

CAREER DECISIONS AMONG HONG KONG IMMIGRANTS

By

MEI MEI YIU

B.S.Sc., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1982

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

We accept this thesis as confirming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

August 1989

© Mei Mei Yiu, 1989

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

(Signature) _____

Mei Mei YIU

Department of Counselling Psychology

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date August 25, 1989

Abstract

This study aims to examine how Hong Kong immigrants make career decisions after they have arrived in Canada. Through using a case study approach, this study collected data by conducting indepth interviews with two clients, one male and one female. All the interviews were audio-taped and the important portions transcribed. Three decision-making models (the rational decision-making model [Horan, 1979], the conflict decision-making model [Janis & Mann, 1977], and the deciding-in-context model [Sloan, 1987]) were employed to analyze the clients' career choices. This study found that the first two models were not satisfactory in explaining the decision-making behavior of the two clients. Sloan's model seems to be the most useful because it emphasizes the contexts within which choices were shaped and made. Four contexts - life history, immediate social environment, culture and character - were particularly salient in shaping their decisions.

Table of Contents

	<u>Pages</u>
Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Chapter II: Review of the Literature.....	8
Chapter III: Research Method.....	33
Chapter IV: Case History.....	36
Chapter V: Analysis and Discussion.....	67
Chapter VI: Conclusion.....	96
Bibliography.....	102

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to Professor Larry Cochran, Chairman of my Thesis Committee, whose generous support and advice make this thesis possible. I am also grateful to Professor Marv Westwood and Professor Vincent Doyley, both members of my Thesis Committee, for their assistance and useful suggestions. My special thanks to Peter, my husband, who has encouraged me throughout my research and provided various kinds of service for completing this thesis. My appreciation also extends to my two clients, whose name shall remain anonymous, for their willingness to share their personal experience with me. Finally, I must thank Jane Osborne, a fellow classmate and wonderful friend, who has helped me in many ways in the entire process.

CHAPTER I: Introduction

This thesis is a study of how Hong Kong immigrants make career decisions after they have arrived in Canada. This study aims to highlight the significance of personal meanings behind a career decision by exploring individual life history and life structures (Levinson, 1978). In this introduction, I will first briefly discuss the main theoretical perspectives in understanding career decision making among immigrants. Then I will identify the key problems of my research and review the research method to be employed. Finally, the significance and limitations of this study will be examined.

Some Theoretical Considerations

Two major perspectives -- cultural theory and decision making theory -- can be identified in studies on how individuals make career decisions. The cultural perspective has often been used to approach the problem since it focuses on the distinctive cultural backgrounds of immigrants. Since cultural values are only one of the factors that shape their behavior, it seems too parochial to focus mainly on cultural factors in explaining their career choices.

The decision making perspective emphasizes the importance of rationality (Horan, 1979). Vigilance, calculation and utility maximization are stressed by this perspective while personal meanings and individual conceptions of rationality are usually de-emphasized (Sloan, 1987). By neglecting specific personal attributes and

histories, such a perspective fails to appreciate the uniqueness of individuals in making decisions that will strongly affect their own well-being. Since neither of the two perspectives provides an entirely satisfactory explanation to the problem, this study attempts to relate the career decisions of immigrants to their specific personal contexts and derive significant meanings from their life histories which direct them to choose a particular career.

Identification of Problem

Basically, the Hong Kong immigrants coming into Canada during the past few years can be divided into two main groups, investment and independent immigrants. The overall psychological stress for investors will be less severe. They at least have the financial means to make a living as they must to possess at least C\$ 250,000 to be qualified for the status of investment immigrants. Independent immigrants (Westwood, 1986), however, are not in the same situation. Most of them possess only professional skills, such as those required for accountancy, business management or social work, however they may not have much capital. Their drive to find a job in order to "make ends meet" will certainly result in much greater psychological pressure. I am interested in these independent immigrants because their psychological stress is not restricted to their adjustment alone. There is enormous pressure for them to find a job as well.

According to Super's definition (1976), career can be understood as a series of remunerated and nonremunerated positions occupied by a person from adolescence through

retirement, of which occupation is only one of the elements. Career includes work-related roles, such as those of student, employee, and pensioner, as well as complementary avocational, familial, and civic roles. Careers exist only as people pursue them, they are person-centered. While Super has provided a comprehensive conception of career, my study will, however, concentrate only on one of its many aspects. My focus will be on how those independent immigrants from Hong Kong choose their remunerated careers, rather than their nonremunerated ones, because this aspect seems to be the most immediate concern of the independent immigrants from Hong Kong.

Since a career exists only when we pursue it, it is unique to each of us. At the same time, it is also dynamic and unfolding throughout our entire lifespan. For the independent immigrants from Hong Kong, their conceptions of career may also vary greatly from one another. On the one hand, there are those who plan to settle permanently in Canada once they have arrived here. Their search for career may then be conditioned by their preparation for downward or upward mobility and the need to meet their personal and family demands. Career may mean just a job or occupation to them so that they can maintain a lifestyle similar to the one they have enjoyed in Hong Kong. Since some may change jobs frequently before settling for a particular career, their career decision making will thus be a dynamic and continuous process.

On the other hand, there are others who decide to spend just three years in Canada in order to obtain their citizenship and then return to Hong Kong. Their career decisions will inevitably differentiate them from the rest of immigrants. Finally, there are those who have not made up their minds as to whether they will stay in Canada. They may adopt a "wait-and-see attitude", and their career choice will clearly be influenced by such a consideration.

Since both the decision making and cultural perspectives are inadequate in understanding the career choices of immigrants, this study will examine the career decision making of this group of Hong Kong immigrants by emphasizing the significance of personal meanings. I plan to explore how their views of life are affected by their life histories, how their perceptions are influenced by family and community roles, and how their values are changed by their coping strategies in adjusting to a new country. Only by exploring these and other dimensions of their life histories and life structures, I believe, can we come to a better appreciation of their career choices.

Research Method

I plan to study two subjects who are recent Hong Kong immigrants, i.e. those who have stayed in Canada for not more than four years. They are preferably from middle management levels, such as manager and accountants, since these careers involve a strong need for adaptation and transition to a foreign environment (Goldhurst & Richmond, 1976). The immigrants will be chosen through informal personal contacts.

One will be an example of an immigrant who is satisfied with his/her career decision in Canada while the other is dissatisfied.

Indepth interviewing with immigrants will be a useful and appropriate method to help determine the true meaning and nature of their career choices. Eight one-hour interviews with the two subjects will be conducted and recorded. Significant portions of these interviews will then be transcribed. In order to strengthen the validity of the findings, the subjects will be asked to work on the interpretation and identify the central themes of the interviews together with me (Yin, 1984). By collaborating with these immigrants in their life histories, I can acquire rich and natural information about how they arrive at a career choice and explore the values which compel them to identify with specific careers.

