do those tasks and let them do them…

Beyond the account of his interactions with his wife and children in the domestic sphere, M2’s detailed descriptions of his work were implications of his spatial sensitivity. Furthermore, M2’s illustrations of his needs to work out and play badminton at places like the gym and the badminton court revealed another space where he experienced a sense of self: “I think exercising also helps. Like playing badminton…I think it’s good to do some exercises.” Another spatial experience in M2’s lifestyle takes place in his church where he meets with his peers.

Also at church we have [our own circle] and we can also share [things like aging]. Like last week, we had a trip to [city]. All belong to the same age group. Just hang out, just talk, and try to do something together and relax.
**Lived relation.** The lived relations in M2’s life world were revealed in the statements he made about his interactions with his wife, children, parents, parents-in-law, friends, colleagues, and people at church. For instance, there were several occasions where M2 mentioned his wife. He stated: “some people such as my wife will not like” people labeling M2 as an older man. M2 added: “My wife has the same [need of dealing with aging]” and “my wife likes to look into the mirror…” When M2 talked about his gray hair, he talked about his wife again. “My wife said that I should dye my hair.”

Another relational sensitivity M2 had experienced was reflected in his accounts of his children. M2 saw that the growing up of his daughters are reminders of his own aging. “When you have kids, your kids start getting old, you’ll know that you’re getting to that age.” Another remark M2 made resonated with this one: “Looking at your daughters…that they’re growing up, going to college…the older one also started dating.” At the same time, M2 saw that the nature of his relationship with his oldest daughter has changed. “So maybe it’s getting to the point that we’re more like friends.”

Regarding M2’s sense of relation with friends, M2 reported that he and his friends grew up together. “Because my friends are also in the same age range…all my friends are my age. We grew up together. We kind of know each other.” In addition to his relations with his wife, daughters, and friends, M2’s sense of relation also is lived by means of his interactions with his colleagues. Throughout the conversation, M2 spoke of his colleagues a number of times.

When I look at my colleagues, they just graduated. The oldest one is maybe 30 or 40 [years of age]…I can see some of my colleagues, even
though they’re older than me, they try very hard to…to do that [work long hours].

In another account, M2 articulated his relationship between his older colleagues and himself. These colleagues seem to have an impact on his perspectives about chronological age and workplace. For instance, when M2 talked about the work environment he experienced in the United States, he stated, “I can see my colleagues who are in their 60s. They are still working…” Regarding M2’s sense of relation with people from his church, M2 mentioned: “At church, we have fellowship and we can also share [our aging concerns].” Another relational sensitivity M2 underscored was reflected in his articulation of his parents. M2’s memories of his late parents seem to play a crucial role in his own aging journey.

It is probably because when both my parents passed away, they suffered a lot through their illness and I was there with them [when they were] going through their sufferings. Those were all sad memories and still stuck in my mind. Those memories and feelings might still affect me these days when I’m going through my own aging process.

**Ecological factors.** Based on M2’s account of his relationships with his late parents, his wife’s parents, his wife, his daughters, his colleagues, friends, and his fellow church mates, M2’s aging process seems to be influenced substantially by the persons in his microsystem. In addition to the previous dialogues about M2’s relations with his late parents, M2’s interactions with his wife’s parents also helped him develop the means that protects him as he ages.

Also, from both our parents and my parents-in-law, I found that they
tended to not asking for helps or bothered their children. That also seems
to be the case for some senior people in my church. I'm not sure it is
because of pride or just don't want to ask for favors. Or they really still
think they could handle matters themselves like the old days. Like I
mentioned before, I think if we can understand our limit, then that will
make ourselves and the people around us better. Otherwise, this will lead
to frustrations…

In addition to developing this awareness, M2 realized that older persons have the
tendency to rush things. This realization also had enabled M2 to develop a protective
factor. M2 would not want to rush things lest he would become ill tempered.

But for them, they think that their time is very limited. So maybe because
of that, they had the tendency to rush, and especially, sometimes they had
bad temper because they tried to push people to get things done as soon as
possible.

Another ecological factor stems from M2’s macrosystem, which forms the value
with which he grew up when he was in Hong Kong. “During my days, people also taught
us to respect the elders. You have to uh…just respect them…” As M2 is going through
his aging process, he seems to be mindful of the way people treat older persons in
contemporary society. “But I think overall, I think…in my office, in my neighborhood,
seems like we don’t have age discrimination…” Regarding the mesosystem, M2’s
account of his interactions with his younger daughter reflects some ecological factors
which operated in his aging journey. “…My younger one gets both my wife and me
crazy. I don’t know if it’s because we’re old…when I look at kids’ TV programs, seems
like they don’t teach that [respect for elderly people] here.” Based on M2’s narrative, he had been wondering about the happenings in his younger daughter’s life world that might have affected her behavior. M2 said that he did not know if it was because of his own aging or because of other reasons that he is “so upset with my younger one.”

**Psychosocial themes.** According to M2’s account of his aging process, from the perspective of the psychosocial themes, he is currently negotiating the properties of intimacy, generativity, and identity. M2 was experiencing the affections that relate to his relationships with his wife, children, the older generation, friends, colleagues, and church mates. The rich account M2 gave about his interactions with these persons exposed his intimate associations. M2’s generative property was reflected in his narrative of the weakening of his physical strengths. He talked about feeling aches and pains after doing strenuous exercise. He also mentioned that he could no longer work long hours and that he needed to take breaks when he vacuumed his house.

So, sometimes, that may affect us, because we may think that I cannot do a lot of things anymore…So, in some sense, I’m not that good [capable] anymore. Sometimes I can feel that. I feel that I’m not that good [capable] anymore. I used to be able to do this [difficult problem-solving task] but now I cannot. But that’s the reality.

Moreover, M2 stated, “I always thought that maybe this is just a process, or this may be the hormone or maybe after I reach a certain age, this feeling will be settled, and things will be better…” Adding to his account of his feeling toward his aging, M2 mentioned his ability to offer something to society. He seemed to be aware of his generative capacity:
We have our experience, we have our ideas...we still can contribute a lot...just try not to think like that [that I cannot do many things], you know. That should help. I know it’s not that easy. Right now it’s okay. Maybe when I grow older, I’ll face other difficulties...so far these are the things I think will help.

Regarding M2’s negotiation of the polarity of identity and identity diffusion, in a way, it did not affect him when people labeled him as an older man. When he reflected on his becoming an older person, however, he realized that he still needed to process his aging. He said, “But for me, it’s okay because I’m really getting to that age. It’s a fact. But sometimes it’s kind of uh...it’s hard to go through this process.” Moreover, he appeared to be comfortable in the changes in his physical appearance such as his gray. He stated, “Appearance to me is not a big deal...I seldom look into the mirror...” Regarding the negative changes to his ability, M2 expressed that he was more concern about these changes. “It’s the ability that is uh...I have more concern...that’s my concern.” While M2 was talking about his concern, he also mentioned that he was aware of the importance of accepting the reality of his aging. M2’s desire to work on accepting the realities that come with aging would enable him to resolve any confusion he might have toward his identity.

Continuity factors. Some discontinuities in M2’s life pattern occurred since he began to realize that aging had seeped into his life. He stated that when he came to the United States, he was always the youngest one among his church members and colleagues. However, this phenomenon is no more happening since he had begun aging. He highlighted his awareness of this discontinuity.
When I immigrated to the U.S., at that time, I was [age] or [age]...I’m always the youngest one in my [social] circle and at the church I went to previously. I’m always the youngest one. Also in my office, I was the youngest...never thought about that I’m now the older one. Right now at work, when I look around, when I look at my colleagues, they just graduated; the oldest one is...so the feeling is not good. But this is the fact.

These statements exemplified the changed reality, the discontinuity of “being the youngest one” in M2’s life world. M2’s account of his relations with his loved ones, colleagues, and friends are the internal factors that support him to confront this discontinuity.

Maybe we all have kids, and we were all busy when we were young...now maybe we can chat a lot more. We can go out, and we have time to spend with each other...sometimes when you have company, you can talk, and that will help too.

In addition, M2 also had entered the adaptive process in terms of the role he plays in his relation with his older daughter. This change in his role revealed another discontinuity that related to the process of his growing old and the process of his daughter growing up.

Like my older one...I need to...maybe give her more responsibilities, try not to control her, you know. Just give her the opinion and let her uh...because she also needs to...so she needs to think about what she
needs to do…I’m not trying to uh…force her do things just because I have more experiences in life.

M2 did not mention the external continuity factors in his aging journey. He has been in the United States for a lengthy time. His lived spaces of home, workplace, gym, and church are likely to form the external factor that supports his growth as he ages.

**Aging in the United States.** I asked M2 about the difference it would make to grow old in the United States rather than in Hong Kong. The aspect that surfaced in his response was people’s perspectives and attitudes toward older persons.

From what I got from the news, seems like in Hong Kong, age discrimination is worse than here. Once you get to 30, people think that you are old. But here, seems that…I think it’s better here. At least we’re not being discriminated that bad…when she [younger daughter] watches TV, seems like [those programs] don’t have respect for older people. I don’t know whether it’s the same in Hong Kong…but here [United States], it seems that it’s pretty good…they [colleagues in their 60s] are still working, and if they are productive, people treat them well…

As the interviewing process arrived at this point, I noticed that M2’s sharing was abundant, and we covered many important areas of his aging account. I asked him if he would like to add anything to his experiential account of aging. He shared the reflection he had on his observations of older people’s tendency to try to rush people to do things. Specifically, M2 was referring to his parents, his wife’s parents, and some older persons he met in his church. Then, I asked M2 if he would like to add something that we had not
discussed. He said, “Right now, I think that’s about it.” Next, I invited M2 to talk about his experience of the interview. He said:

That’s pretty good, especially now that I’m getting to that [aging] stage, I start thinking about that, and actually I’m going through that. So that really helps. So I’m anxious to see your study. Once you’ve finished with that, maybe I can get some insights. Because this is something new to me…and this is something not many people like to talk about…a lot of my friends don’t want to face that. They’ll say that they’re okay, and they’re just not talking about that. So I think this [interview about aging] is good…if we have some insights, we know what would help. So we won’t waste five or six years to learn to have a better life. I’ll then know how to have a better relationship with my kids, my friends, or maybe I don’t need to be so frustrated or something like that…Chinese, a lot of times, they just don’t want to talk about it. They don’t want to think about it…

M2 made a gesture to signify that he had nothing more to add. I turned off the recorder and thanked him for his in-depth responses. This meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes. In Table 9, I summarize the themes that relate to M2’s experiential account of aging.
A few days after the interview, I emailed M2 the draft of the verbatim report of the interview, and asked him to help me verify the contents. I also invited him to make comments or provide further insights. He replied in a few days. He made a few comments and added some information which he perceived to be important.

**Summary of Interview with M2.** M2 provided a wealth of information pertinent to his lived experiences of aging. The meanings of aging M2 provided reflect his initial stages of aging. He expressed that he already had begun his aging journey. “I’m getting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Aches and pain</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Always rushing people to do things</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Weakening of vision</td>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td>Not being aware of my own limitations</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to retirement issues</td>
<td>Lower energy level</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td>Not accept my own limitations</td>
<td>Parents and in-laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more time for myself</td>
<td>Gray hair</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a better understanding of the older generation</td>
<td>Change in personality attribute: become irritated</td>
<td>Accepting aging</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brevity of life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning to tone down in lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>People from church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling over the hill</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reminding myself of my usefulness</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A few days after the interview, I emailed M2 the draft of the verbatim report of the interview, and asked him to help me verify the contents. I also invited him to make comments or provide further insights. He replied in a few days. He made a few comments and added some information which he perceived to be important.

**Summary of Interview with M2.** M2 provided a wealth of information pertinent to his lived experiences of aging. The meanings of aging M2 provided reflect his initial stages of aging. He expressed that he already had begun his aging journey. “I’m getting
to that stage, I start thinking about that, and actually I'm going through that.” His meanings of aging are: (a) a decline in physical health, (b) having more time for himself, (c) having more understanding for the older generation, (d) brevity of life, feeling over the hill, (e) a sensitivity to health issues, and (f) a sensitivity to retirement issues. Another indicator of M2 being in the initial aging stage was the account of his need of reading glasses. Other aging symptoms M2 noticed consisted of aches and pain, gray hair, change in personality attribute such as becoming irritated easily, and lower energy level.

Regarding the approaches of coping with aging, M2 mentioned that he would pay attention to his health, exercise more, strengthen family relationships, maintain a social life, accept aging, remind himself of his usefulness, and learn to tone down his lifestyle. M2 seems to have keen interest in talking about aging, learning about ways to cope with aging, and accepting aging. In the latter part of our conversation, he emphasized the advantages of talking about aging. He articulated, “It’s good…uh…what would be a better way to deal with it [aging]? What would be a better way to process it [aging] so that you can learn to deal with it [aging] in a better way?”

There were a number of persons that M2 mentioned would play a role in his aging journey. These persons consisted of his wife, his children, his late parents, his wife’s parents, some elderly persons, his friends, his colleagues, and people from his church. For M2, his concerns about aging are rushing people to do things, not being aware of his own limitations, and not accepting his own limitations.

**Interview with M3**

One of the active members of a particular church referred M3 to me. I telephoned M3 to secure a time to meet for the interview. Over the telephone, I asked if M3 had
received and read the invitation letter. He said that he received the letter and he would read it before our meeting. We met at a private office; a setting M3 thought would be suitable for the interview. After settling into his chair, M3 told me that he had read the letter. He also mentioned that he was ready for the interview. I went through the informed consent procedure with M3 and we signed the form. Subsequent to gathering some demographic information from M3, I gave him a copy of the protocol questions and requested that he go over them. After a short while, I asked M3 if there was anything about the protocol questions that he wanted to clarify. He said, “No. I think it’s fine. I don’t have any questions.” Upon hearing that, I gestured to him that I would switch on the recorder and begin the interview.

**Lived dimensions.** I asked M3 to talk about his meanings of aging. His immediate response was, “Aging means getting old, getting sick…um…you may have a lot of restrictions. What else? Getting some gray hair…um [paused]. Just become a different person.” After a while, M3 added, “Aging is like a process. It’s a long process…aging is unavoidable. I don’t think about aging everyday but aging will tell you that you’re getting old…I’m not afraid of aging because it’s a natural process. Nobody can avoid that.”

**Lived body.** According to M3, the physical changes he noticed about his own aging process include both his physical capacity and his physical appearance. These aging experiences reveal M3’s somatic dimensions in his life world.

Physically, it seems to be different from when you were young...my joints ache sometimes when I wake up…um…I need less sleep and much less, and I eat less and I eat more frequently. And I don’t do much strenuous
exercises, exercises that need a lot of strengths. I just take a lot of ...
walk….not that active. And one thing I remember is, I liked to drink cold
water before, but now I like to drink hot water a lot, instead of cold
water…and joint pain, back pain…I need to put on thicker clothes even
though it’s hot, especially in the morning and at nighttime too…and…my
mobility is limited. I mean I have a lot of back pain, joint pain, and I easily
get injured…my vision is getting worse…I cannot see clearly. I mean I
have to wear reading glasses to read books, watch TV...not
TV…um…computer. Yea…I need special glasses, just like now I’m
reading. At night I cannot work…oh…I get sick easily…and I find my
skin gets dry and even cracks.

In addition to the physical changes, M3 also talked about the mental changes he
noticed he has been experiencing. “…Seems that you forget things…uh…short memory.
So most of the time I write down things on a piece of paper. I know I may forget.”

**Lived space.** The spatial components M3 embraced reflected the lived dimensions
that seemed to offer him a sense of comfort. He said, “I try to stick with indoor instead of
outdoor activities.” Indoor is the space where M3 felt comfortable in engaging in
activities. Another sense of space M3 mentioned related to the weakening of his vision:
“Also about driving, it’s hard for me to drive at nighttime because of my poor vision. At
nighttime it’s hard to locate the destination and find my way home or to other
destinations…” Driving in the dark would not offer the sense of space for M3. Another
spatial property related to the church. M3 stated that when he was at his church, he was
living in the space of being an older person. “Friends in the church are younger.” M3’s
stated situation at work resonated with that at the church. “My coworker, she calls me ‘Papa’ because I’m older.” When M3 talked about the issue of retirement, he articulated the importance of work, which can offer him a sense of usefulness:

Probably, it doesn’t matter if you’re getting older or you become what…you can still continue to work. So, by staying in the workplace for a longer period of time, it makes you think that you’re more useful and functioning…

For M3, the work environment seemed to be one of his preferred spaces at present and in the future because this environment offers M3 a sense of self. In terms of the physical space for M3’s aging process, based on his narrative, his aging process would be the same wherever he goes.

I mean physically probably will be the same. You’ll grow old anywhere…it’s the same. Your body will get older wherever you are…should be the same. [In the United States] you have more physical space to exercise, more space to yourself…

M3’s account revealed that the external space does not matter much to him in regard to his aging. It would be fine for him to grow old in the United States or in Hong Kong. Psychologically, however, the space that would offer M3 a home is Hong Kong.

When you grow old in the U.S., for me, I always think about Hong Kong. But I think if I’m growing old in Hong Kong, I don’t think about the U.S. So, it seems that Hong Kong is still your home because you grew up there.

You just get old here in the U.S.
Because M3 grew up in Hong Kong, even though he is growing old in the United States, Hong Kong will always occupy an important space in his heart. “Aging will bring back a lot of memories about my family…they’re in Hong Kong.” These were the statements that revealed M3’s spatial sensitivity.

**Lived time.** M3’s temporal landscape was reflected in various statements he made when asked about things he had been doing differently as a result of aging. For instance, he said, “I take longer time to take showers. Usually I take more time to shower as compared with when I was young.” Another felt experience of temporality was revealed in M3’s statements about driving. “Also, about driving, it’s hard for me to drive at nighttime because of my poor vision…and no long driving trips. Driving more than two hours will be very difficult [for me].” M3’s reliance on his wife’s help also had revealed his sense of time. “…So my wife is the one who takes care of me most of the time…she’s my navigator…” Furthermore, M3 expressed that previously he did not pay attention to the timeline of his age. As he is becoming older, his temporal sensitivity has grown. “I never thought about my age. Now I think about my aging and know that I’m getting older.” He went on to say more:

Aging doesn’t mean that you’re going to die soon. You may live longer. You may live until like 75 or 85. That’s a long way to go…it’s a long process…the retirement age in the U.S. is supposed to be 65 or 70. That’s a long way to go. Aging starts now but it takes a long way…

Furthermore, M3 revealed his sense of temporality with respect to retirement. He used to relate retirement to the marker of old age. “So previously, my point of view was,
when you’re getting old, it’s better to retire from work. But my point of view has changed now.”

**Lived relation.** The relational sensitivity M3 holds was unfolded in his statements about his wife, his children, his friends, his coworkers, and friends in his church. For instance, M3 talked about the interpersonal space that he and his wife share in regard to the aging process.

My wife is the one who takes care of me most of the time. Of course, she has the same problem [in experiencing changes relating to aging]. So we just help each other. We try to remind each other [things] because we both have shorter memories.

In another account, M3’s sense of relation with his family was revealed. When he talked about his future plans, his wife and children were persons he mentioned.

So [I] try to find out…when you get old, where you are going to stay…stay with your kids…one thing, if you’re really getting old and sick…so when you’re really getting sick and your wife and kids are not around, no family members around….

When M3 articulated his perceived differences between growing old in the United States and growing old in Hong Kong, his narrative reflected his relational sensitivity. He said, “Here [in the United States], young people, the children, the grandchildren, they probably live in another place far away from you.” For M3, his sense of relation is consistent with the Chinese tradition of filial piety. People following this tradition often live with their children and grandchildren under the same roof. In addition, M3 talked about his relational experiences at his church. “…And for me I go to church. So I meet a
lot of friends over there.” The church is another space where M3 embraces his relationships with people while he grows old in the United States. Furthermore, aging leads M3 to reminisce about his relations with family. “Aging will bring back a lot of memories about my family.”

**Ecological factors.** M3’s narrative showed that he seems to have identified the means that supports his aging in his microsystem. In addition to what was reported previously about the way M3’s wife had been assisting him and experiencing the aging journey with him, M3 said: “My wife has better eyesight, so I ask her to read signs, posters, and small prints for me.” This statement evidenced another protective means M3 embraces. Another account also revealed M3’s identification of his protector factor. For instance, he stated, “I let my coworkers help me, younger coworkers…those coworkers who are muscular, younger…” Implicit in these two statements are M3’s awareness of his acceptance of the decline in his physiological capacities. Therefore, in both the domestic and work spheres, M3 sought help from people in his immediate ecological system.

When M3 articulated his thoughts about growing old in Hong Kong, he talked about the proximity of his family and friends that could form the protective factor for his aging journey. Nevertheless, the ecological factor that stems from the later retirement age, the spacious environment, and the social security and programs that protect older persons are the supportive systems for M3 to grow old in the United States. M3’s relationships with his wife, colleagues, and friends will be the proximal protective systems that accompany his aging journey.

**Psychosocial themes.** The psychosocial themes that are characteristic of M3’s current life phase in accordance with his aging process are intimacy, generativity,
autonomy, and identity. Regarding the psychosocial theme of intimacy, M3’s account of his wife being his support and his companion on his aging journey implied that various his wife is very much a part of his aging journey. He also spoke much of his friends and coworkers. Concerning generativity, M3’s account of people asking him for advice reflected his sense of accomplishment. “They will ask you for your advice and suggestions on some occasions, on some issues…” M3 did not provide explicit details of his accomplishments, however, he frequently talked about his activities at work, and he emphasized his desire to remain in the workforce. These statements signify that M3 currently is at the generative stage. In regard to the property of integrity, although M3 has not yet reached “old age,” some of the vignettes he gave about aging suggested his enjoyment of the psychosocial theme of integrity that associates with old age. “Since I’m older, I’m more capable of helping others…in my social circle, since you’re the older one…I’m supposed to be the one being honored and respected. That means I have more power to influence younger people.” Underlying M3’s statement is his contentment in becoming an older person. In regard to the theme of autonomy, when M3 mentioned growing old in the United States versus Hong Kong, his account implied his sensitivity to the notion of autonomy. “Here in the U.S., most of the time you have to drive…so if you cannot drive, that means you don’t go anywhere…” Concerning M3’s identity of becoming an older person, his narratives relate to the physiological changes he had experienced, such as the dry skin condition, the weakening of vision, and the declining in energy level revealed his process of negotiating his aging identity.

