


An illustration featuring a baby in a blue and white rocket ship, flying from a dark purple landmass on the left towards a light purple landmass on the right. A dotted line indicates the flight path. The background is white.

chinese american satellite babies raised between two cultures

by leslie . wang

By all measures, 10-year-old Lydia embodied the American dream. The Chinese American Harvard grad was simultaneously pursuing a medical degree and a Ph.D. in biology from a prestigious university in New York. In this, Lydia was following in her parents' academic footsteps: they had migrated from China to the United States in the early 1980s to pursue Ph.D.s—her mother in economics, her father in physics. They married in Boston prior to having her, their first and only child.



intensive parenting in a globalized era

Every year, many parents send U.S.-born infants to China for childcare while they remain behind to work and study.

News media often depict these parents as uncaring and un-American, intensifying judgement and scrutiny of immigrant parents.



Even those who described their own transnational separations as practical choices also noted a lingering sense of emotional distance from their parents.

competing cultural models of family and parenting

Former satellite babies' ambivalence may stem from competing cultural models about family and parenting.

finding resolution

recommended resources

Infant Mental Health Journal

The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood.

Gender & Society

Children of Immigration.

Immigrants Raising Citizens: Undocumented Parents and Their Young Children.

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