Significance and Limitations of This Study

Discovering how immigrants make career choices after arriving in Canada seems to be an interesting and challenging issue to me for three main reasons. First, immigration is a crucial turning point for individuals. Most immigrants suffer from emotional disturbance, such as frustration and anxiety, when they arrive in a new country (Obery, 1960). Since most are eager to find a job, the process of making career decisions provides an excellent opportunity for immigrants to re-examine their personal values and interests, likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. Hence, an

indepth analysis of their search for meanings will facilitate our understanding not only of their career choices, but also of key aspects of human behavior in general.

Second, various problems confronting immigrants have indeed attracted attention among researchers, but studies of their career behavior are still scanty. Since this study is concerned with recent immigrants from Hong Kong who have made career decisions, its findings may provide useful information about the special career needs of new immigrants. This work might be considered a modest step to fill the gap in the literature.

Third, the increasing influx of Hong Kong immigrants into Canada further enhances the salience of this issue, as well as the need for counseling of this particular group. The number of people immigrating from Hong Kong has been growing rapidly in recent years, rising to a peak of 23,000 in 1987, meaning that 1 out of approximately 220 in Hong Kong has chosen to live in Canada in just one year (Vancouver Sun, Feb 27., 1988)! Since the Chinese from Hong Kong may soon become a significant minority in the Canadian community, contacts between these immigrants and local social services professionals, such as counselors and social workers, will definitely increase as well. Hence an analysis of the decision making patterns of Hong Kong immigrants is not only timely and useful, but also conducive to the improved counseling of this major group of new immigrants.

The findings of this study, nonetheless, cannot be generalized without qualifications to immigrant groups from

other cultures. The small number of subjects might also limit the universality of this study. Yet it seems that the approach of this study may facilitate a fuller and deeper understanding of individual career choices. In sum, this study might hopefully generate more insights in understanding career decisions of immigrants, contribute to the study and solution to this increasingly important problem, as well as enhance the interests of researchers in examining career decision making through the exploration of personal contexts and life histories.

The following thesis has five chapters. Chapter II is a brief literature review of Chinese culture, acculturation theory and decision-making theory, all of which seem relevant to explaining the career choices of immigrants. Chapter III explains the proposed research method to be employed, including the selection of subjects, research design, measurement, and problems in validity and reliability. Chapter IV is the transcription of important parts of interviews with the subjects. Chapter V analyses the information collected and Chapter VI discusses the limitation of the findings and the implications for counselling and research.

CHAPTER II: Review of Literature

The aim of this review is to describe and review three major models of decision making: (1) the conflict model (Janis and Mann, 1977), (2) the rational model (Horan, 1979), and (3) the deciding-in-context model (Sloan, 1987). In particular, each model offers criteria for evaluating the quality of decisions, and accounts of what is involved in making a decision. By comparing each model with case study descriptions of the career decisions made by Hong Kong immigrants, the models can be assessed as to their adequacy in distinguishing between good and bad decisions and in providing an adequate account of how decisions are made.

Since the decisions to be investigated were made by Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, a review of the major features of Chinese culture provides an important background for understanding potentially unique features of their decisions. Culture possibly patterns both the context and form of a decision. For example, a cultural emphasis upon career progress might lead a decider to neglect personal interests in favor of salary and job security. Or a cultural emphasis upon obligation to others such as family, might lead a decider to consult more extensively with, and, perhaps even transfer the responsibility for a decision to, significant others. If the way Chinese immigrants make decisions diverges from models of decision making, their cultural background may help to account for those divergences.

Major Concepts in Chinese Culture

Culture is no longer a neglected area in the study of human behavior. Many researchers have already argued that culture is indeed a prominent factor in shaping the values, perceptions, attitudes and behavior of individuals (Sue & Sue 1972, Sue, 1981, Vontress, 1981). Not only does culture shape one's upbringing, but it also provides an extremely useful basis to examine one's decision making behavior.

The Chinese have over 5,000 years of civilization. Such an influential, historic culture would inevitably have significant impact on the development of Chinese perceptions towards life, human relations, and decision making in everyday life. It is therefore crucial to examine the key features of Chinese culture in order to understand how it has affected the Hong Kong Chinese who have come to live in a Western country such as Canada. Family and "face" are two of the key characteristics of Chinese culture (Baker, 1979, King & Bond 1985, Hsu, 1985, Wong, 1986). A brief review of the two concepts is therefore in order.

Family: As Mei (1967) has aptly pointed out, family is the prototype of all social organization in Confucian social philosophy. Status and authority in Chinese culture are based upon filial piety, age and the principle of kinship proximity, which concerns the degree of closeness and distance with kin. These factors condition the proper amount of deference and obedience that Chinese must show to one

another (Yang, 1959). The relationships between a Chinese person, and his/her family and kinsmen are hence closely related.

According to the Confucian cultural paradigm, the Five Cardinal Relationships (Wu Lun) are of prime importance. Wu Lun concerns the relationships between sovereign and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend (Mei, 1967). The Five Cardinal Relationships were arranged in the order of priority. With the exception of the last one, all of these five sets of relationships are between superior and subordinate. Chinese are expected to respect the above order of relationships in order to minimize conflict or friction within one's family as well as in society at large.

In a Chinese family, the "pecking order" starts first with generation, progresses then to age, and finally to sex (Baker, 1979). One's role in the family is therefore prearranged. Those who do not follow the prescribed set of rules upset the balance and disrupt the harmonious relationships among people. Harmony is highly valued by the Chinese in order to maintain proper family and social relationships (Abbott, 1970; Rubin, 1976). Most of the Chinese have to sacrifice their own interests so as to sustain harmony and serve the common interest of their families. They are taught to suppress any feelings of aggression and hostility towards authority and peers from their early childhood (Bond and Wang, 1983; Wu, 1985). Children are not encouraged to "talk back" to parents and

elders, but are expected to follow the five sets of relationships. Hence, controlling one's emotion has become highly desirable in Chinese culture (Tseng, 1973). However, it is possible the Chinese only conform to the pressures and demands from family or society in a superficial way, in order to maintain harmonious relationships. They may not sincerely believe in what they have done or have to do (Kelman, 1961, Hiniker, 1969).

While the above-mentioned features of Chinese culture are enduring and widely found in Chinese societies all over the world, it is necessary to examine studies specifically related to the people of Hong Kong to see whether a capitalist economic system and continuous contacts with Western cultures have brought about important changes in their attitudes toward family. Lau (1981), a prominent sociologist in Hong Kong, has argued that the type of familism of Hong Kong is different from that of China. He called the Hong Kong variant "utilitarianistic familism". Such a model of familial norms and behavior is defined as a behavioral tendency of an individual to place his familial interests above the interests of society or any of its component individuals and groups, and to structure his relationships with other individuals and groups in such a fashion that the furtherance of his familial interests is the primary consideration. At the same time, among the familial interests, materialistic interests take priority over all others (Lau, 1981, p.201). From Lau's point of view, the

familism found in Hong Kong is different from that which traditionally emphasizes common familial property (e.g. land and house) and the concentration of the familial members in a certain locality. His study also indicated that most Hong Kong Chinese stress both materialistic satisfaction and the importance of family at the same time. The people of Hong Kong are particularly concerned with filling materialistic needs and finding immediate materialistic satisfaction, even though some of them are already well-fed and well-clothed. Moreover, most of them have no long term plans for themselves.