**Continuity factors.** M3 already mentioned that, “I grow old in the U.S. now.” His external continuity is his reminiscence of Hong Kong. “When you grow old in the
U.S., for me, I always think about Hong Kong...so Hong Kong is considered home for me, especially when you have children or grandchildren...I mean your family is not with you.” M3’s memories of his family are his adaptive factors of aging because he stated that aging leads him to reminisce about the times when he was with his family in Hong Kong. Another continuity factor is M3’s internal strength of acceptance of aging, as he seems to be at ease in seeking help from others. His openness to new things and diverse ways of living also form his internal adaptive means. For instance, he mentioned that there is no harm in trying new things and engaging in something he has not tried before.

“So I think it’s better to prepare for that [aging]…find a way to adjust yourself. Find cultural activities, interests…no harm to try because you’re aging…open yourself up to more social circles…” M3 went on to talk about possible plans for aging, such as transitioning to nursing homes and preparing for an advance directive. His openness to options for his later years of life was reflected in his verbalized plans.

Aging in the United States. M3’s narrative conveyed a sense that it would not make much difference to him whether he grows old in the United States or in Hong Kong. “You’ll grow old anywhere. It’s the same.” He listed some of his perceived differences between living in Hong Kong and the United States as an aging person. The first difference is the convenience of the public transportation system in Hong Kong.

Here in the U.S., most of the time you have to drive. In Hong Kong, most of the time you use public transportation. So [living in the United States] if you cannot drive, that means you don’t go anywhere. You just stay in your house, stay with your friends. You don’t go far. But in Hong Kong, you can go anywhere you want.
Another factor M3 related about the differences between growing old in Hong Kong and the United States was the value of Confucian’s filial piety. “Here [in the United States], young people don’t live with old people.” M3 went on to describe other perceived cultural differences. “Here [in the United States], most Chinese people may not have many American friends. In Hong Kong, you only have Chinese friends. You speak the same language.” The next difference relates to M3’s thoughts about Hong Kong while he grows old in the United States. “When you grow old in the U.S., for me, I always think about Hong Kong. But I think if I’m growing old in HK, I don’t think about the U.S.” He has strong feelings for Hong Kong because that was his native place, the place where he spent his childhood and a part of his adulthood.

The other differences M3 talked about was the physical space people can enjoy if they grow old in the United States. “You have more physical space to exercise, more space to yourself.” In addition, M3 highlighted the social and medical benefits. “Here in the United States, I know we have social security and some programs for old people. So it seems that…I know there are insurance and welfare benefits for people in the U.S.” M3 also mentioned the seemingly longer work life in the United States. “But here you can retire whenever you want. So when you see people working here, they can be quite old…70 or 80, they may still be working.”

When M3 finished with his responses to my question about differences between aging in the United States and Hong Kong, I asked him if he had anything to add. He stated some meanings of aging, such as “aging will bring back a lot of memories about my family…they’re in Hong Kong. And also you’ve lost some friends already, either here or in Hong Kong.” Following that, M3 offered some advice on coping with aging.
So just have to deal with it, just try to be healthy. I mean physically, psychologically, and spiritually. And try to plan for aging like try to be more active even though you still have joint aches, back pain. Try to be healthy and stay active. Try to do things you couldn’t do when you were young.

When M3 finished with his advice, I reckoned that the information I gathered had reached saturation. I asked M3, “Is there anything you would like to talk about that we have not yet covered?” He told me he had nothing to add, and in a delightful manner, he asked me if I had other questions for him. So the last question I asked was: “What was this experience like for you, the experience of being asked about the subject of aging?” M3 responded:

Oh…this tells me that I’m getting old. Otherwise, I’m not included in this interview [smiled]. And I never thought about any questions about aging. So it [this interview] reminds me one more time, even though I have been thinking or preparing for aging, I never thought about so many questions, and I do think about retirement and aging…and also if you can work, you can still have…like a real person because if you’re still working, you are functioning. Because seems that you lose some kind of dignity or respect [if you’re not working]. But if you’re still working, you seem to retain the same level of dignity or respect. But if you’re still working, you seem to retain the same level of intellectual ability. So you still receive the same level of respect and you maintain the same level of dignity…so keep working!
When M3 finished with that account, he indicated that he had nothing more to add. So I stopped the recording and thanked him again for his insights and sharing. I informed M3 that in a few days, I would send him the transcription via email. I requested his help to check the content, as well as add, delete, or change the input he gave in accordance with his desire. Then, M3 asked me about my study and the program in which I am enrolled. We talked about some of the counseling needs of elderly people in Hong Kong and in the United States. I took note of the time of our conversation, which was approximately 75 minutes. The following table displays the themes that relate to M3’s aging experiences:
Table 10: Themes Reflecting M3’s Account of His Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Aches and pain</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Not accepting my own limitations</td>
<td>Spouse: wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in mental health</td>
<td>Weakening of vision</td>
<td>Watching my diet</td>
<td>Leaving problems for the next generation</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Memory decline</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td>Leaving the workforce</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to retirement issues</td>
<td>A weaker immune system</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td>Driving at night</td>
<td>People from church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to financial issues</td>
<td>Gray hair</td>
<td>Using memory aids</td>
<td>Driving long distance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being respected by younger people</td>
<td>A change in skin texture</td>
<td>Remaining in the workforce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing conversational topics with friends</td>
<td>High cholesterol</td>
<td>Being financially prepared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting older</td>
<td>Decreased need of sleep</td>
<td>Developing hobbies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A process of life</td>
<td>Change in personality attributes: become mellow</td>
<td>Accepting aging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adjust to the aging process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staying active / keeping busy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doing things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contributing to society / doing volunteer work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two days after the interview, I emailed the transcribed interview to M3 for verification. He emailed me back the following day and told me that the verbatim transcript looked good to him and he had nothing to add.

**Summary of Interview with M3.** M3 provided rich information and insights about his aging experiences and his thoughts about the means of coping with aging. M3’s account of his meanings of aging were comprised of a decline in physical health, a decline in mental health, getting older, changing conversational topics with friends, being respected by younger people, a sensitivity to financial issues, a process of life, a sensitivity to retirement issues, a sensitivity to health issues, and a long process. In regard to signs of aging, M3 reported having a weaker immune system, weakening of vision and memory, having aches and pains, decreased need of sleep, change of personality attributes such as becoming mellow, high cholesterol, a change in skin texture, and gray hair. M3’s ways of coping with aging were consistent with his meanings of aging. His approaches to coping with aging are abundant. These approaches include: (a) practicing preventive healthcare, (b) doing physical exercise, (c) watching his diet, (d) strengthening family relationships, (e) maintaining a social life, (f) using devices to aid memory, (g) remaining in the workforce, (h) accepting aging, (j) adjusting to the aging process, (k) being financially prepared, (l) staying active, (m) developing hobbies and interests, (n) doing volunteer work, and (o) doing new things. In regard to persons who are important to M3’s aging journey, he mentioned his wife, his children, his mother, his friends, his coworkers, and people at church. Based on the various statements M3 gave regarding his future aging path, he seemed to have thought about his plans for retirement, transition to nursing homes, dying, and even death. For instance, twice he talked about his thoughts
about retirement. “Don’t stop working or retire so early.” In his consideration of moving
to a nursing home, he shared:

If you think you’re going to nursing home, then you better be prepared. I
mean financially, you need to prepare. You have to look for…which
nursing home is a better one…and how you spend your life in the nursing
home…

Regarding M3’s ideas about end-of-life situations, he stated, “If you’re
getting old and sick, try to get an advance directive…do you want to have life
support if you’re really getting old…” For after-death arrangements, he talked
about two issues:

You have to prepare for a will, if you have money…if you have no money,
that’s okay. Just pay off your credit card bill…somebody told me you
should buy a piece of land for yourself. One day you’ll be buried over
there…

Interview with M4

I recruited M4 through the snowball sampling method. M4’s wife, also one of the
participants, told me that she mentioned my study to M4 and she gave him a copy of my
invitation letter. Additionally, she gave M4’s telephone number to me, and I contacted
M4 to set up the time for the interview. We met at an office in his church. Soon after M4
sat down, I went through the informed consent procedure with him. I made sure that he
had read the invitation letter and was aware of the relevant details of this study. Then, I
processed the informed consent form with him, delineating the important items such as
confidentiality, risks, compensation, etc. We both signed the forms and I gave M4 a copy
of the forms. I then collected the relevant demographic information from him. Next, I showed him a copy of the protocol questions and asked him to study the questions, to see if there were anything he needed clarification. After spending some brief moments reading the questions, he told me that he was ready for the interview. As with other informants, I mentioned to M4 that during the interview, I would not say his name and from time to time I would take notes. He gestured to me that everything seemed fine to him. So I started the recording.

**Lived dimensions.** The first question I asked was, “Can you tell me something about your meaning of aging?” M4 described some of the aging signs he had experienced.

**Lived body.** M4’s spontaneous and detailed account revealed his corporal sensitivity. “I think for me…your physical and mental capacities are deteriorating, as compared with when you were young…you will be aware that sometimes your strength is going down…take more time for rest.” M4 went on to provide an elaborate illustration of the weakening of his physical health.

For me, maybe it looks like your skin texture or your joints are a little bit different. You feel pain in your joints sometimes. Physically, before, you could walk faster, run faster. Right now, your feet cannot bear with long distance and you need to take a rest. Something like that…I think the only big problem for me right now is my feet. Right now, my feet are…before I didn’t have a problem walking long distance. Right now I have some problems…when I drive at night, I have some problems, especially, I cannot stay driving a long distance like when I was still young…
M4’s account of his meaning of aging was characterized by the physical changes he felt recently, which seemed to be a signal that informed him that aging had begun. Other milder somatic changes M4 recalled were his “need to wear reading glasses” and his feeling of fatigue. He said, “Even when you try to watch a long movie, most of the time you would fall asleep on the couch…a lot of stuff you want to do but your physical…do not let you do that.”

**Lived time.** In M4’s narrative, his temporal way of being in the world was revealed in his expressions. For instance, “right now” and “before” were used a number of times when M4 compared his past physical health condition to his present status. In addition, M4’s sense of temporality was revealed in this statement: “I think the main differences I noticed about myself when I look at myself now as compared with when I was young…” Another two expressions M4 frequently used which implied his sense of time were “a lot of times” and “most of the time.” Furthermore, M4 mentioned that with aging, he is taking “more time for rest and then avoid doing activities at nighttime.” M4 said that he also tried “to make the weekend not so busy so that I can have more rest.” Toward the end of the interview, M4 used another expression that was time sensitive: “This is the first time I really think about it [aging].”

**Lived space.** In the interview, one of the accounts of spatiality M4 gave was his shared lived space with his children. “…My son and daughter are living with me…” Next, when M4 talked about the medical services in the United States, his observations revealed the space he felt for himself and the patients.

I see lots of old and poor people sleeping in the ER for even 12 hours, waiting for medical treatment. That’s no good. Then, a lot of time, [the
hospital] ran out of bed, ran out of space, and they needed to put patients
in the hallway.

M4’s account conveyed the spatiality he felt for those patients. He did not specify
what that space represented; however, the space he desired to have for his own aging
would not be the same as the patients’. Another spatial experience M4 emphasized was
his church. “Every Sunday, we have a group of people, fellowship. So we can share
[thoughts] with one another.” M4’s statement revealed that the church was the space
where he felt the camaraderie and the support from his group of friends. In light of M4’s
desire to have support from people, he made several suggestions to older persons:

They can go to senior centers or some other community service centers.
This way, they can enlarge their social circle. So whatever happens to
them, they will have some people to share [thoughts] with and to help
them out. I think this is beneficial to you [aging persons] and other people.

In addition to the church, senior centers or other community service centers might
be the environment which M4 could identify as his spatial landscape when he becomes
older. The social element in these settings seems to provide M4 with a fundamental sense
of being.

Lived relation. The two relations M4 mentioned associated with his children and
his peers at church. Concerning the way M4 had related with his children, M4 said,
I leave a lot of stuff [responsibilities] to my son and daughter so that they
can take care of it…previously, they were teenagers, and now they are
adults. So I think it’s time for them to take the lead, instead of me making
the decision. So they can take the role to lead and make decisions. Before,
I used to be the leader of the family.

M4’s lived relation with his children seems to be transitioning in terms of the role
he plays in this family. He was previously the leader; now that he is aging and his
children are becoming adults, he is stepping back. In regard to M4’s relation with his
peers at church, he articulated:

I think I am lucky because I am one of the church members; we have a lot
of church members around us…so we can share [thoughts] with one
another. Basically, we are almost in the same age range. So whether it is a
problem, family, issue, we can share a little bit with one another. That
helps a lot…

**Ecological factors.** Based on M4’s narrative, the persons he mentioned in his
microsystem consisted of his children, peers at church, and patients in the hospital. For
instance, in M4’s workplace, it seemed likely that the patients and families of patients M4
saw were in his micro and mesosystems. He mentioned seeing the circumstances of the
old and poor patients sleeping in the emergency rooms or in the hallway while waiting to
be transferred to a room or waiting to be treated. M4’s witnessing of these circumstances
and his interactions with these patients and perhaps their family members had made M4
think about his own medical needs. Reflecting on these observations and interactions
seemed to have helped M4 develop his internal source, some supportive means that
would protect him from running into similar situations as he ages.

Domestically, M4 is helping his children to cultivate their leadership skills. M4
might have given the same help in developing his own skills in a similar way when he
was young. Alternatively, this could have been the way he nurtured his own decision-making competencies. At church, M4’s peers also form his protective factor; they provide support to M4 and vice versa.

    We know we are not the only one. We all can see that we are going downhill…I think for me…the good thing is, we have church members who are supporting each other. I think it’s good to have the church support…

    When M4 articulated the differences between growing old in the United States and Hong Kong, he emphasized the subject of the medical costs. He believes that the macrosystem of Hong Kong would offer older people more protection in regard to their medical needs and anticipated medical expenditures.

    **Psychosocial themes.** According to the narrative M4 offered, he seemed to be at the psychosocial stage where he was negotiating generativity, integrity, identity, and intimacy. For instance, M4 talked about his management role in his family. He believed that it was time for him to pass the responsibility to the next generation. M4 said, “And I leave a lot of stuff [responsibilities] to my son and daughter so that they can take care of it…” This statement implies that M4 was transitioning from the generative stage to the integrity stage. He seemed to be at ease in taking less control of matters in the family while his children cultivate the relevant skills to manage things. At the same time, M4’s identity has undergone a shift, from a leader to a follower. He would not be assuming the active role. Rather, he had moved to a role where he could sit back and observe or even relax. In addition to negotiating the parameters of generativity and integrity, underlying
M4’s account was his embrace of his intimacy with family, friends, and peers in his church.

I think that aging is…right now your peers are a little bit different than before. Previously, you might have a bigger group of people [peers], but I think when you get to the aging stage, your group may become smaller. Sometimes they [your peers] pass away, they move to other places. So you will cherish people who are still with you. You will try to keep that relationship as much as you can because you know you don’t have that much chance or time to build [new] relationships with people.

Continuity factors. Based on M4’s response to my question about the ways he would cope with aging, his internal adaptive means included, “take more time for rest, avoid doing activities at nighttime….try to make the weekend not so busy…” These coping strategies are consistent with M4’s demonstration of his psychosocial themes of generativity and integrity. Internally, he is transitioning from an active stance to a less active one. Additionally, when asked about the suggestions he would make to people who are dealing with aging, M4 mentioned that he would recommend people to “go to senior centers or some other community service centers…they can enlarge their social circle…” Internally, M4’s strength is built upon the relational factors. Being able to be with peers on the aging journey would be his adaptive source. Externally, M4 is confident that his church and community service centers are the places where he could find support when he reaches old age.
Another external factor upon which M4 had expressed anticipated dependency is financial means. Because of his chief concern about the medical system, he endeavors to be financially prepared for his medical needs. He stated:

I’m not sure how much you need to pay out of pocket. Maybe in the end all your money will go to the medical system and you have nothing left behind when you get really sick. Maybe you end up having to file for bankruptcy because you have nothing left in your pocket.

**Aging in the United States.** M4 moved to the United States with his wife and children some time ago. I asked M4 about the difference he perceived between growing old in this country and Hong Kong. The only issues M4 underscored were his medical concerns.

I think in America when you get older, especially right now the medical system is so uncertain because they are trying to reform. For me there’s a lot of uncertainty. How much will I have to pay for medical when I get older? This is a main concern for me. In Hong Kong, there’s universal medical coverage. So even when you’re getting old, when something happens to you, you go to the hospital, the government still covers [your medical expenses]. Maybe you need to wait for a long time for medical treatment, but still they are providing something for you. But here, with the Medicare…I’m not sure how much you need to pay out of pocket…

I felt that M4’s responses were concise and illuminating. The information I gathered at this point seemed to be saturating. I asked M4 if he had any other things he would like to share about aging. He said, “I don’t think I have much to share.” Then, I
asked him if he wanted to talk about other aging aspects we had not covered. He responded that he did not have any other information to share. I then asked him share his experience of the interview. He stated:

Well, that’s a good question. I didn’t really think so deeply before because no one really talked about aging issue. Maybe sometimes we talked about, ‘Well, I’m not sleeping well, my vision is not so good now.’ But we didn’t really think about what affects us in our daily life. Well, I never thought about it [aging]. This is the first time I really think about it [paused].

When M4 finished with that statement, he waved his hand and I took that sign to mean that he had nothing more to add. I stopped the recording and expressed my gratitude for his participation. I checked the time and learned that the entire meeting took approximately 60 minutes. In Table 11, I list the themes that correspond to M4’s aging experiences.
Table 11: Themes Reflecting M4’s Account of His Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>Aches and pain</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>Putting things off</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in mental health</td>
<td>Weakening of vision</td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Lower energy level</td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of friends to death or relocation</td>
<td>Change of kin texture</td>
<td>Being financially prepared Letting children manage things at home Finding time to rest Having support from peers at church</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relatives The older generation Friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two days after the interview, I sent M4 a copy of the draft of the verbatim transcript via email. I asked him to verify the transcribed information and invited him to help me clarify any ambiguity he might discover. He responded in a couple of days, telling me that the content looked perfect to him and he did not think he had anything to add.

**Summary of Interview with M4.** M4’s account seemed to reflect that recently he had begun realizing that he was well on his aging journey. “I am really thinking that I am at the aging stage.” The information M4 offered regarding his aging account concentrated on various aspects: physical and mental issues, relationships with children and peers at
church, and concerns for medical expenses. Referring to the meanings of aging M4 provided, it occurred to him that physical and mental incapacities and health are principal issues that he thought about regarding the subject of aging. Another item M4 would relate to aging was the loss of friends to death or relocation. As he had begun his aging journey, he had experienced joint aches, a change in skin texture, a lower energy level, and weakening of vision. In regard to the ways he would use to cope with aging, he identified eight approaches: (1) practicing preventive healthcare, (2) strengthening family relationships, (3) maintaining a social life, (4) finding time to rest, (5) letting children manage things at home, (6) being financially prepared, and (7) having support from peers at church. M4 also believed that being financially prepared would be important for him as he ages. M4’s expressed concerns about aging are: (a) walking long distance, (b) driving at night, (c) loss of independence, and (d) high medical expenses. Concerning the persons who would have a role in his aging journey, during the interview, M4 often mentioned his children and peers from his church. M4’s peers also are people in his social circle. Moreover, M4 stated that when people get to the aging stage, “your group may become smaller.” This reality had inspired M4 to “cherish people who are still with you. You will try to keep that relationship as much as you can because you know you don’t have that much chance or time to build relationships with people.”

**Interview with M5**

M5 was another participant whose name was on the list given to me by an active church member. I telephoned M5 to set the time and venue for the interview the day that I received his name and contact details. M5 had received a copy of the invitation letter from his church member. The interview took place in an office of the church where M5
regularly attends services and engages in fellowship activities. I arrived at the office slightly earlier than our scheduled appointment time to prepare for the interview. After M5 arrived, I gave a brief introduction of this study, discussed the informed consent procedure with him, and we signed the relevant form. I then gathered some demographic information from him. At that point, he asked about the type of questions I would be asking. When I showed him the protocol questions, he told me that he needed some time to think about his aging experiences. While he was reading the questions, he said several times, “I never thought about these questions. I don’t know how to answer these questions.” I asked him about the difficulty he perceived in answering those questions. He replied, “I don’t know.” Just as I was thinking about asking him if he felt comfortable to move forward, he looked up and told me that he was ready to start.

**Lived dimensions.** When I asked the first question, “What does aging mean for you?” M5 responded, “I never thought about these things [paused for a while]…these are the things I would hardly talk about [paused]…really…don’t know how to respond…” He paused for quite a while. I still was not sure if he would pursue this interview. After some moments of silence, he began, “Aging means um…experience and being respected and um…dealing with people and things in a more considerate way.” M5 looked down and I thought he had more to say. After another pause for silence, I tried to probe further by asking him if he wanted to say more. He responded, “No…that’s all.”

**Lived body.** In M5’s account of his meanings of aging, some of the expressions revealed his bodily experiences in the world. For instance, in the narrative he gave about his health, he articulated his somatic experiences.
Maybe we’re more conscious about our health…um…the only thing I think is…my health is getting worse…it’s because um…when I do some exercises, I um…well, actually I do less exercises recently. Um…it’s a feeling. I feel just…my health is getting worse. Sometimes like my blood pressure gets higher…something like that.

As soon as M5 finished with this account, he gestured to me that that was all he had to say about his health issue. He then looked down and concentrated on reading the protocol questions. In regard to M5’s temporal sensitivity, it was reflected in some of the remarks he made about his aging experiences.