In another study, Wong (1988) argued that familism in Hong Kong is expected to be different from that of traditional China because of the rapid social changes in the territory. Certainly, family solidity is still regarded as being of great importance; the core features of the Chinese family, such as ancestor worship, filial piety, are preserved in Hong Kong. However adjustments have also been made to accommodate the effects of industrialization and colonization. Wong also found out that the Hong Kong Chinese may be described as Westernized only in a superficial sense, since they still treat family solidity as crucial.

Both Lau and Wong have stated that the familism found in Hong Kong is different from the traditional Chinese concept, and yet the importance of familism to the people of Hong Kong cannot be underestimated, despite their fondness for materialism. The people of Hong Kong, as shown in the studies conducted by Lau, are characterized as lacking in long term

planning for the future, while exhibiting a strong interest in materialistic satisfaction and a deep respect of familism. These characteristics therefore should also be found in recent Hong Kong immigrants and might also affect the way in which they make career decisions. For instance, instead of placing their own personal needs first, family concerns and/or material returns might be the primary considerations in making a career choice. A meaningful career may be an occupation which allows them to make a good living, sustain a certain life style and cause no conflict with family demands. Personal needs may only be of secondary importance.

Face: According to Hu (1944), the Chinese concept of face can be divided into two categories, lien 臉 and mien-tze 面子. Lien is the confidence of society in the integrity of an individual's moral character manifested through the "ego". The loss of lien makes it impossible for an individual to function properly within the community. Mien-tze represents a type of prestige or reputation which is obtained through achieving in life, evidenced through success and ostentation (p.45). The Western idea of face does not make the distinction between these two categories. Goffman (1955) stated that "face" is the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the role he has taken during a particular contact (p.213). The Western concept of face is similar to mien-tze as described by Hu. However, a major difference is found in the individual nature of the Western view of face as opposed to the Chinese concept which

emphasizes a relationship between face and a larger social structure. For Chinese people, life is a collective property; the family is of more concern than the individual (King & Bond, 1985). The loss of one's face would mean a loss of face of the whole family. Children are taught from a young age that "A man needs face like a tree needs bark." They are therefore likely to behave cautiously and avoid impulsive behavior which may reflect negatively both on themselves and on their family (King & Bond, 1985, p.37).

The concept of face seems potentially to be a key factor in affecting how Hong Kong immigrants make career choices. Their career decisions are not only an individual concern, but are also related to the reputation and the well-being of the whole family. Pressure to maintain "face" for the family may add additional pressure to the individual in making a "right" choice.

Since family and face are two major concepts in Chinese culture, it can be assumed that they will exert profound influence on the perceptions, values, attitudes and behavior of the Hong Kong immigrants in Canada. However, as has been discussed Chinese culture alone seems insufficient to give us a complete guide to understanding the career choice of these immigrants. The need to sustain family relationships and maintain one's face is powerful, but it is not sufficient in explaining the career choices of the Hong Kong immigrants. Such cultural factors should be considered as part of one's life history, and other factors, such as childhood experience and peer influence, should also be included in

order to examine their influence on the decision making process. It is inadequate to focus only on the cultural perspective in order to understand how Hong Kong Chinese come to make specific career choices.

Acculturation: Another key issue concerning the cultural adjustment and change of immigrants is the concept of acculturation. Acculturation can be understood as the modification of an original culture and the internalization of a new value system. Most of the studies on acculturation have been conducted in the fields of anthropology and sociology, which focus on the continuous contact between groups from different cultures (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936).

As suggested by the Social Science Research (1954), acculturation can be defined as the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems which might lead to individual change. The process may result in internal adjustments because of the acceptance of the culture of the host country, or a reactive adaptation of the traditional modes of life to the new culture. In sum, acculturation can be regarded as the mixture of the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of integration and differentiation, and the generation of developmental sequences, role determinants, and personality traits.

At a more personal level, acculturation involves the overall change processes through which an immigrant continuously engages in first-hand contacts with a new

environment (Kim, 1979). Almost all immigrants have to confront the new values of the host country, which often pose acute threats to their own endeared culture. In order to find their existence in a new place during this process, they may become marginalized people.

Stonequist (1937) defined marginal man as " the individual who through migration, education, marriage or some other influence leaves one's social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another, and finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither" (p.2). He also maintained that most immigrants have experienced a strong sense of loss. Such feelings can be categorized into three main types of "strips": stripped of status (especially for those who experience downward social mobility), stripped of country, and stripped of roots. Many immigrants may become overwhelmed, confused and disoriented by the new socio-cultural environment, and may even lose their judgment abilities.

Studies on acculturation of Chinese immigrants have revealed that even though they participate in some ethnic community organizations for social needs and entertainment, their families are of upmost importance to them (Hayner and Reynolds, 1937, Lee, 1956 & 1960, Lyman, 1968). Using the California Psychological Inventory, Abbott (1970) examined the psychological functioning and changing values of Chinese immigrants. The findings showed that Chinese-Americans, when compared with European-Americans, were more self-restrained, more group oriented and less extroverted and social.

According to a study by Sue and Kirk (1972), the Chinese Americans seem to be less aggressive and evidence a more external locus of control. Kuo and Lin (1977) even suggest that Chinese-American have long been regarded as unassimilable (p.340). Their research indicates that the majority of Chinese Americans still have a relatively strong attachment with their own race and culture, through interactions among family members, close friends, and the Chinese community. Further, another study found that the traditional Chinese value system (such as attitudes toward family and interpersonal relations, and the use of the mother language), were still considered very important among the Chinese (Yao, 1979). The Chinese have also shown the highest rate of language retention (Li, 1988).

While the concept of acculturation apparently provides a useful way for analyzing the experience of immigrants, this perspective also has shortcomings. Acculturation seems to suggest that there is a standard set of values, behaviors and language that all people, including minorities, adopt in a similar manner (Li, 1988). Yet it is unrealistic to presume that people from different cultures can conform similarly to a single culture, because individuals from the same culture behave in different ways. Hence it is necessary to recognize the persistence of sub-cultures, even in a culturally homogenous society.

Models in Decision Making

After briefly discussing some key issues concerning Chinese culture, it is necessary to a review of the major approaches in decision making. Most decision making theories aim to explain human choice behavior by analyzing the key elements of the decision making process -- such as perception, information gathering, and evaluation of alternatives. These theories often utilize a rational model which emphasizes rationality and cost-benefit analysis. Since most approaches focus mainly on 'rationality' and how it affects the quality of decisions, the process of achieving rationality is presumed to be the loci for understanding one's decision.