**Lived time.** M5 mentioned that his wife was in the same aging process. “She’s getting older at the same time.” M5’s account revealed that he is not the only person in his household who is moving along the timeline of aging. In several instances, M5 stated that he did not see himself as a different person. He also indicated that he did not sense any difference in himself that would relate to aging. “I see myself to be the same as when I was young. It makes no difference.” M5’s sense of time seemed to be consistent with the way he perceived himself. He added that one of his ways to deal with aging would be, “To imagine that you are young.” This coping approach might have helped M5 to stay in the youthful chronological space. Furthermore, this statement implied that his temporal landscape was characterized by youthfulness.

**Lived space.** In M5’s responses, his sense of space was reflected in the domestic sphere, at church, in traveling, and in the environment. These factors were the existential spaces that allowed M5 to have a sense of self. For example, on a couple of occasions, he mentioned his wife and children. He said that his wife is also experiencing aging. He also
articulated that his relationship with his wife and children had been the same since he noticed that he had begun his aging journey. Furthermore, highlighted the importance of going to church, seeing friends at church, and establishing fellowship with peers in the church. He also stated that he enjoys traveling and having a leisurely lifestyle, which revealed his spatial sensitivity. He also expressed that he preferred the living condition in the United States to Hong Kong. These aspects form the nature of the space he felt he would embrace as he navigates his aging path.

**Lived relation.** When asked about the people who might have helped him most since he began his aging journey, M5 immediately replied, “I think my wife is very important to me, helping me deal with the aging…” With his wife’s company, M5 would not be traveling by himself in his aging expedition. I asked M5 to talk about any influence he noticed that aging had on his relationship with others. He responded, “There’s nothing different or nothing that affects the relationship [I have] with others. It’s almost the same…um…most likely, it’s the same, with my sons, my wife, and friends…it’s almost the same.” The first thing on M5’s list of suggestions to people who were in the process of aging was, “Get more friends…um…um…more fellowship…something like um….” Implicit in M5’s narrative is the importance of his relations with friends and peers at church, in addition to his relations with his family. Toward the latter part of our conversation, M5 repeated the importance of developing friendship. “…Make more friends [smile]…and sometimes I think we need to talk to our friends about aging.”

**Ecological factors.** The people in M5’s microsystem had played an important role in his aging journey. M5’s relationship with these people forms the protective factor
for M5’s aging. It was discussed in the lived relation section that M5’s wife, children, friends, and peers at church are people central to his life. Concerning M5’s macrosystem, in addition to the persons mentioned in his microsystem, the ecological transition also has affected his aging experiences. He mentioned that he had traveled back and forth from Hong Kong in order to “compensate for” the lifestyle that seemed to appeal to him. This compensation would be another protective factor that facilitates M5 to maintain his lifestyle, his feeling of youthfulness, and perhaps his transitioning into his later years in life. In addition, the dynamic lifestyle and entertainment amenities in Hong Kong are the properties that he enjoys in his macrosystem. The foreseeable risk factor then, would be a deterioration of his physical or mental health which might hinder his traveling. Becoming disabled or unable to travel would prohibit him from “compensating” for the things he would enjoy doing in Hong Kong. He may have to explore other adaptive means in order to deal with this bio-ecological risk factor.

**Psychosocial themes.** According to M5’s account of his aging experiences and feelings about his aging journey, the psychosocial themes he is negotiating currently include identity, intimacy, generativity, and autonomy. Regarding M5’s identity status, when asked about anything he would do differently as he realized that he had begun his aging process, he said, “I don’t feel that I’m that old. I’m already a grandpa but I don’t feel like I’m old.” His remarks suggested that he identified himself as a grandfather, however, he would not identify with the typical old-age image of a grandfather. Concerning intimacy, I noticed that relationship is important to M5 because very often, he talked about his wife, his children, his friends, and his peers at church. In regard to the psychosocial theme of generativity, M5 did not talk about his work or the things he had
accomplished. The demographic data show that he currently has full-time employment, which places him in the generative phase. Regarding autonomy, M5’s traveling back to Hong Kong to “compensate” for his lifestyle, his involvement in church activities, and his active social life reflected his embrace of his autonomous stage of life.

**Continuity factors.** The external adaptive factor for M5 was the opportunity of traveling back to Hong Kong to enjoy the lifestyle and the public facilities because he mentioned that he had been going back to Hong Kong frequently. The internal factor M5 had been relying on as his continuity strength stemmed from his relationships with his wife, friends, and peers at church. M5 suggested people “make more friends.” This might be the same suggestion he would have for himself. In addition, his feeling of youthfulness would be another internal adaptive source that furnishes him strength as he ages.

**Aging in the United States.** When asked about the difference it would make to M5 in terms of his aging in the United States or Hong Kong, the account he gave revealed that he prefers the living condition in the United States but he enjoys the lifestyle in Hong Kong. M5’s response to this question was spontaneous. He appeared energized when he talked about the lifestyle of Hong Kong.

Besides the living condition…um…I like…I like Hong Kong more than the U.S…um…the style of living in Hong Kong is the one thing I think a lot about. The people…and something like the entertainment…um…the transportation system is more convenient. Going shopping is more convenient than in the U.S.

As the interview arrived at this point, I sensed that the information I had gathered was saturating. I asked M5, “Is there anything you would like to share or talk about
aging?” He responded, “Hmm…doing good, being good, and um…um…be considerate.” In addition to that, he emphasized the importance of developing new friendship, sharing thoughts with friends, and engaging in more physical exercise. I then asked M5 about his subjective experience of the interview. He said, “I think this is good. At least I get to think about these questions now.” He looked at me and shook his head. I took that as his way of signaling me that he did not have anything more to add. I stopped the recording and thanked him. He said, “I don’t know what to talk about…I never thought about these questions.” The entire conservation lasted nearly 55 minutes. M5’s themes that reflect the account of his aging experiences are summarized in Table 12 below:
Table 12: Themes Reflecting M5’s Account of Her Aging Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Meaning of Aging</th>
<th>My Perceived Signs of Aging</th>
<th>My Means of Coping with Aging</th>
<th>My Concerns about Aging</th>
<th>Persons (Figures) that have an Impact on My Aging Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>Change in personality attributes: considerate</td>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more life experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being respected by younger people</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td></td>
<td>People from church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing hobbies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being considerate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling young</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having a religious belief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two days after the interview, I emailed M5 the transcribed draft. I asked him to examine the contents and possible ambiguities. I invited him to provide additional insights. The next day, he replied and told me that he thought I did well in transcribing our conversation, word for word. He added, “I think everything looks good.” I thanked him again for his participation and his input.

**Summary of the Interview with M5.** Initially, when M5 kept saying that he did not know how to answer the questions or what to say, and when he took a couple of minutes to come up with a response, I thought that he was intending to withdraw from the
Despite the frequent pauses and length of time he used to think about the responses, the insights he offered were representative of his aging process and his subjective experiences of aging. The meanings M5 gave to aging were a decline in physical health, a sensitivity to health issues, having more life experiences, and being respected by younger people. M5 did not specify any social or mental health risk that relate to aging. He highlighted his high blood pressure problem as a sign of aging. In regard to the means of coping with aging, he made several suggestions: (a) paying attention to health, (b) engaging in physical exercise, (c) strengthening family relationships, (d) maintaining a social life, (e) developing hobbies and interests, (f) being considerate, (g) feeling young, and (h) having a religious belief. Concerning persons germane to his aging process, he stated that his wife, his children, his friends, and peers at church would play an influential role in his aging journey. He did not articulate any concerns about aging.

**Cross-case Analyses of Relevant Themes of Aging**

I recall my thoughts about identifying themes and patterns after I interviewed the second participant. It was natural for me to start drawing a mental picture of the patterns, the seemingly common and uncommon themes that relate to participants’ responses. Now that I have transcribed and listed participants’ responses, the themes and the similarities and uniqueness of the collected data have emerged. I present two sets of cross-case analyses that relate to the aging experiences of the participants. I use two cross-case analyses for the purpose of facilitating another level of triangulation of the collected data.

The first set of analysis adheres to the perspectives of five patterns I discovered from participants’ aging accounts. I consolidate the five patterns and their corresponding
themes, and list them in five tables: Tables 13 to 17. Each table displays the common and
less common themes that associate with one of the five patterns relating to the
participants’ experiential accounts of aging. The five patterns are meaning of aging,
perceived signs of aging, means of coping with aging, concerns about further aging, and
persons (or figures) that have an impact on participants’ aging journeys.

The second set of analysis describes the themes that correspond to the experiences
of aging from the perspectives of van Manen’s (1990) four lived existentials (corporal,
temporal, spatial, and relational dimensions) and the theoretical framework. I use the four
subsidiary questions as the conceptual framework to guide my analysis of the collected
data, and because I present the analysis of the interview according to this framework, it
seems consistent that I examine the crucial categories that emerge in each aspect of the
framework. There is only one table for the second set of cross-case analysis. There are
five columns in this table. The columns correspond to the lived dimensions, the
ecological factors, the psychosocial themes, the continuity of aging, and the aging in the
United States or Hong Kong.

Cross-case Analysis I

I present a cross-case analysis using five tables to summarize the themes that
relate to the five patterns pertaining to the participants’ experiential aging accounts. I
reiterate these patterns: (1) meaning of aging, (2) perceived signs of aging, (3) means of
coping with aging, (4) concerns about further aging, (5) persons (or figures) that have an
impact on participants’ aging journeys. For Tables 13 to 17, I list the themes that are
shared by two or more participants, and I discuss the themes thereafter. I list the themes
by the rank order of the number of participants who shared those themes.
## Table 13: Common Themes Relating to Meaning of Aging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning of Aging (19 themes)</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
<th>F6</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>M5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in physical health</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to health issues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to retirement issues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in mental health</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to lifestyle issue</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more time for myself</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brevity of life</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to financial issues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A process of life</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting older</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being respected by younger people</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a better understanding of the older generation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at life from different perspectives</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing in wisdom</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing conversational topics with friends</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling over the hill</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A different stage of life</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A long process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A blessing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I discovered participants’ themes that relate to their meanings of aging primarily from the responses each gave to the question, “What does aging mean for you?” In addition, I uncovered other themes from the rest of the responses given by participants during the interviews. Table 13 summarizes 19 themes that are shared by two or more participants. A decline in physical health and a sensitivity to health issues were the unanimous themes that relate to the meaning of aging that the participants gave. The next set of common themes shared by six and seven participants are sensitivity to retirement issues, decline in mental health, sensitivity to lifestyle issues, having more time for themselves, and brevity of life. Many participants stated that aging made them realize that their memories were not as strong as when they were younger. Some participants said that aging is associated with the changes that take place in their lifestyle. A of them mentioned that they now have more time for themselves because they do not have to attend to their children’s needs and activities. Several persons articulated that aging made them think about retirement issues. Some participants talked about the limitations of time since they realized that aging has become their existential reality.

The themes shared by two to five participants include sensitivity to financial issues, a process of life, getting older, being respected by younger people, having a better understanding of the older generation, looking at life from different perspectives, growing in wisdom, feeling over the hill, changing conversational topics with friend, a different stage of life, a long process, and a blessing.

The unique themes that relate to the meaning of aging are not listed in Table 13. These themes are a timeline, “sunset of life”, approaching death, not being a miserable
thing, a liaison between children and grandchildren, everything is getting worse, a slow process, being a different person, and reminiscence of family.

Table 14: Common Themes Relating to Perceived Signs of Aging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Signs of Aging (12 themes)</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
<th>F6</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>M5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in personality attributes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakening of vision</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aches and pains</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory decline</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower energy level</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray hair</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight gain</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrinkles</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A change in skin texture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cholesterol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menopause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 14, I list the themes that relate to participants’ perceived signs of aging. These themes may or may not have been experienced by these baby boomers. From this table, there are eight common themes that emerged that correspond to three or more participants’ perceived signs of aging. Seven participants shared the theme of a “change in personality attribute.” Six participants indicated that “aches and pains, and weakening of vision” are their perceived signs of aging. Concerning the weakening of vision, some
informants said that they had started wearing reading or bifocal glasses. A male baby boomer said that he needed to accustom himself to using his bifocal glasses. A female baby boomer talked about her need to take off her glasses whenever she was reading small print. The next two common themes related to signs of aging are lower energy level and decline in memory. Five participants said that they experienced these two signs of aging. Another two notable signs of aging are weight gain and gray hair. Four baby boomers said that noticing these physiological changes informed them that they are in the process of aging. There were three participants who said that they started having wrinkles.

Four common themes were shared by two baby boomers. These baby boomers talked about their experiences of change in their skin condition, blood pressure, and cholesterol; two participants highlighted the theme of menopause as a perceived sign of aging. The unique themes that also are not listed in Table 14 are symptoms of spider veins, eye bags, cataracts, having a weaker immune system, decreased activity, physical limitations, and decreased need of sleep.
Table 15: Common Themes Relating to Means of Coping with Aging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means of coping with aging (19 themes)</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
<th>F6</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>M5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening family relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a social life</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing preventive healthcare</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in physical exercise</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching one’s diet</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being positive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to society / do volunteer work</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting aging</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying active / keeping busy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being financially prepared</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being considerate</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying life more</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining in the workforce</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing a relationship with God</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being thankful for what I have</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being relaxed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing hobbies / interests</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using memory aids</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting to the aging process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

243
There are 19 themes that are shared by the Hong Kong baby boomers whom I interviewed. In Table 15, I list the top six most commonly shared themes. These themes are: (1) maintaining a social life, (2) strengthening family relationships, (3) practicing preventive healthcare, (4) engaging in physical exercise, (5) watching their diet, and (6) being positive. All of the participants perceived that preventive healthcare, strengthening of relationship with family, and maintaining a social life are important coping strategies that accompany their aging journeys. Eight participants mentioned that exercising more would be an important coping means. Watching diet and having a positive attitude follow as their next essential themes of coping with aging. For six informants, contributing to society and accepting aging are also their ways to confront aging. In regard to each of the themes of staying active, and being financially prepared, four baby boomers believed that these are important ways of coping with aging. In addition, three participants perceived that being considerate, remaining in the workforce, enjoying life more, and nurturing their relationship with God are crucial to their processes of growing old. Finally, two informants articulated that having hobbies and interests, being relaxed, being thankful for what they have, adjusting to the aging process, and using devices to aid memory would be their coping means as they navigate their aging journeys.

The unique themes of the means of coping with aging which I did not incorporate into this table are: (a) avoid over stressing oneself, (b) cherishing one’s days more, (c) being more organized, (d) taking good care of myself, (e) aging with dignity and purpose, (f) living an independent life, (g) doing something meaningful, (h) reading books about aging, being forgiving, (i) having facial treatments, (j) being aware of aging, (k) staying mentally active, (l) reminding oneself of one’s usefulness, (m) doing new things, (n)
being oneself, (o) letting children manage things at home, (p) learning to tone done in lifestyle, (q) having support from peers at church, (r) feeling young, and (s) having a religious belief.

I noticed that the connotations of some of the themes are similar. For example, contributing to society can mean doing something meaningful. Yet, doing something meaningful does not necessarily mean that a person is contributing to society, because every person has his or her own interpretation or definition of meaningfulness. Hence, I kept contributing to society and doing something meaningful as separate themes. In addition, nurturing a relationship with God may mean the same as having a religious belief. For some religious beliefs, however, such as Taoism, people worship more than one God. For this reason, I separated the two categories.

Table 16: Common Themes relating to My Concerns about Further Aging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns about aging (7 themes)</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
<th>F6</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>M5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of independence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not accepting my own limitations</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing children less often</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving problems for the next generation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a burden to others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting things off</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving at night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the whole, participants have their own concerns about aging. There are a total of 17 different themes of concerns. Only seven out of the 17 themes are shared. Six participants indicated that losing independence would be the chief concern that relates to
their aging. Three baby boomers said that they were concerned about seeing their children less often and about not accepting their own limitations. Two baby boomers revealed that leaving problems for the next generation, being a burden to their others, putting things off, and driving at night would be some of their aging concerns.

The unique themes that associate with participants’ concerns about aging were developing weird habits, always rushing people to do things, forcing opinions on others, doing only household chores, complaining about aging, being rigid, being unaware of one’s own limitations, leaving the workforce, driving long distance, and moving to a foreign place.

Table 17: Common Themes Relating to Persons (Figures) that Have an Impact on Participants’ Aging Journeys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons (Figures) that Have an Impact on My Aging Journey (9 themes)</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
<th>F6</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>M5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People from church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The older generation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are 13 themes that correspond to the category of persons (figures) that have an impact on the participants’ aging journeys. In Table 17, I list the top nine themes shared by two or more participants. All of the Hong Kong baby boomers shared two themes: children and friends. The next shared theme is spouse; eight participants reported that their husbands or wives played an important part in their aging journey. Based on six participants’ narratives, parents or in-laws have had an impact on their aging. Five baby boomers shared the theme of people from church. Three participants said that the older generation and God are important to them in their aging paths. Two participants considered relatives and colleagues as persons who have an impact on their aging processes. The unique themes are siblings, caregiver, and physician.

**Cross-case Analysis II**

After I presented the individual and common themes that relate to each of the five patterns that links to the participants’ accounts of aging, I revisited the transcribed interviews. I realized that the five patterns that emerged and their corresponding themes were important insights about the Hong Kong baby boomers’ aging experiences. Nevertheless, I believed that the discovery of another set of common themes would add strength to the interpretations of the findings. I examined the interviews based on the perspectives of the lived dimensions and the theoretical framework. It would be helpful to summarize the common factors and themes that resonate with the perspectives of the lived dimensions and the theoretical framework. In Table 18, for each column heading, I insert the lived dimensions, the ecological factors, the psychosocial themes, the continuity of aging, and aging in the United States or in Hong Kong. Under each column,
I list the most commonly shared themes. I also illustrate the number of participants who shared those themes.

Table 18: Common Themes Reflected in Participants’ Accounts of Their Lived Dimensions, Ecological Factors, Psychosocial Themes, Continuity Factors, and Aging in Hong Kong or the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lived Dimensions</th>
<th>Ecological Factors</th>
<th>Psychosocial Themes</th>
<th>Continuity Factors</th>
<th>Aging in Hong Kong or the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lived Body:</td>
<td>Growing old with children’s company</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Internal Factors: relationship with loved ones</td>
<td>Hong Kong: convenience of shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decline in physical health</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
<td>n = 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived Relation:</td>
<td>Growing old with friends</td>
<td>Generativity</td>
<td>Internal Factor: positive attitude</td>
<td>United States: close to children / family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maintain relationships with</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td>n = 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loved ones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived Space:</td>
<td>Growing old with spouse</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Internal Factor: awareness and acceptance</td>
<td>Hong Kong: better public transportation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience changes in felt space</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
<td>n = 8</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td>n = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived Time:</td>
<td>Care giving and witnessing parent(s)’ aging</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>External Factor: accustom to local lifestyle and culture</td>
<td>Hong Kong: better medical system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spent in a different way</td>
<td>n = 11</td>
<td>n = 8</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td>n = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived Body:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>External Factor: travel to Hong Kong to visit relatives and to enjoy local amenities</td>
<td>United States: better social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decline in mental health</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td>n = 2</td>
<td>n = 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lived Dimensions.** From the perspectives of the lived dimensions, based on the information provided by the participants, I noticed that they shared many of the themes...
that relate to the lived dimensions of their aging experiences. Referring to the total numbers of the shared themes of various existential dimensions shown in Table 18, the only theme that does not have a general consensus is the decline in mental health. There were only six participants who mentioned their awareness of a weakening of their mental capacities.

**Ecological Factors.** As exhibited in the demographic information, all of the participants are married. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that “aging with one’s spouse” is one of the common themes that emerged among eight of the participants’ microsystems. In addition, as revealed in Table 15, all the participants perceived that strengthening family relationships and maintaining a social life are important means of coping with aging. Consistent with these two indicators, all of the participants stated that children and friends are in their microsystems. Regarding the theme of caregiving and witnessing parents’ aging, taking care of the parents and watching them grow old influences the aging process of seven of the participants.

**Psychosocial Themes.** Based on the experiential accounts of the participants, their relationships with loved ones are important to them. Therefore, close bonding with loved ones would offer them support in their aging journeys. All of them seem to be at the stage where intimacy is active in their life spheres as well as their aging paths. The theme of generativity is another psychosocial theme that is important to all of the participants. Based on the participants’ accounts and the demographic data, all of them are in the generative phase of life. They are currently employed, and many of them indicated that they are supporting a family and contributing to society. Some of them might not have verbalized their generative strength, however, they talked about their
children living with them, and they also are living with and taking care of their elderly parent or parents. Regarding the theme of identity, some participants, probably the younger boomers, are at the beginning stage of aging. These younger baby boomers articulated a sensitivity to some physical traces of aging. Examples of these traces were wrinkles, gray hair, and a lower level of energy. One participant talked about the changes he experienced: He used to be the youngest one in his workplace, but now he is almost the oldest one. “I’m [was] always the youngest one…right now at work, when I look around, when I look at my colleagues, they just graduated…” Some of these aging baby boomers seemed to be at ease with their aging identities, while few of them are in the process of dealing with their identity changes.

Concerning the theme of integrity, even though the oldest participant is 62 years old and the youngest 49, based on the experiential aging accounts of seven participants, they seem to be enjoying the integrity that is associated with persons in the phase of old age. For instance, a male participant reported that some of his younger colleagues consulted him about things like raising children. A female informant said that younger people came to her for advice regarding health issues. Another psychosocial theme that is prominent among eight baby boomers is autonomy. Maintaining independence, being active, and keeping themselves occupied seem to be aspects that are important to these baby boomers.

**Continuity factors.** All of the participants seemed to embrace the theme that relates to the internal qualities as their adaptive means which facilitate their dealing with aging. Eight participants talked about their journeying with their spouses, children, parents, relatives, friends, etc., and it seems safe to assume that these relationships will
serve as internal sources of continuity for these baby boomers as they age. “I used to play basketball, or tennis with my husband. But now we changed the exercise…” is an example of a participant’s changing journey with her spouse, which furnishes her the strength to proceed further into her later years of life. Other themes that correspond to internal adaptive means include a positive attitude and awareness and acceptance of aging. In regard to the themes that relate to the external factors, four persons talked about their having grown accustomed to the local culture and lifestyle. Two persons mentioned that they travel to Hong Kong to visit relatives and to enjoy the amenities in the place in which they grew up. “I go to Hong Kong often to compensate for that [external continuity].” A male baby boomer expressed that he desired to grow old in the United States, and he would think about his family and friends in Hong Kong. He grew up in Hong Kong, and his way of adapting to the aging process is to cherish the memories of his family.