Rationality is often considered central to making a "good" or "right" choice. Some studies on decision making avoid using the word "rationality". Chernoff and Moses (1959) suggested that decision making is a process of utility maximization, in which people decide in the hope of getting maximum utility rather than finding the best choice. However, since the concept of utility maximization excludes personal attributes, the meaning of choices to individuals is thus completely neglected. In a similar vein, Etzioni (1967) suggested that decision making is a kind of mixed scanning which involves the searching, collecting, processing, evaluating and weighing of information. However, this approach is no different from the mainstream rational approach which emphasizes the weighing of different

alternatives. Herbert Simon (1976) argued that because of the pressure of time, personal limitations, and various external constraints, people actually do not have the ability to maximize; and they can only hope to make the best of their decisions. Although personal factors, such as personal limitations, were acknowledged in Simon's studies, the subjective context of how an individual chooses was still left untouched. The rational efforts in explaining decision making from different angles are useful in broadening our understanding of this phenomenon, yet they all fail to offer any insights to understanding the meaning of choices as valued by the decision maker.

Whether as a descriptive or prescriptive model, the dominant approaches in decision making seem to ignore the key attributes of the decision maker and his/her decision making contexts. What each decision means is distinctive to each person, not only because of the differences in situational factors, but also because of the complexity of personal contexts, such as culture, socio-economic background, and life history. Hence, these variables interweave to form a web upon which we perceive, understand and evaluate our choices. Human beings do not make decisions in only a cool, calculating way, nor do they decide without being influenced by past and present life experiences. Individual characteristics would surely exert powerful influence on behavior. In short, this section suggests that while rational approaches are clearly relevant in understanding the career behavior of Hong Kong immigrants, they are not

entirely satisfactory because they fail to consider the impact of individual attributes, life histories, and cultural contexts. While models of decision making are plentiful, only three major contributions relevant to counseling will be discussed: (1) the conflict model (Janis and Mann, 1977), (2) the rational model (Horan, 1979), and (3) the deciding-in-context model (Sloan, 1987).

The Conflict Model: Janis and Mann (1977) conceptualized decision making as a conflict-ridden process. Arguing that decision making was not simply a matter of cognition, since emotions of the decision maker are involved, they considered choice behavior as a type of hot cognition, an interactive process between thoughts and feelings. Since such interaction influences our anticipation of loss and/or gain from a decision, psychological conflicts (such as uncertainties, apprehension, and a desire to avoid from choosing an alternative) is generated.

Janis and Mann considered these conflicts in decision making an essential factor in making quality choices. They suggested that a medium level of stress produced by such conflicts facilitates better decisions. The lower the level of stress, the less motivated the decision makers is because of a low sense of urgency. As a result, they tend not to search for new information or carefully consider implications of each alternative. However, if the stress level is too high, panic prevails and the decision maker becomes too frightened to take any action.

Janis and Mann postulated seven major criteria for evaluating the quality of a decision. These seven criteria together constitute what they called vigilant information processing. While these steps are complicated, they argued that such information processing will help reduce unanticipated setbacks and post-decisional regrets. These seven criteria are as follows:

"The decision maker, to the best of his ability and within his information-processing capabilities:

1. thoroughly canvasses a wide range of alternative courses of action.
2. surveys the full range of objectives to be fulfilled and the values implicated by the choice;
3. carefully weighs whatever he knows about the costs and risks of negative consequences, as well as the positive consequences, that could flow from each alternative;
4. intensively searches for new information relevant to further evaluation of the alternatives;
5. correctly assimilates and takes account of any new information or expert judgment to which he is exposed, even when the information or judgment does not support the course of action he initially prefers;
6. re-examines the positive and negative consequences of all known alternatives, including those originally regarded as unacceptable, before making a final choice;
7. makes detailed provisions for implementing or executing the chosen course of action, with special attention to contingency plans that might be required if various known risks were to materialize." (p. 11)

According to Janis and Mann, four basic questions have to be answered in the decision making process: First, are the risks serious if one does not change? Second, are the risks serious if one does change? Third, is it realistic to find a better solution? Finally, is there sufficient time to search

for information and deliberate? Each question will influence a decider's psychological condition and level of stress. The level of stress affects coping patterns in responding to each question. Five coping patterns are suggested in their model: (1) unconflicted adherence, (2) unconflicted change, (3) defensive avoidance, (4) hypervigilance, and (5) vigilance (p.70).

In order to put these ideas into practice, Janis and Mann proposed a decisional "balance sheet" as a scheme for decision makers to plan for action. Aside from capturing both cognitive and motivational aspects of deciding, this balance sheet provides an analytical framework for assessing what would happen when a decision maker uses a defective coping pattern. Each entry on the sheet refers to an anticipated favorable or unfavorable consequence that a decision maker needs to consider before making a choice. They expected that this scheme will help others to make better decisions if they go carefully through each of the seven steps previously outlined.

The Rational Decision Making Model: In contrast to the exhaustive study by Janis and Mann, Horan (1979) mainly focused on decision making skills in counselling. Instead of offering a novel approach to decision making, he postulated a four-stage model by synthesizing a number of already existing cognitive-behavioral models. These four stages are: (1) conceptualization, (2) enlargement of response repertoire, (3) identification of discriminative stimuli, and (4)

response selection respectively.

Stage one is conceptualization, which concerns the construction of cognition of the environment. The decision maker has to develop a clear definition of the problem or decision. Stage two concerns the enlargement of response repertoire. After the situation has been appraised by the decision maker, he/she asks what can be done and searches for as many potential alternative responses as possible.

Stage three focuses on "the identification of stimuli discriminative of positive or negative consequences for each response" (Horan, 1979, p. 175). Based on past or newly acquired experience, the decision maker then assesses the probabilities of utilities from various possible alternatives. The final stage is response selection. The decision maker ranks all the alternatives and implements the best possible one. However, the choice may be tentative, depending upon future developments and feedbacks.

According to Horan, the quality of decision making can be evaluated by whether the decision maker has exhibited the necessary behaviors in each of the stage of deciding. In the first stage, three skills are pertinent to the process of conceptualization: a) the ability to maintain low level of affective arousal; b) the ability to define correctly the choice problem; and c) the ability to explain the decision making paradigm.

In the second stage, Horan suggested that in order to enlarge the response repertoire, the decision maker has to have the ability to avoid an impulsive response, identify all

known alternatives to the counsellor, and plan to search for additional alternatives. In stage three, the decision maker should identify known discriminative stimuli to the counsellor and search for new ones. "What would happen if I did what could be done?" is thus the key question to be addressed. In the final stage, the decision maker has to have the ability to determine what they will do. They have to assess the probabilities of expected utilities, adopt and explain a response selection paradigm (such as the balance sheet proposed by Janis and Mann), and implement the selected course of action. In Horan's view, the quality of decisions will be improved if the decision maker has acquired these necessary abilities in the decision making process.

While making a serious effort to synthesize the major works on decision making and apply them in counseling, Horan again failed to enlighten our understanding of choice behavior beyond a mechanical stage-by-stage description which might or might not be universally applicable. First, Horan conceptualized decision making as choosing the best alternative in order to maximize utilities. While decision making can be quantified by means of self-reporting scales in his view, it is clear that the meaning and the uniqueness of decisions are completely excluded. As Sloan has pointed out (1987), Horan has considered quantification to be a highly reliable device in decision making. Yet it seems that personal values are more subject to the processes of clarification and understanding than to quantification.