**Aging in Hong Kong or the United States.** Regarding the differences participants articulated about aging in Hong Kong or the United States, only a few themes had emerged. I recall only one participant mentioned that he would like to grow old in Hong Kong because he enjoys the lifestyle in Hong Kong. Two participants talked about the facilities and medical system in Hong Kong, which, according to their points of view, are better than those available in the United States. Regarding the benefits of retiring or growing old in either place, there were mixed preferences. Moreover, three participants contended that they desired to stay in the United States. The shared theme of these three participants was their belief that their children would continue living in this country. Therefore, if they were to stay here, it is likely that they could be closer to their
children. In regard to the perspective of growing old in Hong Kong, four participants shared the theme that revealed their thoughts about the convenience of shops as one of the reasons they prefer to spend their later years in life in Hong Kong. Another common theme relates to the efficiency of the public transportation system in Hong Kong. Three participants indicated that this public facility can be an attraction that might lead them to consider growing old in Hong Kong.

**Reflecting on the Collection and Analysis of Data**

In this reflection, I write about my experiences as an interviewer, a transcriber, and an analyzer of the data germane to this study. Specifically, I provide a reflection of my experience as an investigator, my efforts in processing the verbatim interview report, and my involvement in organizing, summarizing, and presenting the data. As I recollect my journey as an investigator, I realize that mentally, I was examining the information when I spoke with the prospective participants over the telephone to secure an appointment with them. I started to gather some initial traits about the participants that might relate to their aging experiences. I was moved immensely by their willingness to accept my invitation, to participate in this study, and to talk about something that they do not habitually verbalized. As I look back to one participant’s struggle to give his responses to the protocol questions and his perseverance in the interviewing process, I learned from this participant the importance of completing a task, no matter how challenging it seems to be.

Since I grew up in the same Chinese cultural heritage as the participants, I could imagine the challenges for some Hong Kong persons to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. It occurred to me that typically, people from the Hong Kong culture rarely
express their perspectives about their personal experiences. The benefit of this “new”
experience for them might mean the naturalness and the inartificiality of their responses.
Their first-time experiences resonate with mine, as an interviewer, a transcriber, and an
analyzer. In the following sections I discuss my reflections on my experiences of
fulfilling the tasks of these roles.

As an Investigator

I enjoyed the interviewing process for two reasons: (1) I felt that the interviews
were the fruits of the groundwork I developed from working on the first three chapters of
this study, and (2) I was seeing and talking to the persons whose insights I would be
processing to generate information that as a means of adding to the literature about the
aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers who are residing in the Untied
States. In addition, I sense that my experience as an interviewer resonates with van
Manen’s (1990) emphasis of entering into the life world of persons who are articulating
their lived aging experiences. The interviewing process caused me to appreciate that the
study is a joint effort of the participants, the investigator, and their relationship (Finlay &
Gough, 2003). Being able to sit with the participants, paying attention to their postures
and gestures, and gathering their verbal and nonverbal responses are all the vital pieces
that are interwoven into the tapestry of this study.

As a Transcriber

There were four reasons that encouraged me to do the transcribing of the recorded
data rather than hiring a professional to do the work. First, listening to the recorded
conversations helped me to understand better what the participants were trying to convey,
which was helpful to my analysis of the gathered information. Second, revisiting the
recordings enabled me to clarify some notes I took shortly before, during, and immediately following the interviews. Third, because I share the cultural and linguistic background with the participants, I believe I am in a fitting position to understand some words or expressions that are characteristic of the way Hong Kong people articulate certain ideas or perspectives. Sharing the linguistic background also helps me overcome the difficulty in unfolding connotations that might be obscured by some sentence structuring or ways of expressing things in English as a second language to Hong Kong Chinese dialects. Fourth, listening to the tapes and developing the transcript were apt opportunities for me to re-immers myself into the aging existentials lived and interpreted by the participants.

As an Analyzer

I am aware of the availability of computer software that helps researchers organize their raw data and provide a coding system to the data. Such software may be helpful in grinding through voluminous raw data. However, I also understand that computer systems lack the creativity and intellectual capacity to detect some qualitative features of the dialogues (Patton, 2002). Additionally, I am not certain if the software is sensitive to the way Hong Kong Chinese persons verbalize some words and expressions. To discover the uniqueness, the commonality, and the essence of the collected data, I decided to do the processing manually. I know that analyzing the data is a meticulous and tedious process. At the same time, I also noticed my mounting excitement while uncovering different meanings, patterns, and themes from the collected data. I was certain that both my curiosity and passion would furnish me with the motivation to go through each and every step of the analytical process. Furthermore, I recognize the
importance of a qualitative researcher, who is the key person administering the data
collection, selection, and interpretation of information (Finlay & Gough, 2003). I believe
that the processing effort is not only an important part of the study, but it is also
essentially a powerful way of deepening my interest in understanding the aging
experiences of the participants.

Before I began processing the collected data, I consulted my dissertation
chairperson on the central issues pertaining to data analysis, and I reread the relevant
literature. Once again, I referred to the insights van Manen (1990) articulated—
immersion, presupposition, and intentionality. Analyzing the transcribed data allowed me
to immerse myself into the subjective experiences of the aging of the Hong Kong Chinese
baby boomers whom I interviewed. I was mindful of the risk of presupposing some
approaches and ideas because I share the same cultural backgrounds with the participants.

I also live in the United States, even though my student status is not that of an immigrant
or citizen and my length of stay is shorter. In addition, I was vigilant in adhering to the
assumptions that relate to the theoretical framework that guided this study. I also was
conscious of the aging phenomena revealed in other articles and texts. These
acknowledgements cautioned me to maintain an open mind when I was organizing and
synthesizing the data. Namely, that I would follow the attitude consistent with the
phenomenological approach—openness and awe (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Concerning
the notion of intentionality, I strived to bracket any biased perceptions I had toward aging
and toward some Chinese cultural characteristics. Applying the insights of van Manen
(1990), this bracketing would refer to my “knowing too much” about the Hong Kong
Chinese culture. It was essential that I be conscious of my biases because they could
disempower my ability to listen to the participants’ responses. In addition, I was vigilant of the fact that although I share the ethnic and linguistic culture of the participants, there are many factors that constitute diversities in our cultural common grounds. These factors may include our upbringing, our own relationships with families and friends, our socio-economic status, and our educational level.

Crucial insights regarding the collected information emerged while I was working on the transcription (Patton, 2002). I noticed the developing of some patterns that relate to the accounts which the participants gave in response to my protocol questions. I made an outline of these patterns. Then, I uncovered various themes and listed them in accordance with the identified patterns. Next, I created a table for each interview; each table summarizes patterns and their corresponding themes that pertain to the participants’ aging accounts. I then designated two sets of cross-case analyses. The first analysis contains five tables. Each table addresses one of the five patterns and the associated themes shared by the participants. The second analysis accentuates the common themes based on the perspectives of van Manen’s (1990) lived dimensions and the theoretical framework. These two sets of cross-case analyses depict the relevant common themes examined using different perspectives. I used the hermeneutic phenomenological method of inquiry, which enabled me to “transform the lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (van Manen, 1990, p. 36). When working on the analysis, I endeavored to present and capture the essence of the Hong Kong baby boomers’ experiential accounts of aging, which represents the realities of their subjective experiences.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided the analysis of the processed information that relates to the interview of the 11 participants’ accounts of their aging experiences. The factors that constitute the analysis include (a) the written accounts of the 11 private interviews, (b) a table that summarizes the patterns and themes that correspond to each of the participants’ aging accounts, (c) a cross-case analysis that consists of five tables and the written analysis of the common themes pertaining to the five patterns emerging from the participants’ aging accounts, and (d) a cross-case analysis that consists of a table and the written analysis that followed the perspectives of the lived dimensions, the ecological factors, the psychosocial themes, and the continuity theory of aging. I added a column that relates to the themes of participants’ perspectives of growing old in the United States or Hong Kong. Common themes emerged in relevant aspects relating to the participants’ narratives of aging. For some categories, there were more participants sharing one or more themes. For other categories, participants’ themes were diverse. In the next chapter, I interpret in detail these shared and diverse themes.
CHAPTER V

Discussion of Findings

In contemporary society, rapid aging of the population is a demographic reality that demands attention. In the United States, in recent years, one of the prevalently discussed issues is the graying of its population. Because of the sheer size of the cohort of 76 million babies born between 1946 and 1964, the aging of this cohort will add substantial weight to the aging of the country’s population. In addition, the increase in the minority population and the aging of this population are crucial contributors to the aging phenomenon. In the realm of the minority population, people from China form the second largest group of immigrants in this country, only after Mexican immigrants. In response to the scenario of aging, a growing volume of literature has examined a constellation of characteristics pertaining to the older adult population. Volumes of scholarly work have highlighted crucial issues about the aging of the baby boomer generation. In addition, many studies have underscored the heterogeneities among elderly minority persons living in the United States. A gap in the literature has existed in the discussion of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers who are aging in the United States. The principal purpose of this study has been to investigate the experiences of aging among this group of baby boomers. The findings of this study can illuminate the knowledge base of the counseling literature, adding insights into counselors’ work, specifically with persons of Chinese descent, born between 1946 and 1964.

In the previous chapter, I presented the findings of this study. In this chapter, I discuss my interpretations of these findings. My discussion revolves around the emerged themes corresponding to the five key categories. These categories are: (1) meanings of
aging, (2) perceived signs of aging, (3) means of coping with aging, (4) concerns about aging, and (5) persons (figures) who have an impact on the one’s aging journey. For each category, I provide the interpretations of the themes. After presenting the interpretations of the findings, I propose hypothetical questions for future studies. Following that, I discuss the cultural parameters, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

**Interpretations of Findings**

In this section, I interpret the prominent themes that emerged in each of the five categories that formed the patterns of the participants’ responses. I discuss both the common and uncommon themes.

**Interpreting Meaning of Aging**

Referring to Table 13, there are 19 common themes that emerged that relate to the participants’ meanings of aging. I first discuss in detail seven themes that were shared by six or more participants. These themes include: (1) a decline in physical health, (2) a sensitivity to health issues, (3) a sensitivity to retirement issues, (4) a decline in mental health, (5) a sensitivity to lifestyle issues, (6) having more time for oneself, and (7) brevity of life.

**Decline in Physical Health.** Referring to the aging accounts of the participants, all of them talked about “decline in physical health” when they articulated their meanings of aging. A few participants talked about the bodily changes they noticed, which implied their realization of their aging processes. Some informants went into detail to describe their experiences of declining health and how these experiences had affected their lifestyles. Other informants highlighted the adjustments they had to make as a result of
some deteriorating conditions in their physical health. These aging experiences parallel those described in earlier literature about aging, that physical decline is considered the undeniable reality of becoming older persons (Cheng & Heller, 2009). The theme of “decline in physical health” was shared by all of the participants probably because of the age group to which participants belong. The majority of the participants are younger baby boomers, whose ages ranged from 49 to 53. The participants’ narratives of aging displayed their awareness of the changes that relate to their lived bodily dimensions. Their experiences of the biological changes that come with age are consistent with situations reported in previous studies on aging (Atchley, 1991; Reichard et al., 1962).

**Sensitivity to health issues.** Another theme that was noticeable among all of the participants’ aging accounts was “sensitivity to health issues.” Because these participants reported their lived somatic experiences such as “aches and pains, decline in memory, and lower level of energy,” it seems natural that they now pay more attention to their own health. Being sensitive to health issues has its social implications, which resonate with Atchley’s (1991) statement about the social impact of aging. For instance, the majority of the participants’ means of coping with aging are “maintaining relationship with families” and “maintaining a social life.” Additionally, some of the participants expressed their concerns about losing independence and being a burden to others, while many of them indicated that they would like to stay in the workforce, and they want to do volunteer work. These social reasons are motivators for these baby boomers to maintain their sound health. Accordingly, they expressed their concerns about health status. Furthermore, several participants are taking care of their elderly parents and providing financial support for their children. These situations resonate with the circumstance described by...
that baby boomers have an open attitude to acquire knowledge about their aging issues in order to be able to avail themselves for the needs of their loved ones. In addition, a female participant said that she goes online to seek information on healthcare and vitamins. This scenario evidenced the argument found in the studies about baby boomers’ use of the internet service to explore treatment methods (Bender, 2004).

Sensitivity to retirement issues. There were seven participants who shared the theme of “sensitivity to retirement issues.” In F1’s account of her aging experiences, she talked about becoming sensitive to advertisements that focus on retirement matters such as retirement funds and financial planning for older adults. F4 expressed that she would be retiring soon, as she moves on to another stage of life; she would do things that she perceives to be fulfilling. A few participants talked about their future work plans such as changing to part-time employment, spending more time on missionary or volunteer work, visiting family, relatives, and friends, and enjoying life more. In F5’s account, she did not specifically articulate her retirement plans, however, she reiterated her desire to maintain an active lifestyle when she reaches the age for retirement. Concerning the male participants’ sensitivities to retirement, M3 perceived that the United States is a better place for him to grow old because he would feel more comfortable staying in the workforce at an older age. M2 said that he had seen some older colleagues switch to work that would require less mental energy. M2 indicated that he also would pursue a similar change.

Because most of the participants are in their early to mid 50s, retirement may not be something imminent for them. In addition, their aging accounts revealed their desires to preserve their generative abilities. Based on the collected information, participants’
sensitivities to retirement issues were consistent with the literature’s highlight that baby boomers would reframe the meaning of retirement. It is apparent that these baby boomers’ meaning and timeline for retirement are different from those of former generations. Participants’ perspectives that relate to retirement also resonate with Wheelwright’s (2010) remark that retirement would not be an attractive option for the baby boomer generation.

Decline in Mental Health. The next common theme I described that is associated with the participants’ meanings of aging is “decline in mental health.” When describing their meanings of aging, six baby boomers talked about the change in mental health status. Specifically, they highlighted their experiences of becoming forgetful. F2 mentioned that being forgetful actually helped her become more understanding and patient with people who cannot remember their lunch appointments or other gatherings. Two male participants indicated that they have to write down things to remind themselves of some agendas. M3 said that it was difficult for him to remember names of people he recently met. His wife helps him remember things because they are both going through aging. According to the cited vignettes of participants’ decline in mental health, similar to the situations of the decline in physical health, the decline in mental health also has its social connotations. The participants’ accounts of the weakening of their memories had revealed both positive and negative effects on their everyday lives. Implicit in their accounts was also the impact that their change in mental health had on the dynamics of their microsystems.

When articulating their experiences of decline in mental health, the baby boomer participants only emphasized their memory decline. None of them talked about mental
health issues such as addictions or abusive experiences. Some baby boomers articulated their thoughts and feelings toward the negative physical changes they had been experiencing. Other informants expressed that they did not feel depressed or unhappy about a decline in health. In F1’s circumstance, she realized that getting older seemed to cause her to become irritated with people when they failed to understand something that seemed common sense to F1. Two other participants stated that a decline in mental health was merely a different stage of life. M2 talked about his feelings of distress as he pondered the deteriorating of his physical abilities. He used the term “depressed” to describe his feelings toward this experience. I wondered about the level of depression M2 had and I also wondered if it was simply his word choice for his feelings of distress, displeasure, or discontentment. I refer to my field notes, where I recorded M2’s emotion when he said that he was “depressed.” His facial expression did not reveal any sorrow or grave emotion. Nevertheless, his expressed “depression” could be an issue to be further explored with counselors or other mental health professionals. These are the scenarios that pertain to the mental health issues that I collected from the data provided by the participants. Overall, their sharing did not indicate any serious psychological symptoms that might require immediate clinical attention.

**Sensitivity to lifestyle issues.** The theme of “sensitivity to lifestyle issues” emerged in six informants’ responses. For these persons, their anecdotes revealed their awareness of the changes in their lifestyles as a result of their aging. Some of them already have experienced these changes, while others were anticipating them. For instance, F1’s paying more attention to the labels of food items was one of the changes in her way of living that she had noticed. In addition, aging makes her think about the
changes in her family’s lifestyle. Another participant, F2, also talked about the changes she had experienced because her children are now in college. She now has more time for herself. In F3’s situation, aging has rendered her more conscious about her diet. She said that she and her husband are now “eating less salt and fat.” F5 anticipated that as she gets older, she would decrease in activity. Therefore, aging would mean changes and even interruptions to her active lifestyle.

In M1’s circumstance, he mentioned the changes in his way of living which include watching his diet more closely, getting enough rest, and having regular exercise. His sensitivity to the brevity of life which relates to aging also had prompted him to alter his lifestyle because he had begun to avoid putting things off. For M5, aging led him to enjoy a leisurely lifestyle and to maintain his relationship with family and friends. An examination of the participants’ narratives of their sensitivities to lifestyle issues reveals that their sensitivities are related to their desires to adopt lifestyles that are healthy physically, nutritionally, relationally, and spiritually. Additionally, their sensitivities to lifestyle issues were related to the changes in the operations of their Microsystems and mesosystems.

**Having more time for themselves.** Another popular theme that emerged among the participants’ meanings of aging was their having more time for themselves. That is, they started to live their felt space in different ways. Six baby boomers expressed that when they were young, they focused on establishing their families and providing support for their children. A couple of female baby boomers worked part-time because they devoted more time to raising their children. Some participants mentioned that they gave more attention to their children when their children were younger. Now that their children
have grown up, these participants reported that they had been spending less time attending to their children. For example, F6 mentioned that her children have grown up and are not interested in traveling with her and her husband. In F4’s situation, one of the initial responses she gave to the question about her meaning of aging was her becoming an “empty nester” because her children are no longer living with her. She now has more time to focus on other priorities in her life. For these baby boomers, their course of growing old parallels their children’s process of growing up. This phenomenon resonates with another theme that emerged that relates to the meaning of aging: a different stage of life. As I look at the theme of “having more time for oneself,” I notice its cultural trait of collectivism, whereby the career plans of the members of a family need to be in line with the family’s priorities (Sun, 2008). These participants have been living their values of collectivism because of their devotions to their families’ concerns.

**Brevity of life.** The theme of “brevity of life” emerged in six participants’ narratives. This theme also reflected participants’ changes in their lived space. Knowing that they are aging, some of these participants indicated their desires to help others or to contribute to society. Others talked about enjoying life more. In M1’s anecdote of his aging, he revealed his awareness of the brevity of life as he said, “Time is the main issue. With each day you spend, you are taking that day off the rest of your life span.” He also suggested that people “do as much as you can now.” F3 used “sunset of life” to define aging, which seems to imply that persons have traveled the majority of their lives’ journeys; they are now into the latter segments of their journeys. F6 mentioned the brevity of life and urged people to enjoy life. “So…I realize that life is really short…we just want to try to enjoy life.” These participants’ perceptions of the shortness of life did
not seem to reveal any negative connotations. Rather, these baby boomers expressed their awareness of the transience of life, and this awareness has inspired them to use their time in a more desirable and meaningful way.

**Other common themes.** There are 12 other common themes that were shared by two to five participants. These themes are “sensitivity to financial issues, a process of life, getting older, being respected by younger people, having a better understanding of the older generation, looking at life from different perspectives, growing in wisdom, feeling over the hill, changing conversational topics with friends, a different stage of life, a long process, and a blessing.”

**Other common themes I.** Regarding the theme of “sensitivity to financial issues,” five baby boomers mentioned that aging had made them think about their plans for retirement or for their later years of life. For instance, M4 repeatedly mentioned the high medical costs in the United States. This anticipated financial expense was his concern that relates to his aging journey. Despite his concern, the statements he made did not imply that he was in great debt because of his current use of the medical services. At the same time, I did not recall hearing other participants talked about their financial difficulties. While this scenario does not mean that these baby boomers do not have financial issues, in their aging narratives, none of them underscored an anticipation of financial difficulties as they age. Furthermore, M3 urged people not to leave any credit card balances outstanding for the next generation. Perhaps these Hong Kong boomers’ financial standings are confirming the argument made by researchers, that Asians are one of the most affluent groups of baby boomers (Russell, 2004). Or, by chance, these 11
participants are secure in their financial standing as compared to other Hong Kong baby boomers.

In regard to the theme of “a process of life,” several participants talked about the inevitability, the naturalness, and the unavoidability of aging. The baby boomers who have “a process of life” as their meaning of aging are also the ones who chose to “accept aging” or to “adjust to aging” as their coping means. The themes of “a process of life” and “getting older” might be spontaneous responses to the question about the meaning of aging. The two themes are diverse ways to describe aging being a natural life phenomenon.

**Other common theme II.** In regard to the theme of “being respected by younger people,” four participants shared this theme. This theme reflected participants’ senses of integrity. F3 talked about younger people seeking her advice on medical knowledge. F5 said that senior people at her church are her models. She stated that as an older person, with more life experience, she had gained some wisdom and she would use that attribute to help others. I speculate that these baby boomers’ perceptions of being respected by younger people are connected with their shared belief in the tradition of filial piety, a cultural value that emphasizes respect for elderly people. This perception also resonates with some authors’ discussions of Chinese people’s respect for older persons (Sun, 2008; Tom, 1999; Wong, 2001; Xie et al., 2007). However, Dychtwald (2000) mentioned that in the United States today, people’s high regard for older persons has slackened.

**Other common themes III.** The theme of “having a better understanding” of the older generation emerged in three participants’ narratives of their meanings of aging. The three persons who shared this theme are either currently living with their parents, or had
witnessed the aging experiences of their parents. A common experience among these three baby boomers is their living with their elderly parents under the same roof at present or in the past. Their shared theme of having better understanding of the older generation might refer to an emergence of reflections on their own aging processes as they witnessed the aging experiences of their elderly parents.

Three participants expressed that “looking at life from different perspectives” was one of their meanings of aging. According to these participants, as people accumulate more life experience, they tend to look at life from diverse angles. Another theme that also was shared by three participants is “growing in wisdom.” This theme may relate to the former theme because quite commonly, people say that when they have more life experiences, they tend to be wiser.