Second, while Horan attempted to develop a 'rational' decision making model, he failed to give adequate attention to the feelings of the decision maker and the intricacies of subjective processes in decision making. The complexity and richness of personal meaning in one's choices are disregarded. His approach tries to examine decision making through an analytical framework that emphasizes extensive information gathering and rational calculus rather than exploration of personal feelings and connections between our inner worlds and relevant decision making contexts. Not only are the subjective meanings of choices to the decision maker dropped entirely from consideration, but variations in human capacities, motives and other factors which render a major life decision unique are also ignored (Sloan, 1987, p.42).

The Deciding In Context Model: In contrast to both Janis, Mann, and Horan, Sloan (1987) argued that most of the decision making approaches fail to emphasize the meaning, context and uniqueness of decisions because they all adopt a logical, rationalistic model; their conceptions of human behavior are mechanical and inadequate. Instead, reflective understanding of decisions should be our primary task because only in this way can we understand the meaning of specific decisions for individuals in different contexts, and why he/she resorts to self-deception. By using a "phenomenological" approach to examine the decision making process, we might be able to capture more accurately the process of decision-making. By establishing a rapport with decision makers, we might understand their frames of

reference and appreciate the real origins of their behavior. Put simply, Sloan stressed the importance of understanding the interrelationship between the individual and the different contexts within which the decision maker creates meaning. In exploring specific major life decisions, such as career choice, not only must psychological constraints on rationality be identified, but also social, material and practical influences on human choice behavior must be explored. Sloan's ideas concerning decision making help to fill the gap left by the prevailing decision making theories since it examine how individuals choose from their own perspective, and uncover factors involves in the misunderstanding of situations which can lead to a faulty decision.

Sloan argued that decision making is an interaction between self understanding and social, historical, cultural, or other contexts. Instead of just focusing on one or several special contexts in examining decision making, he stressed the uniqueness of individuals. He maintained that an individual would be affected by different contexts in a particular situation. The nature and number of contexts vary from decision to decision. Individual differences in turn influence the number and nature of contexts that determine the process and outcome of decision making.

Rather than presenting a step-by-step guideline for making better choices, Sloan highlighted that decision making involves one's socio-cultural background, personal meaning,

self awareness and life history. He borrowed the concept of life structure from Levinson. According to Levinson, life structure is the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at any given time. Life structure is composed of three key elements: (1) self-world transactions, i.e. the immediate interactions between relationships and roles; (2) constraints and opportunities, e.g. skills, goals, wishes, ideals, fantasies, and conflicts, which affect individuals in realizing their potential, and (3) mediations between individual activities and their socio-cultural contexts. However, life structure is influenced not only by external factors, but also by self-images and unconscious intentions. Aside from serving as a corrective balance to the subjectivism usually adopted, life structure also provides a more objective stand point for deliberation in deciding, through continuous self-questioning and examination of self-world relationships.

According to Sloan, every major decision derives its special meaning from the contexts within which it is made. Deciding is thus conceived as an amorphous process of constant questioning and answering. Experience influences our assumptions of the world, which in turn directly affects our judgments. Sloan's conception of context is quite encompassing, including historical, cultural, developmental, organizational, and interpersonal aspects. Further, contexts may interact with one another in the process of deciding. A decider might not be consciously aware of these interactions. In the final analysis, our self perception, and understanding

of others and the world are crucial in blocking or facilitating our deeper self awareness and hence our decision making.

Individuals often try to fulfill their desires, intentions and wishes in decision making. Thus every decision is imbued with special meaning to the decision maker, whether he/she is conscious of them or not. According to Sloan, decision making is not simply a private choice that only concerns the decision maker involved. Rather, it is closely tied with the conscious or unconscious images of self in relation to others. Self perception is in turn heavily influenced by interpersonal experience and socialization.

Sloan argued that most decisions are actually denials of the self-and-other relationship. Decision makers rationalize their actions, hence intellectualizing defenses which repress an unacceptable vision or alternative. He illustrated, through cases, that decision making often involves only a subjection of consciousness to relations of power, force, and authority. Our decision making is therefore closely related to the specific social and historical contexts within which we make our choices. The demands of "conscience," "reality," and "desire" are fused into compromises that appear as the "only way to go." Therefore, in sharp contrast to the mainstream approaches of decision making, Sloan suggested that individuals do not really have the freedom to decide since they are subject to a great deal of external pressures. He maintained that only if decision makers can grasp their

situations objectively for themselves can they generate more options. Otherwise, they are forcing themselves to submit to external demands. The greater the self awareness, the better the chance decision makers can formulate their own identities and preferences, and the easier they can pursue their desires, wishes and intentions in accordance with their own expectations rather than those of the others.

Our dependency on others was regarded analogically by Sloan as a master-and-slave relationship. Individuals are not free to choose. Hence the decisions they make are at best self-deceptions. Unlike the mechanical rational decision making model, he conceptualized good decision making as the freedom to choose, and freedom from automatic compliance to external pressures and predetermined alternatives. It involves the freedom to critically examine and change situations, not to conform within what he considered coercive structures. In short, freedom in decision making results from pursuing what is best without being unduly subject to others' demands. In addition, the economic context is often neglected by decision makers. In the modern world, one tends to exchange "self" for "money" (Sloan, 1987 p. 159). By recognizing how our finances affect us may provide more options in making good choices. Sloan maintained that we seldom pay attention to many aspects of our lives. We simply accept the status quo and rarely challenge our existing life pattern. In order to make good decisions, we must focus on opportunities, or methods which assist us in overcoming the obstacles of life. By attempting to overcome these obstacles,

we may be able to identify more alternatives and make better choices.

A Comparison of the Models

These three major theories have both similarities and differences. The rational decision making model and the conflict model have more elements in common with one another than with the deciding-in-context model. Horan, and Janis and Mann all assumed that human beings rely upon rationality and cost-benefit analysis in decision making because they want to maximize their payoffs. Thus, whether in explaining or prescribing, they believed that human beings decide in a conscious as well as cautious manner. Rather than viewing people as unique, emotional and psychological beings, they considered them as highly rational, calculative. Hence, they all suggested a step-by-step guidelines for making better choices. This perspective, as has already been discussed earlier, is quite different from that of Sloan, who emphasizes the personal aspects of decision making and the contexts within which one make choices.

However, Horan's model is not entirely identical to that of Janis and Mann. The former mainly synthesizes a variety of cognitive-behavioral models in the rational decision making tradition (including that of Janis and Mann) while the latter focuses on the psychological conflict, notably stress, generated in the process of decision making. By emphasizing both the positive and negative roles of stress in decision making, Janis and Mann thus incorporated not only cognitive

but also emotional aspects of human behavior. The decisional balance sheet designed by these two authors also addresses the importance of significant others in affecting decision making. Horan, on the other hand, paid much greater attention only to individual considerations in decision making.

Sloan postulated a rather different approach in understanding decision making. He acknowledged the role of rationality and rationalization in decision making, but more as a defense to justify one's choice, a self-deception. He aptly pointed out that each decision has special meaning which is not addressed by either the rational or the conflict model. This meaning, which may or may not be recognized by the decision maker, is embedded in the relationship between individual and the variety of contexts pertinent to the decision making situation. A decision, as Sloan has argued, is a representation of our identity. One can only appreciate the "rationale" of a decision by exploring the relationships between self and others as well as between self and the world. Consequently, a mechanistic approach, as found in the rational or conflict models, can never fully explain why a particular decision has been made, because they fail to address the functioning of the conscious and the subconscious levels, or interactions between the two, from which we derive meaning for our decision making behavior.

If one appreciates the insights of Sloan, then it is clear that the other two models fail to provide a useful guideline for making better decisions because they cannot

explain the phenomenon correctly itself. While the different strategies offered by the rational and conflict models might serve as suggested methods for making better choices, they are also quite superficial and rigid as they ignore the uniqueness of each individual and the prominent role of contexts and constraints on decision making. Rather than postulating a simplistic framework in explanation and prescription, as in the rational or conflict models, Sloan's model enables us to examine decision making as a much more complex phenomenon.

Sloan's contextual model encourages an understanding of decisions by exploring the relevant contexts from which meaning is derived. Such an approach in understanding human behavior is more consistent with a counsellor's responsibility to appreciate the richness of human existence. The focus on context enables one to look at the intricate relations between self and others as well as between self and the world. The emphasis on individual uniqueness also helps to distinguish the differences among living human beings. Having discussed the strengths and weaknesses of these three models, the next chapter will briefly discuss the research method of this study.

CHAPTER III: Research Method

Case study is the research method used in this study. According to Yin (1984), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and which multiple sources of evidence are used. His definition suggests that case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (p. 14), a method which is particularly useful for this study. While this research aims at examining the career decisions of Hong Kong immigrants, I believe that each of their career decisions is not a simple decision to find an occupation. In fact, each decision is also affected profoundly by life histories and the relevant contexts within which choices are made. This theoretical orientation and the nature of my topic suggest that case study is the most appropriate method for inquiry.

Survey may allow us to identify a common pattern from a sample that is representative of a larger population. Yet the use of questionnaires and interviews in collecting information from a large group of subjects severely limits the depth into which we can explore each case. Although the use of case study restricts the universality and representativeness of my findings, it does help in investigating the details of each case, in exploring the intricate interrelationships among different variables, and in probing into the life histories and contexts of each

decision through indepth interviews.

Experimental designs enables us to control some variables while observing the influence of others. However this kind of design is neither appropriate nor feasible in this study. The subjects to be investigated are human beings who have made decisions involving some of the most important aspects of their lives, such as career, family and personal development. Unlike other topics that can use experimental designs, the impact of independent variables, such as cultural background and personal history, on the career decisions of recent immigrants from Hong Kong, cannot be separated and controlled under an experimental setting. In fact, some of the advantages of an experimental design, e.g. the singling out of the impact of environmental factors on the dependent variable, can be partially achieved by comparing the similarities and differences of our two cases. As Schramm (1971) has rightly pointed out, case study is particularly useful in examining decision making behavior because we can illuminate why certain decisions are made, how they are implemented, and what results come from these choices.

The design of this research is a multiple case study. Two participants, Linda and Michael, will take part in indepth interviews so that the investigator can identify the salient patterns of their life histories and explore the rationales, contexts, and environmental constraints that shaped their key career decisions. These interviews, which

are recorded by a cassette recorder, provide the key source of information for my analysis. These two subjects are also invited to review the draft of their respective case reports in order to ensure that my interpretation of their life histories and career choices are not tainted by my personal biases or misunderstanding. In addition to comparing and contrasting these two cases, three theoretical perspectives will be applied to each case in order to determine which is the most useful in explaining their career behavior.

These two cases are not chosen randomly. Since it is not easy to find willing respondents who will open up themselves to the investigator, they have been introduced to me by friends. However, they are not atypical among the group of independent immigrants who recently come from Hong Kong. Both Linda and Michael, separate individuals, are young professionals in their early 30s. Both are married with one child. Both received university educations, either in Hong Kong or abroad, and both had decent jobs before coming to Canada. (For details of their background, please refer to Chapter IV). They correspond to what I observe as the typical kind of independent immigrants who have been able to leave Hong Kong for other countries in the mid 1980s, and they fit almost perfectly into the type of independent immigrants targeted by the Canada government. Further, since they share a similar Chinese and socio-economic background, we can explore deeply into the personal factors that ultimately have shaped their career paths, without being distracted by these background variables.

CHAPTER IV: Case History

Case 1: Linda

Unlike most of my co-workers or friends, I had never thought of immigration in my life. Everything was fine for me when I was in Hong Kong. However, the ambition of Mark, my husband, always posed a threat to the placidity of our lives. He was so desperate to study abroad since his early adulthood that he kept trying to apply for postgraduate studies after his graduation from university. His dream did not really bother me because he was so far an average student. Yet I felt disappointed because he did not want to settle down. I longed for a stable family life ever since our marriage. No matter how much I respected him, I felt angry with him at times. He only thought of his postgraduate studies and was never keen on building our home. Well, I had to admit that fate seemed to be unfair to him. Even though he worked very hard, his performance was not well recognized by his bosses. However, I was afraid to tell him about my accomplishments at work since I did not want to stir up any jealousy between us.

In the winter of 1986, Mark told me he wanted to apply for postgraduate study in England. At the same time, he also wanted to apply for immigration to Canada because of the widespread rumor that the Canadian government would accept more independent applicants. To tell the truth, I was not entirely excited about his plans. My anger towards him burst out again. He did not seem to care about me and Nancy, our three-year old daughter. Leaving Hong Kong would be painful

for me. I wanted to be with my family! I was not sure whether my elder brother and younger sister would take care of my parents since he already had a family and she was going to marry. Moreover, the dream of having our home was again a fantasy. It was so near and yet so far! I had waited for more than five years and I regretted that I had not put pressure on Mark about building our home rather than allowing him to wander around. Nonetheless, I hid my feelings and showed no sign of objection because I did not want to hurt him. Believing that his plans might fail, I decided not to think about it.