Concerning the theme of “discussion topics with friends have changed,” there were only three baby boomers who explicitly indicated that they were aware of the differences in the things they talked about with friends now that they are getting older. This theme revealed participants’ growing up and growing old with their friends. Because most of their friends grew up with them, previously they talked about their struggles in college, later they shared their experiences of raising children, now they discuss matters that relate to aging.

Other common themes IV. Each of the four themes of “feeling over the hill, a different stage of life, a long process, and a blessing” emerged in two participants’ narratives of their meanings of aging. As I examine these four themes, I realize that they are descriptions of a condition, a life phase, or a perspective. These themes share
similarities with the themes of “a process of life” and “getting older” because all of these themes are diverse ways to describe aging as a natural phenomenon of life.

**Unique themes.** There are seven unique themes that emerged in the participants’ accounts of their meanings of aging. In F2’s account, she used “timeline” to describe aging. As mentioned previously, F2’s use of this expression implied her subjective time. Implicit in her anecdote is her positive view of the advancement in chronological age. She reported that she would look forward to getting older, celebrating her progress in life. F3 used “sunset of life” to define aging, which also revealed her felt time. The descriptor of “sunset” may reveal a chronological sense that people are moving toward their later stages of life, or the negative sense of coming darkness after a bright life. Based on F3’s narrative, it is apparent that she also perceived aging with a positive lens.

In F5’s account of her meaning of aging, two unique themes emerged: “a liaison person between her children and her grandchildren” and “aging not being a miserable thing.” With the former theme, F5 referred to her mediating role as an older person. This connotation is consistent with F5’s praise for older people for their having more life experiences. This theme also reflects F5’s affirming perspective about becoming a grandmother and enjoying being around her children and grandchildren. I wonder if this theme is connected with F5’s own experience as a child and as a grandchild because in her account of aging, she frequently talked about elderly persons. F5’s anecdote reflected that elderly persons were very much a part of her microsystem. In regard to the theme of “aging not being a miserable thing,” F5 seemed articulated her perspective of aging as natural phenomenon. Correspondingly, this theme, despite its uniqueness, resonates with another theme that emerged in F5’s meaning of aging: “a process of life.”
Concerning F6’s theme of “everything is getting worse,” at a glance, this theme sounded negative. From the psychosocial perspective, this expression revealed the person’s feeling of despair. As I examined the rest of F6’s responses, I noted F6’s positive stance in her aging journey. My observation notes revealed that F6 chuckled when she said, “everything is getting worse.” She was talking about her weight gain, gray hair, wrinkles, eye bags, and her need of reading glasses. Her chuckling might reflect a positive emotion or perspective that relates to those signs of aging. It also can mean that things are truly “getting worse” but that she is accepting them as they are.

Regarding M4’s theme of “losing friends to death or relocation,” this expression reflects his sensitivity to one of the realities of life. M4 did not display despair or any negative emotions when he mentioned this theme. As stated previously, M4’s account of aging had emphasized the functional aspects and the realities of aging. His concerns about high medical costs, his intention to let his children manage the affairs at home, and his articulation of sharing thoughts with friends are examples of the functional aspects of aging that were reflected in his aging narrative.

**Interpreting Perceived Signs of Aging**

There were 12 common themes that emerged which corresponded to participants’ perceived signs of aging. This diversity of themes reveals the vast number of signs that these participants have experienced and reported with regard to aging. It also reflects the uniqueness of the ways participants perceived their signs of aging. I believe there are other signs or symptoms that were not mentioned or noticed by participants, as some participants stated that this was the first time they really thought about so many questions relating to aging. Perhaps they did not recall or verbalize some of the signs of aging they
experienced or witnessed. In Table 14, most of the themes reflect changes in physical health, physical appearance, and mental health. According to Atchley (1991), these signs correspond to persons’ functional aging. In this section, I discuss in detail the five most commonly expressed themes that relate to participants’ perceived signs of aging. These themes are: (1) a change in personality attributes, (2) weakening of vision, (3) aches and pains, (4) the decline in memory, and (5) a lower energy level.

**Change in personality attributes.** Seven participants indicated experiences of change in their personality attributes since the inception of their aging journeys. Several participants revealed that aging may cause people to become more patient, tolerant, considerate, or mellow. However, two informants articulated that they become irritated more easily as they grow older. As all of the participants are living in the ecological system whereby they interact with their families, friends, colleagues, and church members, it is likely that they become sensitive to the way they interact with others. In addition, since all of them indicated that their families and friends are important to them, it is natural that they pay attention to the changes of their personal traits. Ecologically, the theme of a “change in personality attributes” would interfere with the participants’ interactions with their loved ones in their immediate and intermediate circles.

**Weakening of vision.** Six participants highlighted that they need reading or bifocal glasses, or that they could not see clearly when driving at night. This theme revealed an experience of the participants’ lived bodies. Participants’ reported levels of deterioration of vision seem to be mild. I believe that the prominence of this theme was due to the age group to which the participants belong. The participants who shared this theme are persons whose ages are between 49 and 53. As these baby boomers have begun
their aging journeys quite recently, naturally, weakening of vision is one of the symptoms they had experienced. If the pool of participants were older baby boomers, weakening of vision might not be a key theme or even a theme that they would relate to a sign of aging. Furthermore, this deteriorating condition of the vision can be invisible or unnoticeable by others. It becomes visible when people use their reading glasses. Nowadays, bifocal glasses help maintain the invisibility of the natural need for reading glasses when eyes age. Because of the hidden need, the psychological effect of aging of the eyes seems to be less. However, the persons who experience the change are aware of it. Hence, these persons’ feelings toward their own bodies will not be the same. In addition, experiencing a deterioration in vision may cause the aging persons to ponder their identities along their aging timelines. For the participants who stated that they sought help from their spouses, weakening of vision has rendered them the opportunity to nurture their relationships with their loved ones.

Aches and pains. Three female and three male participants identified “aches and pains” as one of the themes of their perceived signs of aging. This is another theme that revealed participants’ bodily focus in their life worlds. For instance, F2, F3, and F4, discussed their experiences of joint pains and back problems. In F2’s situation, she did not verbalize any pain. She consulted her orthopedic doctor and she had been taking vitamins as a nutritional supplement. M2, M3, and M4 articulated their experiences of aches, muscle tightening, and foot problems. They related these scenarios to signs of aging. Implicit in the participants’ theme of “aches and pains” is their realization of the deteriorating of their physical strength. M2 revealed his negative feelings toward this
change, while he recognized the importance of accepting this change and the necessary adaptations to his aging process.

Because all of the participants have a “decline in physical health” as one of their meanings of aging, it is not surprising to find that “aches and pains” is one of the themes that relates to the perceived signs of aging. I wonder, however, if some of the participants’ expressed somatic experiences were stress-related or were indicators of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Examining this theme of “aches and pains” enabled me to enter into the life world of the aging baby boomers and learning about their subjective experiences of the physical challenges that come with age. Their experiences are consistent with a pertinent undertone of aging that was described in a previous study; aging is a personal, socio-emotional, and psychological concept driven by the way persons perceive themselves as they grow older (Meisner & Hynie, 2009).

**Memory decline.** Decline in memory was another noticeable symptom that emerged in five participants’ themes of the signs of aging. Memory decline reflects a decline in mental health condition. F2, F6, M1, and M3 talked about their experiences of forgetting things. Because most of the participants are younger baby boomers, at their current ages, they have begun to experience a weakening of their memories. Therefore, this experience of change is noticeable to them. In addition, decline in memory has its social, personal, and functional implications. That is, this change in mental health condition interferes with the participants’ dynamics in their microsystems. On the positive side, some boomers can count on their spouses to help them to remember things because these persons also are experiencing aging. When participants talked about their spouses helping them with things that they tend to forget, their smile reflected their
intimate relationship with their spouses. In F2’s situation, experiencing forgetfulness caused her to becoming a more understanding person. The negative aspect of forgetfulness relates to people’s work responsibilities. If people’s memories worsen, it will affect their work performance. Based on the participants’ narratives, no negative perceptions resulted from their memory loss or forgetfulness.

**Lower energy level.** Three female and two male participants mentioned that “lower energy level” is a sign of aging. This is another theme that displays the participants’ subjective bodily experiences. In addition, this theme relates to the participants’ senses of generativity. F2 reported her sensitivity to her energy level after having the decline in the physical capabilities of her parents, particularly her mother. Consequently, she had become more alert to her own energy level. F5 embraces an active lifestyle and so is sensitive to the changes in her energy level. In her narrative, she did not specify that she had experienced loss or decline in energy; however, she indicated that she perceived having lower energy level as one of the signs of aging. F6 mentioned that she had been unable to engage in high impact exercise because she sensed that her energy level had become weaker. In M2’s circumstance, he stated that he used to work long hours. Now he has to rely on coffee to keep him energized, or he would spend less time trying to focus on work problems. M4 said that he often fell asleep on the couch because of the decline in his energy level. Implicit in these participants’ examples was their awareness of this sign of aging. In addition, some of them indicated that they are making changes in their lifestyle to adapt to the decline in their energy levels.
Other common themes. Two to four participants shared in each of the other common themes in their interviews. These themes are: gray hair, weight gain, wrinkles, a change in skin texture, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and menopause.

Other common themes I. “Gray hair” and “weight gain” were perceived signs of aging shared by four participants. As mentioned previously, the younger boomers reported having gray hair. This sensitivity related to the participants’ negotiation of their aging identities. Because most of them are at the early stage of aging, it would be common for them to experience graying of hair. Concerning the theme of “weight gain,” the four participants who shared this theme are females. Actually, all of these participants have slim physiques; they do not appear to have any weight issues. Nevertheless, gaining weight is an apparent change that some of them noticed and verbalized. In addition, gaining weight can lead to other medical conditions or complications. F2 talked about seeing her mother gain weight and become dependent on others to help her get around. F6 described her mother’s experience of a stroke, which inspired F6 to be conscious of her own weight. F3 is sensitive to gaining weight probably because of her profession that involves advocacy in preventive healthcare.

Other common theme II. Regarding the theme of “wrinkles,” three female participants shared this theme. Other than their concern about losing their youthful appearances, this change may inform them of their changing of identities, which would be a crucial aspect to which they must adjust.

Other common themes III. Concerning each of the themes of “a change in skin texture, high blood pressure, high cholesterol level, and menopause,” two participants indicated that these are their experiences and issues with which they cope. These themes
also relate to the participants’ dealing with their aging identities. I did not hear them complaining about experiencing these somatic changes. Moreover, they did not verbalize any inconvenience relating to these experiences.

**Unique themes.** There are seven unique themes I discovered in the participants’ narratives of aging. These themes are “spider veins, cataracts, physical limitations, decreased activity, eye bags, needing less sleep, and having a weaker immune system.” Spider veins and eye bags are aging signs that affect the aging persons’ physical appearances. In addition to becoming accustomed to these changes in appearance, the aging persons negotiate with their changing identities. The other aging signs, “physical limitations, decreased activity, decreased need of sleep, and having a weaker immune system,” also are inevitable signs of aging that involve the persons’ negotiation of their change of identities while they make relevant physiological adjustments.

**Interpreting Means of Coping with Aging**

The participants had identified diverse ways of dealing with aging. There are 20 themes that were shared by two or more participants. I discuss, in detail, the six themes shared by seven or more participants. Respectively, these themes are: (1) maintaining a social life, (2) strengthening family relationships, (3) practicing preventive healthcare, (4) engaging in physical exercise, (5) maintaining a healthy diet, and (6) being positive.

**Strengthening family relationships.** All of the 11 Hong Kong baby boomers expressed that deepening relationships with their families was one of their means of coping with aging. This choice is consistent with their current lifestyles because all of them are living with either their children or their parents. Living with children and parents does not imply that these baby boomers’ relationships with these family members
were positive or negative. However, based on these participants’ accounts, they seem to have a close bond with their family members. Inevitably, strengthening relationships with family would be a coping approach for these participants as they age. Many informants stated that as they get older, they hope to see their children more often. In addition, some of the participants reported that they had visited their parents and relatives who are living some distance away. In accordance with the participants’ statements, family members constitute an active factor in their microsystems.

**Maintaining a social life.** Based on the participants’ experiential accounts, “maintaining a social life” is another unanimous theme they perceived to be important as they navigate their aging journeys. For instance, I asked F1 who had helped her most in her aging journey. Her spontaneous reply was: “definitely, family, friends, close friends.” F2, F3, and F4 also reported that friends were important to them. These participants talked about friends who are close in age to them. These participants grew up with their friends and are now sharing their aging journeys with them. Therefore, these participants value their relationships with friends and hope to maintain the relationships as they age. In regard to F5, she keeps in contact with her friends who are about her age, so that they can be support for one another. They would engage in the same kind of activities. F6 stated that she treasures her relationship with friends. She also said that most of her friends are about her age. When they get together, they share their perspectives on the ways they cope with aging.

Among the male participants, M1 stated that aging inspires him to relish the amount of time that he could spend with his friends. M2 mentioned that his friends are about his age and they had provided immense help to him in his aging journey. When
they get together, they enjoy one another’s company and they share their thoughts and experiences with one another. Based on M3’s account, he is in a similar situation because his friends also are in the same age group. M3 suggested that people who are aging should socialize and enlarge their friendship circles. For M4 and M5, their friends are probably their peers at church because they talked about seeing their “friends at church.” Similar to M3’s suggestion, M5 encouraged aging persons to expand their social circles. M5 reiterated the importance of having friends when he said, “Sometimes I think we need to talk to our friends about anything, right?”

I noticed a common phenomenon as I was interpreting the participants’ themes of maintaining a social life. Most of the participants mentioned that their friends are close in age to them. This might be another important factor about having friends on the aging journey. The essence is the universality. This togetherness may imply companionship as well as the feeling of being understood, as these baby boomers go through the challenges and difficulties in their aging processes. Implicit in the theme of “maintaining a social life” is the participants’ embrace of their intimate relationships with friends. Their friends also form their protective factors in their aging journeys.

**Practice preventive healthcare.** With “decline in physical health” as the most common theme that emerged in the participants’ narratives of their meanings of aging, the theme of “practicing preventive healthcare” is a coherent means of coping with aging. All participants shared this theme. Their consciousness about their states of health resonates with Smith and Clurman’s (2007) argument that baby boomers embrace vitality as their source of dealing with aging. Furthermore, I noticed some reasons that underlie these baby boomers’ desire to maintain their states of health. For instance, F2 mentioned
that raising children takes about 18 to 20 years. Aging, however, can take 30 or more years. Therefore, to prepare for this long process of life, F2 stated that it is important that she take care of her body. She also expressed her desire to maintain an independent life. To fulfill this goal, she needs to stay healthy. Moreover, seeing the aging of her parents has caused her to be aware of the importance of aging well. In F1’s situation, seeing some of the habits of her aging mother-in-law has inspired her to be conscious of her own mental health.

In F3’s circumstance, she expressed that her profession and training have inspired her to be proactive about her own health conditions. She believes that prevention is better than treatment. Additionally, she emphasized that early diagnosis and treatment would reduce suffering. F4 reckoned that she would like to avoid being a burden to others when she becomes older. In addition, she perceived that health has an impact on a person’s quality of life. F5 also talked about staying healthy. At the same time, she emphasized her desire to keep up with her active lifestyle. Accordingly, one of the chief reasons for her to stay healthy is to be able to maintain her vibrant way of living. Regarding F6, she talked about the impact of seeing the graying stages of her own mother, which caused F6 to “try to do something more” for her own health.

In regard to the male participants, M1 emphasized the importance of maintaining his sound health. His exercise regime and his expressed need of decent walking shoes undergird this emphasis. In M2’s situation, seeing his parents’ sufferings from illness before they passed away had a crucial impact on his desire to stay healthy as he ages. M3’s account of his changes in his daily lifestyle, such as taking hot water and wearing thicker clothes to safeguard himself from catching a cold are examples of the way he
would care for his own health. For M4, his primary concern about high medical costs rendered him more conscious about his own health. He indicated his awareness of his weakening physical ability. He stated that his feet could no longer support him in walking long distances. In M5’s circumstance, he underscored his higher sensitivity to his health status. He stated, “Maybe we’re more conscious about our health…the only thing is…my health is getting worse.”

Because the participants like to remain in the workforce, stay active, live an independent life, contribute to society, enjoy life more, develop hobbies, and maintaining a social life, it is understandable that “practicing preventive healthcare” was their unanimous means of coping with aging. Moreover, for some of the participants, their need to be healthy was connected with a felt obligation to care for their elderly relatives. In addition to the personal and functional meanings, there also is a social meaning that corresponds to the participants’ choices of their coping strategies.

**Engaging in physical exercise.** This theme corresponds to the former one because both themes focus on health issues. Eight participants indicated that doing physical exercise is one of their ways to deal with aging. Exercise regimes seem to be something these baby boomers have been integrating into their lifestyles for some time. F1 mentioned that she played tennis with her husband. Exercise is something in which F1 has been engaging. Now that she is on her aging journey, she stated that she would exercise more. Similarly, F5’s active lifestyle was revealed in her account of the activities in which she currently engages. Physical exercise is a part of her active lifestyle. Exercising also has been part of F6’s lifestyle. Aging may affect her choice of exercises and the level of strength required. Yet, growing older does not stop her from working out.
For the male participants, one of the things M1 mentioned when he talked about his means of coping with age was “getting regular exercises [sic].” He also said that walking shoes were one of the things that helped him deal with aging. M2 said that he played badminton and he liked sports. He also talked about playing badminton with younger peers and with friends. M2 also reported going to the gym to do weightlifting. M3 also exercises and he has been careful about the intensity of the exercise in which he engages. In M5’s report, he said that he had not been exercising regularly since he had begun his aging journey. Even though he had been exercising less, he expressed that physical exercise would be one of his means of coping with aging.

When I revisited the narratives of the participants that highlighted the engagement in physical exercise as their coping means, I noted that most of them engage in exercise with spouses or friends. Therefore, this coping means echoes with the participants’ desires of strengthening family relationships and maintaining a social life. Engaging in physical exercise with their spouses or friends also means that they are sharing their aging journeys with one another and supporting one another. Furthermore, this theme of engaging in physical exercise also resonates with the theme of having more time for themselves. For instance, F2 said that she could spend more time working out now that she does not need to spend time with her children.

**Watch their diet.** There were seven participants who shared the theme of desiring to “watch diet” as a way of coping with aging. The majority of these participants are females. Watching one’s diet can be tied to the concern about gaining weight. For instance, some baby boomers talked about concerns of gaining weight if they are not careful about what they eat. Other baby boomers indicated their need to be careful about
their food intake due to their concerns about having higher cholesterol levels. There is also a social element in participants’ schemes of watching their diets. For instance, F4 said that one of the things she and her friends talked about these days was healthy eating.

**Being positive.** There were seven participants who reported that “being positive” is one of their coping means that relates to aging. Among the more common themes, this is the only one that relates directly to a person’s attitude. This coping approach resonates with discussions in the literature of the vibrant energy and positive spirit that would help baby boomers rise above the stereotypes and constraints of old age (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989; Smith & Clurman, 2007).

**Other common themes.** The other common themes I discuss are those that are shared by two to six participants. These themes include: “contributing to society, accepting aging, being happy, staying active, being financially prepared, being considerate, enjoying life more, remaining in the workforce, nurturing a relationship with God, being thankful for what one has, being relaxed, developing hobbies, using memory aids, and adjusting to aging.”

**Other common themes I.** There were six participants who selected each of the themes of a desire to contribute to society and accept aging. For the theme of “contributing to society,” two participants mentioned that they hope to engage in volunteer work overseas. F3 said that she had been doing volunteer work for a while. F2 expressed that helping less-privileged children in China was her dream; however, her back problem deterred her from pursuing this dream. She decided to help by way of financial support. F1 talked about her pro bono services in mentoring young people, and F5 reported that she engaged in her church volunteer work. M1 had been helping people
at church and he stated that he would continue with this volunteer work. M3 stated his desire to contribute to society. From the collectivistic point of view, offering help to society displays the contributor’s communal concern. As mentioned previously, participants’ desires to serve people in society relate to their desires to maintain sound health. That is, their sound state of health would support their desires to help others.

The theme of “accepting aging” is a theme that requires the work of the heart and the mind. Accepting changes can be a challenge for many people, especially changes that affect one’s way of living. The changes that come with aging can interfere with many facets of a person’s lifestyle. For these Hong Kong baby boomers, it is important for them to accept the changes that come with aging because some of these changes may upset their desires to maintain an active lifestyle, to stay in the workforce, to see their families and friends, and to do volunteer work. Furthermore, negative changes of aging also render these participants dependent on others to help them with their everyday needs. Some participants expressed their concern about losing independence. Inevitably, accepting the reality of not being able to live an independent life can be taxing. Psychologically and spiritually, it is essential that these participants prepare for the realities of aging, because eventually, the aging journey can become demanding and perplexing. At their current aging stages, these participants are negotiating their aging identities; eventually, they may have to confront the polarities of generativity and stagnation and autonomy and shame and doubt.

Other common themes II. There were four participants who shared the coping means of “being happy, staying active, and being financially prepared.” The first two themes require the aging persons’ spiritual and mental efforts. That is, they have to
cultivate an uplifting spirit in the face of changes that come with age. Based on the content of F2’s responses to the protocol questions, it is clear that she did not use any negative descriptions when she talked about her back pain. She also mentioned that whenever she encountered older persons who had negative views about their aging, she would encourage them to explore aging from other angles. F2 seemed to have nurtured her internal force and she had demonstrated her embrace of the coping means of “being positive.” F4’s narrative also displayed her positive energy and cheerfulness. Her account of her caregiving responsibilities she had for her elderly mother did not carry any negative connotations. She articulated that aging is a part of life, and she urged aging people to maintain an uplifted spirit.

In F5’s case, the account she gave was filled with a delightful accent. Her perception of aging persons was cheerful: “Oh…the people in the church…they are all over 65. The oldest ones are probably close to 100. They have regular meetings; they are all cheerful…” F6 also was joyful during the interview. She talked about traveling to visit her relatives and friends because she realized that “life is short.” Her experiential account of aging conveyed a sense of joy. M3 said that he would suggest aging people to relax and do the things they have not yet done previously. M3 also expressed that he did not believe that being sad would be a way to deal with aging. Other participants also appeared to be cheerful, and the contents of their accounts conveyed a sense of vivacity. Yet, they did not verbalize that “being positive” was their way of coping with aging.

The theme of “staying active” is consistent with the literature’s descriptions of baby boomers’ characteristics of maintaining their vitality and strengths. For the 11 Hong Kong baby boomers, aging is not to be faced with a passive or an inactive stance. They
have been enjoying their active lifestyles and they endeavor to continue with this way of living. As discussed previously, baby boomers’ sensitivity to health issues was tied to their desire for keeping up with their dynamic lifestyles. Therefore, they embrace vitality as an avenue for dealing with aging (Smith & Clurman, 2007).

In regard to the theme of “being financially prepared,” I noticed that two participants who had “sensitivity to financial issues” as one of their meanings of aging did not have “being financially prepared” as their coping means. This scenario may suggest that being sensitive to financial issues does not necessarily mean that people are preparing financially for their later years of life. The participants did not raise the issues of having outstanding mortgage loans or debts. M4 emphasized the high cost of medical care and F2 talked about the risk of elderly people outliving their money. In contrast, some participants talked about their visits to Hong Kong and to other places. A few of them reported hiring caregivers or helpers, and some mentioned contributing to society. Perhaps these baby boomers are financially prepared for their aging journeys. Or they feel it is too soon to worry about financial issues because they do not see themselves leaving the workforce in the near future. Nevertheless, their accounts did not indicate that they shared the traits of older Chinese immigrants, who were described as people living in poverty (Wong, 2001).

*Other common themes III.* Three participants shared each of the four themes that reflect their desires “to be considerate, enjoy life more, remain in the workforce, and nurture a relationship with God.” In regard to the theme, “be considerate,” the participants who shared this theme highlighted the importance of paying attention to not only themselves, but also to others. Some of these participants talked about doing
volunteer work and helping others, while other participants emphasized their caring and thoughtful gestures for their families, friends, and others in their lives. The coping means, “being considerate,” echoes the means of “contributing to society” in that the person who thinks about others is offering something to help others. Furthermore, being considerate is another example of collectivistic behavior.

Concerning the theme of “enjoying life more,” I believe that there might be more participants who would select this theme as their coping means even though they did not verbalize this theme. For instance, some participants mentioned traveling, seeing concerts, and going out with friends as their coping means. This situation is similar to participants’ expressions of the theme of “remaining in the workforce.” There were eight baby boomers who did not select this theme as their coping means. This does not necessarily mean that they would prefer to retire or leave the workforce. F3 said that she had been working part-time because she was raising and caring for her children. Now that her children are grown, she has more time to do other things. F3 did not consider herself fully employed. Perhaps for this reason, retirement would not be a radical change for her.

F2 was in a similar situation because she also was working part-time. Additionally, her line of work offers her the advantage of a flexible schedule. M2 mentioned that some of his older colleagues had taken on management responsibilities, which seemed to require less intensive work. Inspired by this, M2 had considered switching to tasks that demand less mental strength. He also mentioned that it might be time for him to think about retirement. Yet, he did not delve into the subject. One rationale that supported the reason why some participants did not choose “remain in the workforce” was likely to be the age group to which they belong. Most of the participants are in their early 50s. It seems early
for them to consider retirement. Another reason can relate to the delayed age of retirement. With the improvement in health and in life expectancy, people are anticipating a longer life span. Therefore, it seems too soon for people in their 50s to consider leaving the workforce within a period of 10 or even 15 years.

The three participants who shared the theme of “nurturing a relationship with God” have a Christian faith. Similar to the scenario that relates to the other themes, other participants who share this faith might not have expressed that this would be their approach to cope with aging. In addition, religious belief is a personal choice. Every person has his or her own way of understanding and practicing a faith tradition. According to three participants’ accounts, they have been maintaining a relationship with God. F1 integrated God into her illustrations a couple of times. She reported seeing some people weakening in faiths as they age, and she underscored that she desired to deepen her relationship with God. Similarly, F3 also mentioned God several times in her account of aging. She said, for instance, “So basically I’m searching for God’s purpose in my life.” Adding to that, she stated, “To me, the most important part is the relationship with the Creator our God.” F5 did not explicitly talk about her belief in prayer; however, she said that when she had problems, she would ask her friends at church to pray for her. In addition, she suggested aging people should be faithful to God and be grateful for each day.

**Other common themes IV.** The other five common themes I discuss are the desires to “develop hobbies, use memory aids, adjust to aging, be thankful, and be relaxed.” Two persons shared each of these five themes. The first two themes require the participants to take physical actions. For instance, M3 suggested people “start learning
something you never dreamed of doing…such as golfing, tennis, sky diving…” M3 suggested aging persons try out things they have not yet done before. Similarly, M5 recommended people to engage in activities in which they are interested, such as “traveling, listen to music, go to concert…” In regard to using devices to aid memory, M1 mentioned that he would use a personal digital assistant and notebooks to help him remember things. This is the strategy he was using to deal with his weakening memory. Similarly, M3 would write down things as a way to remind himself of some important agendas.

In regard to the theme, “being thankful for what they have,” three female participants expressed that they embrace this as their coping strategy. This theme requires the aging person to develop a grateful attitude. F2 perceives the experience of becoming an older person as a blessing because she seems to be relatively healthy and mobile. For instance, she said, “…I have lived to this current age, and everything is still intact. I still have my feet, you know. So I think I am very thankful…” In addition, F2 suggested people contribute to society, and be thankful. In F4’s situation, she emphasized gratefulness several times in her account of aging. She also reported that she is thankful for being healthy. Additionally, she encouraged people to be grateful for the things they have.

The themes which reflect a desire to “be relaxed, be thankful for what you have, and adjust to the aging process” are coping means which demand a person’s mental and spiritual strength. These themes are “easier said than done.” Imagine the scenario of an aging person losing mobility; it is quite a challenge to accept and adjust to this potential consequence of the aging process. It would be more difficult for people to feel grateful
for losing mobility particularly when it just happens to them. However, when aging persons can develop the strengths to deal with the potential predicaments that accompany aging, they are able to move forward. The composed demeanors of the participants suggest that they might have cultivated their grateful attitudes at an early age. This scenario resonates with the argument Hartman-Stein and Potkanowicz (2003) made about the positive impact that baby boomers’ early-life healthy lifestyles and cognitive patterns can have on their quality of life as older adults.

**Unique themes.** There are many themes that pertain to the means of coping with aging. In addition to the 20-shared themes, there are 17 themes that are unique. Some of these themes are functional in that they require some actions, while other themes challenge individuals to take a different stance or perspective. The themes that require some action reflect a desire “to be more organized, live an independent life, take good care of oneself, do something meaningful, read books about aging, have facial treatments, stay mentally active, do new things, have support from peers at church, find time to rest, and let children manage things at home.” The themes that entail the efforts of the participants’ hearts and minds reflect participants’ desires “to cherish one’s days more, age with dignity and purpose, be aware of aging, remind oneself of his or her usefulness, and feel young.” The theme of having a religious belief also requires the participants’ involvement in their spiritual and mental efforts.

**Interpreting Concerns about Aging**

There were 17 different items that the participants classified as concerns about aging. Only two or more participants shared seven of the 17 themes. “Loss of independence” was the most commonly shared theme because there were six baby
boomers who stated that this would be their concern about aging. Each of the themes of “not accepting one’s own limitations” and “seeing children less often” was shared by three baby boomers. Each of the four themes of “leaving problems for the next generation, being a burden to children and others, putting things off, and driving at night” was shared by two baby boomers. In this section, I discuss in detail the three most prominent themes and I explain briefly the rest of the shared themes as well as the unique themes.

**Loss of independence.** Five female participants and a male participant expressed their concern of losing independence when they become older. Because all of the participants expressed that “sensitivity to health issues” and “decline in physical health” were meanings of aging for them, it seems that their concern about losing independence when they grow older is congruent with their meanings of aging. In addition, the concern about losing independence relates to the concern of being a burden to children and others. For instance, F3 said that she desired to live a healthy life partly because she does not want to bother her children. In addition, she believed that growing old in the United States supports her independent way of living, and she does not want to interfere with her children’s own family lives. She said, “I guess that’s a good way of coping with aging…um…living an independent life.” Therefore, losing independence would counter her desire for living an independent life. Additionally, participants’ concern of losing independence resonates with the argument stated in earlier literature which highlighted that persons’ fears or anxieties about aging relate to the loss of mobility (Myers & Schwiebert, 1996). Foster (2009), for example, maintained that age-related disability and loss of autonomy are some of the challenging experiences of old age. Essentially, loss of
independence is a major concern as well as a problem that relates to aging. From the psychosocial perspective, loss of independence requires the persons to negotiate their senses of shame and doubt. A discontinuity factor seeps into the persons’ lives when they can no longer be independent.

Generally, age-related disability and loss of autonomy happen when people get older. There are other situations, however, where people can lose their autonomy. For instance, F1 witnessed her mother-in-law’s loss of independence because of her language barrier. Additionally, her not being able to drive increased her dependence on others. F1 perceived that it would be difficult for her mother-in-law to grow old in the United States because she has to totally rely on F1 and her husband, even for getting ordinary life things such as milk, bread, and apples. In F2’s situation, her mother’s health started to deteriorate even when she was younger. F2 saw her mother’s health decline which has caused her to depend on others to help her with her day-to-day activities. Therefore, F2 became more conscious about her own health. In F4’s circumstance, her mother with whom she lives is wheelchair-bound due to some medical conditions that associate with old age. F4 might also share the perspectives of F1 and F2, who witnessed a parent becoming dependent on others for her daily activities.

Not accepting one’s own limitations. There were three participants who selected this theme as one of their concerns about aging. F2 emphasized the importance of being positive about life in order to deal with whatever comes along. For instance, she dealt with her back problem and her weaker bone condition in an affirming manner. She accepted her deteriorating health conditions and asked people to help her do things such as cleaning her cars and cleaning her house. In M2’s account, after discussing his weaker
physical health, he reckoned that it was crucial for him to accept his own limitations. When he talked about the older generation, he realized that some older persons did not bother to ask younger people to help them. For example, those older people would carry heavy things, or bend themselves to pick up things rather than seeking younger persons’ help. M2 said that he did not know the exact reason why those older people did not seek help from others; however, M2’s witnessing of these situations cautioned him to be vigilant about not accepting the limitations that relate to his aging.

M3 seems to be a model for “acceptance of one’s own limitations.” He admitted to the reality of his weakening body and had sought help from others. For instance, M2 had asked his younger colleagues to help him lift heavy items. He also would avoid driving at night or driving long distances. The theme of “not accepting one’s own limitations” associates with persons’ negotiation of their ego identities. The level of comfort with aging identity relates to the acceptance of an individual’s own limitations. Furthermore, accepting or not accepting one’s own limitations has its social implications. In M2’s interview, he mentioned that some older people never asked others to help them. These older persons’ inabilities to accept their limitations made their loved ones worry. Much worse, these older persons might end up hurting themselves if they were to insist on lifting heavy items or doing things that were beyond their capabilities. Quite the opposite for aging persons such as M3, his acceptance of his weakening physique and his dependence on others to help him offers him the opportunity to nourish his relationships with others. From the perspective of the psychosocial stages of development, M3’s comfort in his acceptance of his aging identity offers others an opportunity to assume a generative role.
Seeing children less often. All of the participants indicated a desire for strengthening relationships with family as they continue with their aging journeys. Based on the accounts of these Hong Kong baby boomers, their relationships with their children are important. For this reason, it is natural that some baby boomer parents expressed a concern about seeing their children less often. For some of these parents, the ideal scenario is to live an independent life while seeing their children more often.

Other common themes. Two participants shared each of the themes of leaving problems for the next generation, being a burden to children and others, putting things off, and driving at night. F2 expressed that the way she had prepared for the future was to avoid leaving problems for her children. In M3’s account of his aging experiences, when he talked about preparing for death and dying, he specifically endorsed settling any outstanding balances held on credit card bills. M3’s concern was about leaving debt to the next generation or to family who survives him.

The participants who indicated that they would not like to be a burden to children and others apparently were concerned about inconveniencing or troubling people. The difference between this theme and that of leaving problems for children is perhaps only in the timing. The former theme refers to the concern about something that happens after the death of the baby boomer parent, while the theme of “being a burden to children and others” is about the concern when the baby boomer is still alive. Both themes are social concerns, and both relate principally to the participants’ children and other family members.

Regarding the theme of “putting things off,” the two participants who selected this theme also chose the theme of “brevity of life” as a meaning of aging. For these two
baby boomers, aging seemed to inspire them neither to procrastinate nor to delay in doing things they liked to do. However, not procrastinating does not imply that they would rush things, which would be like the elderly people M2 described, who like to hasten people to do things. Concerning the theme of driving at night, two male participants reported that because of the weakening vision, they avoid driving when it gets dark. Driving at night is a concern for them at present as well as in the future. This concern relates to the decline in their health conditions. It also associates with their awareness and acceptance of their limitations.

**Unique themes.** There are 10 unique themes of concerns about aging expressed by the participants. Four themes concentrate on the aging persons’ lifestyles, and six involve both these persons’ lifestyles and the lifestyles of people around them. The themes of “doing only household chores, leaving the workforce, moving to a foreign place, and driving long distances” are the themes that involve the aging persons to adapt to the changes in their lifestyles. The theme, “complaining about aging,” can affect both the aging person and people in their Microsystems and mesosystems. The aging person may consider exploring the reasons for them to make complaints. For some people, voicing a displeased experience or negative change may be a way of expressing concerns and fears. There are people who use complaints as a means of venting. Some people, however, may have developed a habit of complaining and becoming bitter. F5 emphasized that she did not see the need of complaining about aging because she perceived aging to be a natural process. In regard to the themes of “always rushing people to do things, forcing opinions on others, developing weird habits, being rigid, and not
being aware of one’s own limitations,” the participants’ common concern seemed to be a mindfulness of inconveniencing others or affecting others in a negative way.

**Interpreting the Important Persons (Figures)**

In this section, I discuss in detail the four most commonly shared themes. These themes include children, friends, spouse, and parents. All participants indicated that children and friends play a role in their aging journeys. The next common theme is “spouse.” Based on eight participants’ narratives, spouse plays a crucial role in their aging paths. The next common theme is “parents.” Seven participants shared this theme.

**Children.** Children are one of the two themes that emerged most frequently in the participants’ accounts of aging. It is apparent that children are important to these Hong Kong baby boomers. The close bonding between the participants and their children was highlighted in many participants’ narratives. The participants talked about their children in their meanings of aging, their means of coping with aging, and their concerns about aging. F3 emphasized her relationship with her daughter, and stated that her daughter is her best friend. I remember seeing the joy and contentment on participants’ faces each time they mentioned their children. Both F3 and F5 indicated that they would prefer to grow old in the United States because they believed that their children would stay in this country. Growing old in the United States as compared to Hong Kong might mean that F3 and F5 could see their children more often. In a similar light, F6 said that if she were to grow old in Hong Kong, she might be able to see her children more often because Hong Kong’s transportation system is more accessible. M2 also talked about his relationship with his daughters. He talked about his challenges in dealing with his younger daughter; however, he was smiling when he mentioned his younger daughter.
M5 also demonstrated delight in his facial gesture when he stated that he had become a grandfather. For these baby boomer parents, children play a significant role in not only their aging journeys, but also in the meanings of their lives.

Friends. All of the participants frequently spoke of their friends in their narratives. Additionally, the participants underscored the importance of maintaining social lives. Seven participants said that their friends are in their age range, and they are aging with these friends. The other five participants emphasized the value of spending time with friends in sharing thoughts and “having fun” with them. Friends hold a special space in these participants’ lives. Furthermore, M3 articulated that aging had inspired him to think about his friends in Hong Kong. F2 and F6 said that aging had prompted them to reconnect with friends.

Spouse. Eight participants declared that spouse plays a crucial role in their aging journeys. Some participants talked about growing old with their spouses. Few of the participants indicated that they would do more traveling with their spouses now that they are older. Still, several informants attend church services and activities with their spouses. Referring to the notes taken during the interviews, I observed that the male and female baby boomers’ faces “lit up” when they talked about their spouses. Some of them smiled whenever they articulated the way their wives or husbands helped them with their aging needs.

Parents. Based on the aging account of six participants, parents or in-laws are important to them in their aging journeys. Five participants are currently living with at least one of their parents. According to M2, although he and his wife are not living with his wife’s elderly parents, M2 and his wife are responsible for their everyday needs. Five
informants talked about seeing of aging of their parents or in-laws, which seemed to have a substantial impact on these informants’ perspectives about aging. For instance, F1 mentioned that observing her mother-in-law’s way of living cautioned her to avoid moving to a place where she would need to learn the new culture and language. F2 talked about her parents being her models for aging. She learned a healthy lifestyle from her father, while she noticed the unhealthy eating habits and lifestyle of her mother. F6 mentioned her mother’s experience of a stroke, which had inclined F6 to be more sensitive to her own health issues. In addition, F6’s facial gesture suggested delight when she said that her mother’s hair was “like silver.” When M1 talked about his parents, he said that aging had inspired him to appreciate more of what the older generation had done for this generation. M2 underscored the influences that his parents and his wife’s parents had on his own aging process.

Although F4 is living with her mother, she did not articulate explicitly any influence her mother had on her aging experience. She talked about hiring a caregiver to attend to her mother’s daily essentials. Pondering the care that her elderly mother demands might have an impact on the way F4 plans for her future aging path. She said that she has prepared herself psychologically to move to a nursing home if she comes to the stage where she requires care and her son or daughter would not be able to care for her. F4 also is living with her elderly parents. She did not mention anything about the influence that her parents had on her aging process. She said that she would desire to live an independent life. Her priority is to be able to see her children when she becomes older.

**Other common themes.** Five participants indicated that people from church are important to them. Because of these participants’ shared faith belief with peers from their
church, it is likely that these peers are important persons in their aging journeys. I speculate that living in the United States have led these participants to develop a close tie to people in their churches. Most of these participants belong to churches that have a significantly high Chinese presence. Only a few participants talked about fellowship during their interviews. Yet, they seem to engage actively in church activities. In regard to the theme of God, three participants mentioned God in their aging accounts. These participants indicated a desire to serve God and to strengthen their relationships with God as they age. Three participants shared the theme of the older generation. These participants often talked about people in the older generation. Two participants reported that they value elderly people’s advice and the things they had done for their generation. M2 indicated that the older generation’s aging processes had influenced the way he looks at aging.

Two participants shared each of the themes of “relatives and colleagues.” F2 said that aging had prompted her to reconnect with some relatives. Similarly, M1 articulated his desire to strengthen his relationship with relatives. M2 and M3 mentioned their colleagues several times during their interviews. These two participants seemed to value their colleagues’ support. M2 did not specify how long he would remain in the workforce. His account, however, did not reflect his intention to retire in the near future. M3, on the other hand, emphasized his desire to remain in employment. He relates work with dignity and respect. Therefore, for M2 and M3, colleagues potentially would be in their microsystems for some time.

Unique themes. Each of the themes of “siblings, caregivers, and physician” emerged in individual participant’s narratives. F2 gave account of her long distance visits
to her sisters and brothers. F4 emphasized the advantages of having a caregiver to care for her mother. She also mentioned that she might need to hire a caregiver for herself when she gets to the stage that she needs such help. F1 said that her doctor was one of the people whom she believed could help her in her aging journey.

**Proposed Hypotheses**

Findings in a qualitative inquiry are significant resources that generate hypotheses for future studies using quantitative methods (Levers, 2002). Reflecting on the findings of this study, I discovered various topics from the collected data that can be examined further in a quantitative inquiry. I propose seven hypotheses: (1) Hong Kong baby boomers’ retirement planning is related to the financial support they provide for their parents and children, a sense of generativity, and a desire for respect; (2) Hong Kong baby boomers’ practice of the filial piety traditions influence their caregiving responsibilities for their own parents and their support for their children; (3) Hong Kong baby boomers’ preference of growing old in the United States is connected with their desire to be physically closer to their children, their accustoming to the American lifestyle, and their appreciation for the spacious environment; (4) Hong Kong baby boomers are sensitive to health issues because of their desire to see their children more often, to remain in the workforce, to contribute to society, to stay active, and to be independent; and (5) Hong Kong baby boomers’ positive attitudes about aging are a result of their educational level, their strong relationships with their loved ones, and their spiritual growth; (6) Hong Kong baby boomers’ concern about losing independence is related to their desire to see their children more often, to strengthen relationships with family, to maintain social lives, to staying in the workforce, to do volunteer work, and to
sustain active lifestyles; and (7) to examine the validity and reliability of a Chinese
version of an assessment instrument that assesses the wellness of aging Hong Kong baby
boomers.

**Cultural Parameters**

The 11 participants whom I interviewed grew up in Hong Kong. Three of them
came to the United States in their late teens. Based on the experiential accounts of aging
of these Hong Kong baby boomers, I recognize that some aspects were typical of the
Hong Kong Chinese culture, and some were characterized by the baby boomer culture.
To explore the cultural parameters, I discuss both the Hong Kong culture and the baby
boomer culture.

**Hong Kong Culture**

I share the Hong Kong culture with the participants and I am familiar with the
expressions and actions that are characteristic of our cultural tradition. Precisely because
of my counseling training and my having lived in the United States during my graduate
studies, I have developed a particular sensitivity to some of the Chinese traditions that are
dissimilar to the Western culture. I believe that the following six Hong Kong cultural
aspects differ in value from the Western culture: (1) living with children, (2) living with
parents or in-laws, (3) supporting children’s educations, (4) calling children “kids,” (5)
the articulation of the language of love, and (6) mental health issues. These aspects are
discussed in greater detail below.