I could not control my anxiety when Mark told me that he was accepted by a university in England. All of a sudden, I had no idea of what I should do. I felt that the burden on my shoulders was so heavy that I could not even breathe. The fact was that we could not afford to stay together in England for two years. How about Nancy, our lovely daughter who was only three years old at that time? Her development would definitely be interrupted by the separation from Mark. To control my frustration was easier said than done. Not knowing how to tell him how much I wanted him to stay with us, I was really upset and even angry with myself. Money was a major concern for his overseas studies. Our savings could only pay $\frac{3}{5}$ of his school fees. How could we draw more from our already tight budget. After weeks of discussion, we came to the conclusion that I could offer him some financial support by giving him the money I gave to my parents every month. Although I was unhappy about the decision, it seemed to be

the only solution for him to realize his dream. The discussion did relieve me a bit, but my guilt over my withdrawal of financial support was never lessened. Actually, my parents did not ask for any money from me. Nevertheless, my financial support was one of the means to show my respect to them. Anyway, I kept on telling myself that I had to face the reality and it took me a long time to accept that I would shoulder all the financial cost for his study. My tension was soon lightened. Our application for immigration to Canada was successful one month later! It might be a turning point. I checked with my close friends who had been in Canada before about Mark's chance of being admitted by the university in Canada. Their replies were very encouraging. In addition, the right of being a Canadian citizenship would allow Mark to enjoy a student fee on a local rate. That meant we could be together! I valued the togetherness of a whole family. It was indeed a good alternative. Time passed extremely slowly on the day I planned to inform Mark about the information I collected from my friends. I remember my eagerness to tell Mark about the good news and could not sit still on the couch. I was so tense that I watched every movement of the hands of the clock. I almost screamed when Mark returned home. Unexpectedly, he did not seem to be interested in the news. Although I understood how frustrated he was, I could not calm down my anger. Arguments did not help. When I was young, I lost all the disputes at home. My parents did not listen to my reasons; they just said that I was naughty.

Instead of arguing with Mark, I decided not to speak to him because he used reason to defend himself rather than listen. Failing to convince myself that he really cared about us, I was hurt! The ice between us melted in a very slow process. Anyhow, Mark had to go to Canada because the school fees in England would be sharply increased; it was not feasible for him to study there. His decision yet gave me another conflict. I questioned whether I was too aggressive toward me. I felt sorry for him. I thought I should at least give him some emotional support. Well, I had to admit that it was good to know that there would be no separation for us!

It took a lot of courage for me to inform my parents of our immigration. They looked happy about our decision. I believed that they would miss us. My sense of guilt towards my parents built up because I could no longer take care of them. On the date of our departure, tears came from my Mom. It was so heartbreaking for me because she seldom cried. I told myself I wanted to stay. However, there was no miracle for me. The weight of my steps increased rapidly as I approached the plane. I walked so slowly that Mark had to push me into the plane. I could hardly notice any passengers on the plane although it was full. I had to soothe myself by looking at the family photo. What a beautiful picture!

Life was never easy for us after we arrived at Canada in the fall of 1987. We chose to stay in Toronto because there were more job opportunities. I was lucky to work in the same company. However, Mark was very disappointed by the rejection of his application to the postgraduate program in the

universities in Canada. He could not even pursue similar jobs in Canada because of his lack of Canadian experience. He was unemployed! What I could do was to assure him of my emotional and financial support. My responsibility had never been so heavy before! It was stressful. Finally, when Mark got a job in the summer of 1988, I felt relieved and happy.

Toronto was too big for me. I had no roots here. I was still trying my best to adjust to a new lifestyle. Since I did not know how to drive and had to depend on Mark to take me to the office and return home, I was not comfortable with this dependency. Yet I had no time to learn how to drive and had no spare money to buy a car on my own. In addition, I found it quite stressful to be a mother, an employee and a wife at the same time. I still remembered my good old days, when my mom helped me to take care of my daughter and my maid did all the household chores. I knew that I loved Hong Kong. I wanted to go back!

Career Decision

My husband and I had visited Canada three months before our immigration in order to explore our job opportunities. Toronto was attractive because of the low unemployment rate. We also talked to friends in Hong Kong and in Canada about our employment potential. I tried not to believe in fate. However, my Mom always told us that people were destined to good or bad fates before they were born and there was no way for us to change our fate. I felt scared by her statement so I tried very hard in everything in order to get back my sense

of control. Instead of using a wait-and-see approach in exploring my career opportunities, I attempted to get help from my friends. My efforts were not in vain. I was so pleased to know that some former staff of my company in Hong Kong could find a job in its subsidiary in Canada. The information did not reduce my anxiety because it was not a 100% guarantee that I could get a job in the subsidiary in Canada. It was uncommon for me to express my concerns to my supervisor even though he had a lot of overseas connections. I was afraid that he might misunderstand me as taking advantage of him. My supervisor impressed me as if he were my father, a person who was hard working, honest but quiet. Communication between my father and I was minimal since he was busy with his business. I found it very difficult to distinguish my supervisor from my father and I had the impression that I might hurt my supervisor if I said something inappropriate. My tension escalated when I told my supervisor that I would immigrate to Canada. I was then not only surprised by the introductory letter given to me by him to his friend, who was now the personnel officer of the subsidiary in Canada, but also the recognition given by him. With his letter, I was pretty confident that I could at least get a temporary position in that subsidiary.

Indeed, immigration has caused a lot of changes in my life, but not my job. I am still a system analyst for the subsidiary of the same computer company in Canada. My job is to provide assistance to customers on how to operate computers. Knowledge of the operation and structure of

computers is necessary for my duties. Besides making contacts with customers, I am also able to have some time alone in my office. Meeting people is not particularly tense to me. Nonetheless, I appreciate having some time for myself. Everyone told me that It was a good job for me, including my parents. I wondered at first, but I began to accept it because not every job would enable me to have same free time for myself.

Well, I did not plan to be a systems analyst in 1984 after I graduated from the MBA program in Hong Kong. I was so disappointed that my specialization in finance did not help me to find a job in banking because of the poor economy at that time. The feeling of frustration and loss did not go away until XXX computer company launched an intensive recruitment program in our university. It was very natural for me to make an attempt. I thought I might at least get a job and I did not really care what kind of job I got. I just did not want to stay home. I was uncomfortable when my parents and husband asked me about my job search. I felt like I was a failure if I could not find any job. They all thought that MBA students were in great demand, hence giving me a lot of pressure. Besides, I needed a job to run my family as I had just got married. The recruitment was the only alternative! It seemed unfair to leave all the financial burdens to my husband.

The first day I took up my job was quite impressive to me. We had about ten trainees. All of us seemed enthusiastic

about the new job. However I discovered that many of them were not trustworthy. Gossip spread around the office, with no confirmation, like a flu. It was very intimidating for me to open up myself because some staff might misuse my opinions to attack others. No politics for me! Otherwise, I might get hurt. Silence was the golden rule though I loved to make friends. To be a system analyst just fit me, so I did not need to rely heavily on the cooperation of my colleagues. My Mom was right. She always stressed that our concerns should be kept within the family because people were not reliable.

To many people, my job was quite ideal in terms of freedom and remuneration. However, I was a bit uneasy about the interpersonal relationships. I tended not to tell my colleagues about my immigration. I appeared as if I were an introverted person in order to avoid mistakes.