**Living with children.** As I review the verbatim transcripts, the interview notes,
and the participants’ demographic information, I notice eight participants currently are
living with their children. Based on the participants’ accounts, the youngest child is a
teenager and the oldest are in their early 30s. This familial way of living is consistent with the value of filial piety, where children, even though they reach adulthood, continue to live with their parents or older relatives in the same household. This is also the common lifestyle in Hong Kong, Asia, and many countries that share this cultural value, where adult children move out only when they get married. It is also not uncommon that adult children and their spouses live with their parents. For instance, some parents who are devoted to the filial piety values would demand their adult children and their spouses to live with them. Alternatively, the children and their spouses need to establish their own households within close proximity to their parents.

I realize that in Western cultures, adult children sometimes are described as “boomerang kids,” because these adult children moved out and subsequently returned to stay with their parents. The decision of these children to return home often is due to financial reasons. For example, the adult children have been laid off and financially cannot afford to pay for their own household expenses. Some adults may desire to save up some money for future use. Therefore, they move back to live with their parents. However, for Chinese families, the tradition is the primary reason for adult children to live with their parents. In addition to the filial piety tradition, Chinese people perceive the family to be complete when parents and children are living under the same roof. By the same token, the family is considered incomplete when some members have moved out. Given the parents’ yearning for a sense of completeness, adult children often continue to live with their parents regardless of the children’s financial standing.

Going back to the scenarios of the participants, it is apparent that some baby boomer parents and their children habitually are following the filial piety tradition despite
their living in the United States. A few participants talked about their children growing up and having moved out. As their children grew up in the western culture, they may have adopted the individualistic lifestyle. The baby boomer parents, despite living in the western culture for some time, seem to remain devoted to their cultural values. Therefore, these parents need some time to process this lifestyle change when they become “empty nesters.” They embrace the physical proximity as a substitute for living with their children because these parents believed that their children would continue living in the United States.

**Living with parents.** Among the participants, five of them are living with one or two parents or a mother-in-law. This way of living resonates with the argument Kang (2007) made about Asian elderly people, that they immigrate to the United States with their adult children and rely on their children as a source of support. The participants did not specify that they sponsored their parents to immigrate to the United States. However, living with and taking care of their elderly parents reveals that these baby boomer participants are conforming to the filial piety tradition.

Filial piety is the foundation of all of the virtues of Confucianism; this value begins with serving the parents (Sun, 2008). In addition, in most Chinese societies, behaviors that are unfilial might be classified as atrocious actions (Sun, 2008). Correspondingly, people consider themselves to be of little worth if they are described as unfilial. Following the filial piety tradition, the son, particularly the eldest son in the family, is responsible for taking care of the generations before him. Furthermore, for adult children, taking care of their parents implies their love, care, and respect for their parents, rather than merely their indebtedness to what their parents gave them when they
were young. For people of Chinese descent, in most cases, taking care of the parents means providing support to them and living with them. In contemporary society, as people are becoming accustomed to the changes in values as a result of industrialization and socio-economic advancement, some elderly parents would prefer to live their independent lifestyles while their adult children provide necessary support for them. This situation resonates with M2 and his wife. They are not living with their elderly parents; yet, they take care of their needs. Culturally, if it were the parents’ desire to live on their own, the adult children would not be considered unfilial.

Other aspects that are associated with this cultural tradition are the elderly parents’ language competencies, mobility, and financial strength. It would be difficult for the elderly parents to live in a foreign country by themselves, given their language barriers, their inability to move freely, and their financial limitations. This scenario is consistent with the situation of the older Chinese immigrants reported in earlier literature (Wong, 2001). For the adult children, even though they sponsor their parents to move to the United States, they are considered unfilial if they are not living with and taking care of their elderly parents who do not have the capacities to live on their own.

**Supporting children’s education.** For the baby boomer parents, providing support to children, spiritually and financially is considered part of their responsibilities. I did not gather any explicit descriptions from the participants about the support they have for their children. However, many of them said that aging means that they have more time for themselves as compared with when they were young. Because when they were young, they devoted their time and energy to support their families and raise their children, they had less time to do things they liked to do. Things like traveling,
gardening, and gathering with friends were activities that some of the participants mentioned they now could spend time doing. Implicit in the participants’ narratives was the support they had provided for their children. Previously, these baby boomer parents’ chief priorities were on their children’s needs. Because their children have grown, their priorities have shifted.

The phenomenon of parents spending more time with their children when their children are young seems to be universal. For parents to provide financial support for children’s college and higher education is customary for Chinese parents, and probably for parents from other Asian cultures, and cultures that emphasize collectivism. Historically in China, education is perceived as an important objective, particularly for male members of the family. In contemporary society, education is important to both males and females. Parents, no matter how difficult, strive to provide financial support for their children while they are in school. Some parents would rather live a frugal life while their children are in college or graduate school. These parents would want their children to focus on their studies rather than working to fund their own tuitions. For many Chinese parents of this generation, their goal is to have their children pursue more education. Acquiring more academic knowledge would enable them to secure employment and live a decent life. Therefore, these parents work hard in order to be able to fulfill their goal of supporting their children’s educational pursuits. This situation is reflected in F6’s statement about her retirement plan. She said that she might retire in five years, when her children graduate from college and her financial burden will be lighter. I did not hear the other participants making any overt statements about giving financial
support to their children. However, eight of the participants have children living with them. In some way, these participants are providing financial support to their children.

Calling children “kids”. I notice a commonality as I examine the linguistic elements of the transcribed data. According to the vignettes the participants provided, most of their children are adolescents and adults. Intriguingly, I realize that some of the participants called their children “kids.” For example, F1 said, “You know, the kids, especially in the U.S., they all live in different areas.” F1’s children are adults and are not living with her and her husband. M2 also used the term “kids” to refer to his daughters. “Because we all have kids, we [our circle of friends] seldom got together previously. Now, it’s getting to the stage that all the kids are going to college…” Likewise, M3 used the expression “kids” when he talked about his future plans. “When you get old, where are you going to stay? Stay with your wife? Stay with your kids? Or enter into a nursing home?” In casual conversations or dialogues with friends, many parents address their children as “kids.” Perhaps some participants considered their interviews as casual conversation. Implicit in the use of the term “kids” seems to be these parents’ perceptions of their children, that they are always their “kids,” their little ones, regardless of their ages. There is a sense of affection that is associated with their calling their use of this term. In addition, I recognize the ethnic element of this phenomenon. Culturally, in the spoken Chinese language, many Hong Kong Chinese parents describe their children as “kids.” In Chinese, the closest match to the English word “children” would be “sons and daughters.” When M4 talked about his children, he said, “I leave a lot of stuff to my son and daughter…” In F4’s account, she stated, “I may have to depend on my son or daughter to take care of me.” For M5, he used the term “sons” to describe his children.
Articulation of the language of love. From the participants’ accounts, another cultural aspect I notice is their way of articulating love. I went through all the transcribed information. I only discovered the word “love” in one participant’s dialogue. When F2 talked about her ways of coping with aging, she said, “…Connect with your loved ones, including both my parents…” Later on, when she articulated her dream of helping orphans in China, she stated, “I also thought I love children…I help them to have good education, mainly provide them with love.” The rest of the participants’ narratives were filled with love. They talked about doing their best for their elderly parents and they expressed their desire to grow old in the United States in order to be able to see their children more often. A few participants mentioned their spouses’ help and company on their aging journeys. They have been engaging in sports activities and church events together. Whenever they spoke of their spouses, I sensed the loving feeling. Yet, they did not explicitly say that they love their spouses or their spouses do things for them out of love. Additionally, a couple of participants articulated their yearning to be close to God. Despite the caring and loving gestures that underlie the participants’ narratives, not one of them overtly articulated that they love their husbands or wives, they love their mother or parents, they love their children, or they love God.

The care and attention the participants provided for their parents are acts of love. The time and energy they spent on raising their children mean love. The joy shown on their faces when they talked about sharing thoughts with their friends reflects love. Their spouses’ pampering and serving as their “navigators” signifies love. Their desire to remain close to God is love. For these baby boomers, their love was expressed in the language of their actions rather than words. Ethnically, it sounds awkward for Cantonese-
speaking people to use the term “love” in their spoken language to express their affectionate feelings toward others. The linguistically expressed cultural value seems to have the same psychological effect for the participants as it translates into their spoken English. Some couples would express their love toward one another through writing rather than oral expression. Verbally, they will say that they care about their husbands or wives or that they are devoted to them. Between parents and children a colloquial term is used to reveal their loving feelings toward one another. This term connotes care and intimacy. Furthermore, Chinese people do not use “love” as the same word to express their desire or craving for something.

**Mental health issues.** In respect to mental health issues, the anecdotes provided by the participants did not indicate that they had any addictive behaviors. They all appeared physically healthy and spiritually uplifted. Their sensibilities to their physical and mental health conditions seemed to safeguard them from falling prey to developing unhealthy ways of living. In addition, I did not hear the participants talk about their experiences of abuse. Participants’ not mentioning their mental health issues does not mean that they did not have challenges or agonies that baffle them. They might not feel comfortable talking about their issues with me, the investigator. Besides, it was beyond the scope of the interview to delve into participants’ emotional or mental health issues. Based on my own experience with people from the Hong Kong culture, it is not their usual practice to verbalize their feelings. Quite commonly, Chinese people, especially males, rarely articulate their emotions, not to mention disclosing their perceived negative feelings.
In regard to the emotional state, M2 underscored his sadness over the memory of the sufferings from illnesses his parents had prior to their deaths. M2 also said that he felt depressed about the decline in his physical abilities. I wonder if it was because M2 had lived in the United States for some time or whether it was his unique way of expressing his emotions. His eagerness to share his feelings reflected his non-traditional traits. Quite the contrary, F5 and M4 indicated that they shared their thoughts and issues with their friends in the church. These two participants and their peers at church also offered emotional support to one another. It is likely that the emotional and spiritual support these participants had received from their church peers helped them maintain their mental health.

The demographic data of the participants reflect that the majority are Christians who are associated with churches that have a high Chinese presence, with many church members being immigrants from Hong Kong. Based on the accounts of some of the participants, they have fellowship at their churches, and their friends are mostly people from their church. Their accounts exemplified their ecological system, which revolved around their fellow “Hongkongneses.” It also is likely that the spiritual and social support these participants receive from their fellow church members and from their faith traditions are the factors that protect them from developing mental health issues.

**Baby Boomer Culture**

According to the aging accounts of the participants, some of their traits and desires resonate with the baby boomer culture. The five traits and desires I discuss are: (1) sensitivity to health issues, (2) being in the “sandwiched” situation of taking care of their parents and not knowing if their children will care for them, (3) redefining the
meaning of retirement, (4) desiring to stay active, and (5) seeking a purpose or meaning. In addition, I talk about the Hong Kong Chinese cultural values that relate to these traits and desires.

**Sensitivity to health issues.** All of the participants’ narratives indicated their sensitivities to health issues. They talked about an awareness of a decline in some physical conditions and they emphasized the need to incorporate preventive healthcare in their lives. These aging baby boomers’ sensitivities to health issues are consistent with the circumstances of baby boomers discussed in literature (Smith & Clurman, 2007). As highlighted formerly, the participants’ concerns about health issues largely are connected with social parameters. For instance, not having a healthy body can affect a whole host of social activities. Much worse, when a person becomes disabled, he or she has to depend on others for help with daily activities. For the vibrant and active baby boomers, it would be difficult to perceive having a lifestyle that is sluggish and inert, let alone having to depend on others for help with everyday needs. These illustrations portray the importance of health to these aging baby boomers.

For any aging person, not having a sound health might develop into potential loss of autonomy where one has to depend on others for his or her daily activities. According to the collectivistic values of the Hong Kong baby boomer participants, it seems that the best scenario is to have children care for their parents. If financially feasible, the family can hire a caregiver and the baby boomer parents would be cared for in their homes instead of at assisted living facilities. Some participants mentioned that they are accepting the possibility that their children may not be able to care for them. Perhaps these baby boomer parents’ desire to maintain a social life is a protective factor that can substitute
the care given to them by their children. These participants’ church peers also form another substituting factor which protects them. Furthermore, most of the participants live near their friends and church members, which establishes the external continuity factor on their aging journeys. In addition, most of the participants live in areas that are close to many amenities operated by Asians.

I realize that it is quite a common practice for adult children to arrange their elderly parents to live within walking distance to Asian retail outlets. There also are medical clinics in these areas that are run by Asian physicians, nurses, and staff members. It seems to be an important continuity factor of aging which benefits people’s physical and mental health when they live in an area where they can sense their subjective space. M3 mentioned that aging inspired him to reminisce the times he spent with his family. The Hong Kong baby boomer participants do not have any language barriers and they have become accustomed to the American lifestyle; however, living close to an area where they can see familiar faces, speak their native tongues, and taste their cultural foods would offer them a familiarity of their ethnic origins. The proximity to these facilities and services has a positive impact on their spiritual and mental health.

In regions in North America, where there is a high Chinese population, assisted living facilities and nursing homes operated by Chinese people are growing. F1 and F3 articulated that some elderly Chinese immigrants had become “blind, deaf, dumb, and lame” because of their language barriers and their difficulties in acculturation. I recall a couple of incidents when I had my counseling internship at a hospital on the East Coast where the Chinese population was relatively low. I saw several Chinese patients who expressed their joy in meeting me, a person who shared their cultural background. I could
imagine their agonies which stem from their illnesses. Their language barriers seemed to create misery and loneliness to their hospitalization. The participants for this study speak fluent English. For those who live on the West Coast, they may see more Asian faces in the hospitals in that region. Despite this “benefit,” the hospitals would not offer them the cultural space they would call “home.” It is likely that one of the reasons these baby boomers strive to maintain their sound health was to lower their chances of hospitalization, to be away from their “cultural home.”

Another cultural aspect that relates to these participants’ sensitivities to their health is the sense of generativity. Typically, in a Chinese household, the father or husband is the principal provider of income and support. If the baby boomer parent’s health condition deteriorates to the point that affects his income earning capacity, he would not be generative. For the Hong Kong baby boomer generation, both the father and mother are income earners for the family. Because they perceive the importance of taking care of their families, especially when their children are still pursuing their studies, these baby boomer parents are sensitive to their own health.

“Sandwich generation”. F3 used the term “sandwich” to describe her situation of caring for her parents and not expecting to receive the same kind of care from her children. This “sandwiched” circumstance also holds true in the Western culture. Koenig et al. (1994) argued that there is little assurance that baby boomers’ children will follow their boomer parents’ paths in taking care of their grandparents. Currently, several participants are living with their parents, and some are taking care of their parents even though they are not living with them. Because in general, baby boomers have more siblings than children, some baby boomers can share the caregiving responsibilities with
their siblings. Therefore, not all of the participants are living with their parents. Some of their parents might have passed away. There were a few baby boomer participants who reported that they do not anticipate receiving care from their children. Some of the participants expressed that they would prefer to lead independent lives, and they would be contented if they could see their children more often. These scenarios summarize the important aspects about these baby boomers being in the “sandwich generation.”

From the perspective of the Hong Kong culture, the participants who currently are caring for their elderly parents are practicing their filial piety tradition, in addition to being in the “sandwiched” situation. Living in the western culture seems to have made this “sandwich” effect more apparent. As children, the participants feel the obligation of caring for their elderly parents. It would be unfilial of them if they do not care for their parents. They would be unkind if they do not take care of their elderly parents who do not speak English. F1 and F3 described this situation as “blind, deaf, dumb, and lame” because these elderly people cannot read any signs or notices, they cannot communicate in English, and they cannot go far from their houses. For the participants, they can “see, hear, speak, and walk.” They had raised their children and are able to live their lives in the Western culture. Because these participants’ children grew up in the Western culture, it would be difficult for these children to learn and understand the values that associate with the filial piety tradition. When discussing respect for older persons, M2 wondered if the television programs nowadays are teaching children to honor elderly people. Because of this generational and cultural diversity, it would be unrealistic for the baby boomer parents to anticipate their children to provide the same care they have for their elderly
parents. Therefore, the participants are experiencing both the western cultural “sandwich” effect and the Chinese cultural “sandwich” effect.

Redefining the meaning of retirement. According to Wheelwright (2010), the baby boomer generation will redefine the meaning of retirement; baby boomers perceive retirement as a less preferred option. This perception of retirement holds true for the Hong Kong baby boomers of this study. Although the majority of the participants are in their early 50s, for long-term planning purposes, it may not be too early for them to think about retirement issues. Yet, only seven participants expressed their sensitivities to retirement; three of them indicated that they would like to remain in the workforce, and one displayed his concern about leaving the workforce. Most of the participants articulated future plans for contributing to society or doing church work. Only one baby boomer indicated that she would be retiring soon. However, she stated that she would continue to work part-time. For the rest of these baby boomers, perhaps retirement is not an option at this time. Reflecting on my conversations with the participants, studying the transcribed data, and examining my noted observations from the interviews, I gathered that their meanings of retirement would be: keep working, keep learning, and keep going.

In Hong Kong, the retirement age is 60 for government and some private organizations. In my conversations with people who were in their 50s and 60s, who worked in the educational, medical, and corporate fields, all of them said that being able to continue with their employment is a “blessing” because they had the impression that people at work consider them old. The Hong Kong culture seems to value young people. This phenomenon resonates with M2’s illustration of people in Hong Kong today not honoring older persons and M3 mentioned the earlier retirement age in Hong Kong. As I
recall my observations in Hong Kong, people who work in retail sales and fast food outlets are mostly young adults in their twenties. There are more and more fast food chains hiring workers beyond 60 years of age. Unfortunately, from time to time, while standing in line at a fast food outlet, I heard some customers complain about the inefficiencies of the older workers. This devaluation of old age seems to cause the baby boomer participants to feel more comfortable living in the United States, staying in the workforce even when they reach their 60s and 70s.

**A desire to stay active.** The Hong Kong baby boomers’ desires to stay active echoes the argument stated in a study that examined traits of baby boomers (Greenblatt, 2007). According to the participants’ aging accounts, some of their means of coping with aging conveyed a sense of vitality and liveliness. Maintaining social lives, engaging in physical exercises, enjoying life more, and developing hobbies are examples of the coping means that implied the participants’ active lifestyles. All of these coping strategies require physical actions. These active baby boomers’ desire for a dynamic lifestyle was revealed in their tones and in the contents of their narratives. I felt their spiritedness and liveliness in my interactions with them during the interviews.

It does not surprise me to hear that the participants desire to stay active because vibrancy and liveliness are prominent characteristics of Hong Kong. The city of Hong Kong is renowned for the dynamic lifestyle it offers to residents and travelers. Hong Kong people enjoy varieties and new things. Growing up in a cosmopolitan city which was under the British rule, baby boomers were exposed to goods and services from Eastern and Western countries and ethnicities. Their desire to stay active may be a way that allows them to continue living their Hong Kong lifestyle as they grow old in the
United States. As the participants chose to live in an area where there is a higher Chinese presence, this is their external factor that supports them as they age. The participants from the West Coast live in areas where there are high Chinese populations. Their residences are close to their churches and many Asian retail outlets. The two participants from the East Coast live in a city where the Chinese population is low. Yet, they live in an area that has a relatively higher number of Chinese residents. Their churches also are not far away from their residences. This cultural lifestyle seems to be the contemporary way of living for Chinese immigrants. Chinese immigrants from the older generations lived in Chinatowns, which seemed to be their external supportive factors of aging. For the participants, living in an area which offers the facilities that support their active lifestyles would be their adaptive means of aging.

**Implications**

In regard to implications which relate to the second goal of this study, I discuss three aspects. These aspects relate to the insights I gathered from the collected data of the aging accounts of the Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. I discuss the proficiency of counselors, examine the cultural competency of counselors, and explore the curriculum of counseling.

**Proficiency of Counselors**

In referring to the interpretations of the common aging themes exposed by the interviewed baby boomers, it is important that professional counselors pay attention to and understand four aspects when working with people from this age group. These aspects are: (a) a sensitivity to health issues, (b) being in the “sandwiched” situation of
caring for the elderly parents while not expecting to receive the same care from children, (c) the meaning of retirement, and (d) a desire to stay active.

**Health issues.** Concerning Hong Kong baby boomers’ sensitivities to health issues, essentially, counselors should explore with clients the underlying reasons that relate to their sensitivities. Counselors must learn about any challenges clients might have experienced or anticipated regarding their health conditions. What kind of support do they have? What are the coping strategies they have been using? In addition, counselors should seek to understand the cultural meanings that relate to clients’ health issues. Cultivating awareness and understanding would facilitate the way counselors can work with these clients to identify possible resources to deal with their difficulties or challenges.

**“Sandwich generation”**. When counselors have Hong Kong baby boomers as clients, they need to explore with the client the meanings, concerns, and possible resources that relate to clients’ situations. According to the aging accounts of the participants, there are cultural meanings that could lead the clients to follow their ethnic traditions. The client may be concerned about not being able to fulfill his or her filial piety responsibility in case he or she relocates. This circumstance can become more overwhelming if the client is the only child in the family. In other situations, clients could be in conflict with their siblings about living with their elderly parents. There may be cases in which clients’ elderly parents are very demanding. In addition, it is important to know if clients have viewed their circumstances from different perspectives. Counselors must develop ways that are sensitive to clients’ cultural expectations and pressures when
they work with these clients to discover the means that help them deal with their difficulties and their negative feelings.

**Retirement issues.** Going into Hong Kong baby boomer clients’ retirement issues, counselors should explore with clients their meanings of retirement. It is important that clients examine the cultural values that are associated with their meaning of retirement. Additionally, counselors can facilitate in considering other meanings of leaving the workforce. If clients identify themselves with their careers, it is important to help them develop awareness of this phenomenon. Counselors also can assist clients in exploring hobbies or interests that seem to be pleasing to them. In cases where clients are interested in pursuing academic learning, counselors can investigate with clients the relevant options.

**A desire to stay active.** Regarding Hong Kong baby boomer clients’ desires to stay active, I believe that people who seek counseling may have encountered challenges to these desires. That is, for some reason, clients may be unable to keep up with their active lifestyle. The counselors must first develop awareness and understanding of clients’ issues that relate to these circumstances. Would it be due to some kind of disability or illness that a client’s autonomy may be hindered? Would it be because clients feel the need to stay home to take care for their elderly relatives? Would there be some financial concerns? Additionally, counselors can explore with clients the cultural and personal meanings of being active. Essentially, counselors must be aware of and understand clients’ dilemmas or difficulties. It is important that counselors try to enter into clients’ felt space to get a sense of clients’ subjective experiences.

**Cultural Competency of Counselors**
There are four crucial aspects that are crucial to counselors’ cultural competencies when their work involves Hong Kong or Chinese baby boomer clients who are confronting aging issues. It is important that counselors develop sensitivity toward and understanding of these aspects. These aspects relate to clients’ living with children, living with elderly parents, supporting children’s education, and developing awareness of their mental health issues. Some of these aspects relate to clients’ observance of the filial piety tradition. In addition, I suggest counselors to take heed of the cultural connotations of Hong Kong clients’ tendency for calling their children “kids,” as well as clients’ tendency to not verbalize their affections toward their loved ones.

**Living with children.** As discussed previously, it is common that the baby boomer parents financially support their children while their children live with them. The data collected from this study indicate that more than half of the participants have children living with them. The majority of the participants’ children are adults. Counselors who are seeing clients of Chinese descent and clients from other Asian countries should be aware that people from various regions in Asia adhere to the filial piety traditions as well. For instance, China, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea are known as Confucian societies (Sun, 2008). In addition, filial piety is a prominent value that prevails in Hong Kong. When counselors work with clients from Hong Kong, counselors need to be aware of these clients’ cultural values. Living with children, even adult children, is considered a norm rather than an extraordinary matter. Perhaps some Hong Kong clients’ struggles would relate to their children’s desire for independent lives as they move out to start their own households. For baby boomer parents who adhere to their own ethnic customs, this transition can be a challenge. Counselors need to use both
a cultural lens and the lens of parents in order to be able to develop an understanding of these clients’ emotional challenges.

When counselors have Chinese teenagers or adults from Hong Kong as clients, it is crucial that these counselors adopt their clients’ cultural lenses. From the perspective of teenage or adult children from Hong Kong families, counselors need to understand that these children are not being “too dependent” on their parents. Rather, it may be their parents’ ethnic custom that these children are following. Some of these children may have issues with their parents because these children desire to establish their independent lifestyles. In my own experience of working with clients in Hong Kong and in interacting with American immigrants from Hong Kong, I have heard teenagers and even adults complaining about their parents waiting for them to return home after late evenings out. Many Hong Kong parents are protective of their children, especially their daughters. When counselors work with the younger generation, it is important that the counselors are aware of the values of clients’ family systems. It is also crucial that the counselors learn about clients’ struggles due to their family’s values. More important, counselors must avoid telling their young clients to ignore their parents or telling them that their parents’ values are not in line with the contemporary way of living. When counselors have Hong Kong parents as clients, the counselors should practice in a prudent manner in order to help clients deal with their struggles. Open-mindedness to culturally different family values is an important tool that enhances competency in counseling.

**Living with parents.** For many generations, people in East Asia have shared the values of filial piety (Sung, 2007). In Hong Kong as in greater China, the Confucian tradition of filial piety remains prevalent. Many adult children living in the United States
still observe these filial piety customs. It would be difficult for elderly parents, particularly those who have language barriers to live on their own. For the Hong Kong baby boomer generation, living with and taking care of their elderly parents are evidences of their respect, care, and love for their parents. When counselors are collaborating with these Hong Kong clients to explore their issues, the counselors must be familiar with the notion of filial piety. If a baby boomer client tells his counselor that he is struggling with the decision of arranging for his elderly father to move to a nursing home, the counselor needs to be sensitive about this client’s cultural values. That is, the counselor must take into account the cultural implications that relate to this client’s decision. In the circumstance of a daughter-in-law complaining about her mother-in-law, where one or both are Asians, counselors must be knowledgeable of the client’s ethnic tradition. It is important for counselors to explore with such clients some possible ways to deal with these potential frustrations and struggles. In this scenario, for example, the counselor should not simply suggest that the client find another living arrangement for her mother-in-law.

**Supporting children’s education.** Supporting children’s education is another cultural practice that conforms to the filial piety tradition. Counselors who are working with clients of Chinese descent or other Asian clients, whose problems relate to their support for their children’s educational needs must be knowledgeable of these clients’ observance of their cultural traditions. If a client were distressed about not being able to support her daughter’s educational pursuits the counselor would need to find out if the client’s distress may be related to her cultural tradition or due to other circumstances. It is important to learn about the values such clients follow in addition to exploring other
concerns a client like this may have. It would be culturally incompetent for counselors to tell Asian clients that their children are young adults, and as such they simply should be responsible for their own expenses, including tuition fees.

**Mental health issues.** The participants’ narratives did not reveal that they had addictive behaviors such as drug or alcohol abuse. The participants’ sensitivities to health issues and health-conscious lifestyles indicate their attention and care about their well-being. Not one of the participants talked about seeking counseling to help confront some challenges or difficulties. F6 reported sharing her struggles with her children. She said, “Just try to share what difficulty we have faced, and the way we tried to find solutions.” Implicit in this statement were F6’s experiences of difficulties and her efforts to resolve her issues. M4 talked about sharing his thoughts and concerns with people in his social circle: “We are almost in the same age range. So whether it is problem, family issue, we can share a little bit with one another.” It is likely that the participants’ relationships with their families, friends, and church members had been profound support for their mental health well-being. Furthermore, growing up in Hong Kong, these participants might have endowed the Taoist values that emphasize harmony and balance. The social support and developed strength are internal factors that support their mental health. In my counseling work experience with clients in Hong Kong, many did not have previous counseling experience. A couple of clients told me that their family members and friends were against their desire to seek counseling. These clients reported that their families and friends perceived counseling as a service for people who have serious mental health problems. In addition, some clients failed to differentiate the functional responsibilities of counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists. When working with Hong Kong clients,
counselors should learn about clients’ expectations and understanding of counseling service.

Another aspect that relates to mental health is Hong Kong people’s articulation of their feelings. Referring to the aging accounts of the participants, I note that only a few of them verbalized their feelings. M2 talked about his distressed feelings due to the decline in his abilities, and he mentioned his sorrow as he still remembered the sufferings of his parents before they died. F1 said that she felt secure as she thought about the things she has accomplished. She also mentioned that aging did not make her feel sad. Counselors who have clients of Chinese descent must develop awareness of clients’ culturally expressed ways of their feelings. Counselors also need to develop sensitivities to clients’ nonverbal behaviors. Clients may express their feelings through their facial gestures or body language rather than words. As discussed formerly, some Hong Kong persons do not explicitly say that they love someone. In such circumstances, the counselors must be aware of the meanings associated with clients’ way of expressing their thoughts and feelings. It also is essential that counselors be familiar with the cultural meanings that are attached to the issues their clients mention. Furthermore, counselors should educate themselves about the possible struggles their Hong Kong baby boomer clients may have with their children. Because many of these clients’ children were born or grew up in the western culture, clients’ traditional Chinese values may or may not be coherent with their children’s way of perceiving things. This may be the situation M2 mentioned when he talked about his younger daughter making him and his wife “crazy.”
Curriculum of Counseling

There are three categories of training that are important to the curriculum of counseling. The first category relates to the values among people of different generations. Based on the themes that emerged from the collected data, training of counselors needs to include an understanding of clients’ struggles and challenges that relate to their cross-generational cultural values. In the counseling sphere, a considerable percentage of counseling issues relate to people’s struggles with their values in isolation and in interaction with the values of generations before and after them. Therefore, it is necessary for counselors to work with clients to explore these values, and to identify ways to deal with the potential dilemmas or difficulties clients face. Furthermore, the training needs to consider helping the counselors to develop an awareness of their own values and biases.

The second category concentrates specifically on the Chinese culture. With the growing Chinese population in the United States, it is essential for the American counseling profession to expand its research on aspects of the Chinese culture, including contemporary issues and concerns of Chinese people. This expansion will benefit not only counselors in the United States, but also counselors in other parts of the world. In addition, the growing number of students from China coming to study in the United States increases the likelihood of counselors in this country having Chinese persons as their clients. Therefore, when designing study curricula, counselor educators should integrate textbooks and training materials that offer more up-to-date and pertinent knowledge in Chinese cultural aspects.

The third important training aspect pertains to the issue of aging. The global aging phenomenon and the aging of the baby boomer population suggest the urgency for the
counseling professionals to attune their training to the concerns and needs of the aging population. Additionally, as mentioned previously, older adults have diverse attributes and their problems and affairs are heterogeneous. Therefore, when designing curriculum, it is important to incorporate training that enhances students’ knowledge in aging aspects, and helps students develop therapeutic skills in helping people examine their aging issues and concerns. Furthermore, when helping counselors cultivate their sensitivities to issues of aging, it is essential that counselors become aware of their own perceptions of aging because these perceptions affect the way they view and relate to older persons (Blando, 2011). In addition to facilitating students’ development of sensitivity and knowledge of the aspects of aging, it is essential for the counseling profession to tailor curricula to enable beginning counselors to examine the heterogeneities among aging persons from different cultural backgrounds.

**Limitations**

I detected four technical limitations in this study. The first limitation I discuss is about validity. Validity of a phenomenologically oriented approach has its methodological and experiential concerns. Methodological concerns are about the research procedure, while experiential concerns concentrate more on the meaning and essence of the interpretive findings (Pollio et al., 1997). In regard to the research procedure, as I re-examine the data collection process, I realize that on some occasions, I could have probed further. Yet, I did not. This scenario might have affected the validity of this inquiry.

Concerning the essence of the interpretive findings, I am aware of the impact that the theoretical framework has on the interpretations of the findings. Because my
theoretical framework was based on van Manen’s (1990) lived dimensions, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory, Erikson and Erikson’s (1997) psychosocial stages of development, and Atchley’s (1991) continuity theory of aging, I followed the perspectives of these frameworks to interpret the findings. If I had used other theories, the interpreted results might not have been the same. For example, had I used the Taoist theoretical framework, I would have placed more emphasis on spiritual values rather than focusing on protective and risk factors.

The second issue refers to the potential constraints over which I had no control. This aspect relates to participants’ genuineness in their responses. I do not perceive that the responses participants gave were untrue. Yet, I would not discount the factor of social desirability. Because participants knew that the conversations were recorded, and some of their responses would be published, the information they provided might be neutral or something they perceived desirable. Besides, cultural aspects such as familism, respect for authority, and a sense of pride also might affect participants’ responses (Brugge, Kole, Lu, & Must, 2005). They might not overtly express strong opinions about some matters or talk about their distasteful experiences. Regardless of this possible constraint, I appreciate participants’ contributions of their valuable perceptions and sharing some of their personal stories. Their participation represented genuine gestures and truthful concerns about offering insights to the counselor education knowledge database.

The depth and breadth of participants’ responses are another examples of constraints that are beyond my control. For some participants’ brief responses, I made an effort to probe further. However, as I paid attention to their nonverbal cues, I sensed that they did not want to express more. Despite some responses that were relatively brief, I
gathered that the statements participants made were unique, and the depth and breadth of their accounts were part of the uniqueness of their responses.

The third limitation relates to the small sample size, which is a common concern among inquiries using qualitative methods. This concern is about the restricted generalizability of the results. I am pleased with the gender mix, six participants were females and five were males, which yields a fairly balanced gender ratio. I also am delighted that I was able to interview people from the East and West Coasts. Eleven participants’ accounts of aging, however, can hardly represent the aging experiences of all of the female and male Hong Kong baby boomers living across the country. Despite the small sample size, I am pleased with the richness of the collected data and the distinctiveness of the participants’ insights. This phenomenon is consistent with the argument Smith et al. (2009) made about the typically small sample size of studies using qualitative methods. The essence of these studies is on the quality of the collected information rather than their quantitative representation of the population.

The fourth constraint is about the homogeneity of the participants’ demographics. The portfolio of the demographics of the participants indicates that all of them are married with children and are currently employed, and 10 of them have a faith belief. I wonder if these common demographics have produced a skewed effect among the participants’ responses. The shared characteristics and experiences of the participants might have interfered with the diversities of their responses. For instance, it is likely that people who are single, divorced, or widowed have different life experiences and lifestyles. Given these differences, their meanings of aging, means of coping, and the persons who play important roles in their lives can be dissimilar.
Finally, I am aware of some personal limitations due to the constraints in time and human capacity. Because of my work and study commitments on the East Coast, it was difficult for me to spend more time recruiting participants on the West Coast. In regard to my capacity, because I was the sole interviewer, my energy level might have affected the data collection procedure.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several areas that can be investigated hereafter in order to continue the discourse of investigating the aging experiences of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers. Two areas relate to the broader understanding of the aging issues of the Hong Kong Chinese baby boomer population, various aspects associate with the cultural considerations that pertain to this population, and some recommendations are tied to the competency of counselors in serving Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers.

**Broader Understanding**

The first recommendation that relates to the broader understanding of the aging issues of the Hong Kong Chinese baby boomer population is to collect data from different regions in the United States. Furthermore, researchers may consider collecting information from Hong Kong baby boomers living in Hong Kong, in other Asian countries, and in other parts of the world.

Another recommendation is to recruit participants of varying marital status, socio-economic background, and educational level. Researchers also can source participants with other faith backgrounds or with no faith tradition. In addition, it would add diversity to the database if future studies can incorporate participants who are on the higher end of the age range.
Cultural Considerations

Future research can examine the cultural values embraced by baby boomers, to find out if the values are conducive to their aging processes, or if the cultural values are posing challenges to them. Another focus for consideration relates to the aging Hong Kong baby boomers’ dealing with particular changes in life, such as leaving the workforce, losing independence, or transitioning to some kind of elderly communal living facilities. These changes could then be investigated further. For instance, they may examine these questions: What are the resources that support Hong Kong baby boomers in making transition to communal living facilities or nursing homes? What would be the hardships for Hong Kong baby boomers to overcome in order to accept the realities of some negative changes such as leaving the workforce, losing independence, or moving to an elderly living facility? For research on elderly community home facilities, the question for consideration would be the type of lifestyle Hong Kong baby boomers would seek in an elderly home facility that would offer them quality in their living.

Counselors’ Competency

Some recommended studies relate to the work of counselors. The first question is: What are the therapeutic approaches that would help the aging Chinese baby boomers accept negative changes in life? How proficient are clinical supervisors in helping beginning counselors develop awareness, understanding, and skills in working with aging Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers? How prepared are beginning counselors in serving Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers who are perplexed by their aging issues? How furnished is the counseling curriculum in providing training for counselors in serving the aging Hong Kong Chinese baby boomer population?
Conclusion

The goal of this study has been to investigate the lived experiences of the aging of Hong Kong Chinese baby boomers who are residing in the United States. Baby boomers were defined as persons born between 1946 and 1964. I interviewed 11 participants from the East and the West Coasts. I conducted individual interviews with these participants in churches and private offices.

The consistent findings that emerged from the collected data indicate that these Hong Kong baby boomers are sensitive to their health issues. According to their accounts of aging, maintaining sound health is important to them because health affects their desires to be independent, active, and generative, and to be with their families and friends. Specifically, some baby boomers articulated that being able to see their children more often is crucial. Correspondingly, these participants’ desires would have impacts on the ways they cope with aging. All of them expressed that practice of preventive healthcare, strengthening relationships with family, and having a social life are the means they would adopt to support their aging journeys. In addition, many participants stated that their children, spouses, parents, and friends are important to them as they age. In regard to the participants’ concerns or risk factors pertaining to aging, loss of independence was the most commonly shared theme. This concern resonates with the participants’ meanings of aging, their coping means for aging, and the people who are important to their aging journeys. Losing independence would pose tremendous challenges for the participants’ senses of intimacy, autonomy, generativity, integrity, and identity. More important, these baby boomers have been living a dynamic lifestyle for years. Inevitably, it would be difficult for them to accept the reality of losing autonomy.
Concerning the topic of retirement, many of the participants indicated a sensitivity to leaving the workforce. Most of them do not anticipate themselves completely retiring in the near future. In addition to sustaining their generative sense, their employment provides them with the financial resource, which enables them to support their elderly parents and their children.

Aging, as expressed by some participants, is a process of life. Aging may come earlier for some people and later for others. For the Hong Kong baby boomers who participated in this study, aging is something that they have been noticing and experiencing. They share some meanings of aging, and they have their unique definitions of aging. A noticeable common experience is their aging in the embrace of their fine relationships with families and friends. They all have developed ways to deal with aging. They also are aware of the potential risks that accompany aging. For these aging baby boomers, the importance of aging is not merely about finding solutions to deal with the risks, but about the persistent exploring and asking about their meanings of aging. This persistent search for solutions is the truth that underlies the meaning of their aging issues and concerns (Jung, 1933). For counseling professionals, continuous research efforts on issues of aging and ongoing empathic helping efforts would add meaning to the aging journeys of Hong Kong baby boomers, as well as baby boomers of other ethnicities.
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Appendix A

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
Department of Counseling, Psychology & Special Education
CANEVIN HALL
PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

TEL 412.396.6112
FAX 412.396.1340

Letter to Prospective Participants

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am pleased to inform you that I have received approval from the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct a study on the topic of aging experiences of Hong Kong baby boomers currently living in this country.

Accordingly, I am writing to invite you to participate in a study investigating the experience associates with aging. Your insights will benefit the volume of literature connected with the aging experiences of baby boomers, persons born between 1946 and 1964, particularly Hong Kong, Chinese, and Asian baby boomers residing in the United States. In addition, the sharing of your experiences may offer important implications and serve as a source of suggestions for counseling professionals working with Chinese or Asian persons on their aging concerns and demands. The results of this investigation will be shared with you, at no cost, upon request.

As a participant, you will be asked to participate in an audiotaped individual interview that takes approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The co-investigator is the only person who will listen to the recording. The recording will be destroyed after the study is completed, and the notes taken during the interview will be destroyed five years after the study is completed, in accordance to the federal research policy. Your identity and the information that you provide will be kept in strict confidence. Your participation is voluntary, and you are not subject to any penalty should you decide to withdraw during the study. The information that you offer will be used only for the purpose of this study. Furthermore, any of your identifying characteristics will be concealed in the published report.

I am grateful for your consideration of this invitation. Please contact me at 412-620-3955 or by email at nhelena0505@yahoo.com to arrange a time for the interview. You may also contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Lisa Lopez Levers at 412-396-1871 or by email at levers@duq.edu if you have any questions about this study. I look forward to your kind response.

Yours truly,

Helena Ng, MS, NCC / Lisa Lopez Levers, Ph.D, LPCC, LPC, NCC, CRC
Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education

Education for the Mind, the Heart, and the Soul
www.duq.edu

Duquesne University
IRB - Protocol 12-47
Approval Date: April 9, 2012
Expiration Date: April 9, 2015
Appendix B

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
600 FORBES AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE

The Lived Experiences of the Aging of Hong Kong Chinese Baby Boomers Residing in the United States

INVESTIGATOR:

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ADVISOR:

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SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Counselor Education and Supervision at Duquesne University

PURPOSE:

The type of questions you will be asked to participate in a study that seeks to investigate the experiences of aging. The questions you will be asked would be, “What does aging mean for you?” and “What seems to be your way of coping with aging?” You will be asked to participate in an individual interview, which takes approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The interview questions will focus on your aging experiences. There will be only one interview. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed by the co-investigator, Helena Ng. You will receive a draft of the transcription via email when it is ready. Upon reading the transcription, if you find the need to clarify your responses to the questions, or to ask further questions, you can contact the co-investigator via telephone, email, or mail. These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

Your risks are considered minimal; and could include feelings of mild discomfort when talking about the aging experience. Yet, these risks are not greater, in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Your shared experiences have the potential benefit of shedding light on knowledge about aging; hopefully, your contribution will be a rewarding experience for you.

Duquesne University
RB - Protocol 12-47
Approval Date: April 6, 2012
Expiration Date: April 6, 2013

354
COMPENSATION: There will be no compensation associated with this study. However, your participation will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any published report. No identity will be made in the data analysis. When audiotapes are transcribed, all identifiers related to you or any person you mention will be deleted. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the co-investigator’s home. The tapes will be destroyed after the completion of the study. All transcriptions and written notes will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. Also, you may request that the information that has been gathered be destroyed.

If you would like more information or are in any way dissatisfied with the process of the study, please contact the co-investigator, Helena Ng (phone - 412-620-3955; email - nghelena0505@yahoo.com). You also may contact Dr. Lisa Lopez Levers, the dissertation advisor for this study (phone - 412-396-1871; email - levers@duq.edu) or Dr. Joseph Kush, the Institutional Review Board Chair, at Duquesne University (phone - 412-396-1151; email - kush@duq.edu).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you at the completion of the study, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I state that I am willing to participate in this research project.
Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Individual Interviews

Pre-Interview Protocol

Prior to the interview, the informant will be apprised of the conditions of the inquiry. The participant will be asked to sign a consent form that illustrates all the important information about the participant’s consent to participate in the proposed study. Such information consists of the title of the study, the investigator’s name and contact details, the advisor of the co-investigator, the rationale for conducting this study, the purpose of this study, the risks and benefits, the compensation, the confidentiality, the right to withdraw, the summary of results, and the meaning of the voluntary consent.

Protocol Questions

The following semi-structured questions represent the types of question that will be posed to informants. These questions are designed to be open ended in order to allow for additional probes, depending upon the specific information that each informant provides.

1) What does aging mean for you?

2) Is there anything you do differently as a result of realizing that you are in the aging process? Tell me about those things.

3) What seems to be your way of coping with aging?

4) Who are the people or what are the things that help you the most as you deal with aging?

5) How does aging affect the way you see yourself?

6) How does aging affect your relationship with others?

7) What are your suggestions to people who are dealing with aging?

8) What difference would it make for you to grow old in the United States rather than in Hong Kong?

9) Is there anything you would like to share about aging?

10) Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that I have not already asked you about?
Appendix D

Demographic Information

Interviewee No. Date & time:

Email: ______________________________ (transcripts will be sent to this email address for verification of the content and for making relevant changes to the responses given during the interview)

Gender: Female Male

Age:

Or age range: 48-52; 53-57 58-62 63-66

Currently employed: Yes No

Profession: ____________________________

Education Level: High School College Graduate Others

Have been living in the U.S. for: approximately ________ years

Status: Single Married Widowed Others

Living with family: Yes No