My seven years of working experience did help me to become aware of the fact that my strong sense of responsibility and commitment would help me to work under pressure and perform well in different areas. Way back to my childhood, my parents, especially my Mom, always highlighted to me that high school education was good enough for females, because we would get married eventually, yet more education would be required for my elder brother because he had to shoulder a family when he grew up. What a ridiculous idea! I felt resentful toward this statement and my tears flowed. Anyway, I held back and refused to express my sadness to my family because they would not listen to it. When compared to my introverted brother, I was considered to be disobedient

and rebellious. They paid almost all the attention to him simply because he was male! I hoped I could be a male too when I was young. I wondered if I was really naughty or if I was just outspoken in my family. Without any confirmation from my friends, I was pretty sure that I was a good girl. Even when I was a kid, I tried to voice my opinion if there was anything unfair to me. My Mom considered it unacceptable because it meant that I did not respect my parents. I was angry about that since I was prevented from pursuing my rights. My dissatisfaction was never recognized by my parents; I was discouraged to take further action. Confused by their attitudes towards me, I decided to keep my mouth shut because it was the best way to protect myself. At the same time, I compared myself with the other kids in my school. My observations did tell me that I was an easy kid for my parents, but I was not approved of by them. "Bad" kid! Oh! I did not want to be labeled as "bad" kid by my parents. Otherwise, I would be left alone in our room. My experience was very scary, to me, I spoke back once when I was in grade 2, and my Mom kept me in our bedroom for several hours. So I acquiesced to their opinions. The word "bad" was connected to the loss of love and acceptance from my parents, I was afraid to face that type of loss. Although I could not control myself in giving my opinions about any injustice, I retreated when they showed their disagreement.

My parents were not highly educated, even though they did spend a lot in putting us in a private elementary school,

so that we could get a better education. Similar to most of the Chinese, they believed that education was the only means for us to have a better future. My Dad was a driver of construction materials, indeed a physically demanding job. He had to work from morning till dawn with little time left for my family. He seldom spoke to us or took us out for activities. The interaction between us grew only in the past few years after he could afford to hire two workers to share his duties. My mom had to do laundry for others to maintain a living. She emphasized that they worked very hard to support us and they hoped that we would not do anything to dishonour our family.

My mom never suggested to me that any particular job would be suitable to me. Anyhow, she always emphasized that life was hard for a blue collar worker because the demand for physical strengths was high but the salary was low. However, it was different for a white collar worker since the working environment was, at least, comfortable and decent. I agreed with her because of my parents' example. Moreover, I felt bad because I always had the intention to surpass my brother.

Although my parents did not scold me for my unsatisfactory performance in elementary school, I became aware that if I did not work hard, I would waste my parents' time and effort especially because my brother did not perform well in school. First I felt guilty; then I decided to work hard.

My high school education did not really give me any insights in career exploration. Two career exhibitions were

organized by my high school. But they focused heavily on nursing and teaching because all the students were females. That was all I knew about jobs when I was a teenager. Thinking that the limitation of career choices was linked to my gender, I had the idea that if I worked hard, I might be in a better position to get a decent job, even though I might end up being a teacher or a nurse.

My efforts were rewarded! I was accepted by one of the universities in Hong Kong. Well, my education was not restricted to secondary school. Excited by the admission, I could not sleep for a week. Nevertheless, I seemed to lose my courage to inform my parents of my admission. I was somewhat frightened because they might refuse to support me financially. I practiced in my mind how to tell them and ask for help. Surprisingly, my parents did not reject my studying in university, since the financial situation of my family had improved. Uncertain about the subject I wanted to study, I ended up choosing geography because I got the highest grade in it. In fact, Geography was not practical enough for me, so I switched to Economics when I was a sophomore. I had developed some interest in Economics after I took an introductory course. What a disappointment! I was indeed too impatient, in relying on my impulse to choose Economics. The program was very theoretical. I managed to get through the program with fairly good grades but I did not want to carry on. It was time for me to find a job. Without any idea of what type of work I wanted to do, I was quite nervous. I went

home late for about a month in order to avoid any questions from my parents.

The year of my graduation did not come together with a year of prosperity. I had checked with the appointment services in my university. I was so frustrated to find that teaching was almost the only job opportunity for graduates. Well, teaching was at least a decent job. I decided to make several attempts, but all were rejected. I felt bad about the whole situation. With many questions about my ability, I guessed my parents might be right: females might not need a lot of education. Education did not ensure us of any good career. Anyway, a teaching assistant post in the business school of my university was available and finally my application was accepted. I felt relieved after I got a job. At least I felt I was accountable to my parents. Before I worked in the business school, I was not clear about what business was. Business appeared to be associated with materialism and corruption. It sounded a bit dirty. However, I discovered that business did cover a wide variety of areas, such as business management, information systems, marketing and finance. It was very practical and useful in developing the economy. Moreover, it was dynamic and interesting. I had the idea that the more I knew about business, the better I could manage it. Two years of work in the business school was in fact enough for me to understand what business was and to develop a interest in it. Yet I decided to study for an MBA because the job market was still poor. I believed that the MBA degree might enable me to find a better job.

Consequently, I became a system analyst in a multinational corporation. Quite satisfied with my job, I had no plan to give it up for at least a few years. In fact, it was not an ideal time for me to take a risk. Risk taking would certainly prevent my husband from pursuing his plan. I felt guilty if I gave up my support. Although I was a bit annoyed at losing the promotion opportunity of my job, I believed that Mark's development was far more important than mine since he is the head of the family. I remembered how my Mom had supported my father when the economic situation was really bad. With the belief that my pressure would only be temporary, I opened the wardrobe calmly and tried to find a dress for myself to go to work that day.

Case 2: Michael

From the mirror, I can see the reflection of myself. That is myself, the Michael I have known for 36 years, I look at least healthy and energetic. Having worked as a teacher for over ten years has not changed my appearance. I still have my spectacles and the same skirts and pants. However, I am now living in a completely different horizon.

The word "immigration" does not sound alien to me at all. It struck my mind at least three times after I graduated from a university in Canada in 1979. Time flies. It was almost 9 years ago that I became a landed immigration in 1987 at last. Anyway, I can remember how I had reacted differently to the idea of immigration each time. I might phrase it as a process of transforming passivity into activity.

The six years that I spent in Canada for my undergraduate study were a luxury to me. Besides the opportunity to study abroad, what I valued most was the freedom from the control of my parents. Their advice and assistance were certainly valuable to me, but I also treasured the opportunity to be independent. It was such a relief to live on my own even though I felt nervous without getting directions from my parents! To be honest, to be the only son in a traditional Chinese family did provide me with lots of privileges. I got not only what I wanted, but also an exceptionally high level of tolerance from my parents. Their concern for my well-being was so visible in every aspect of my life! They planned almost everything for me before I got married to make sure that I was on the right track. I was annoyed by their lack of confidence in me. But I lived like a nobody, muddling around. Their expectation of my submission and obedience contributed to my already confused self identity. I yielded to their power because their provision of shelter, food and protection were essential to my survival. Resistance to their control did not work. Even when I was a young kid, I made numerous attempts to speak up for myself, but my voice never caught the attention of my parents. Such discouragement obviously overwhelmed a kid like me. Instead of expressing my needs, I told myself the best way not to cause any hassle to myself was to remain silent. I applied this strategy in preparing for postgraduate study at the time I was about to graduate from university. To continue my study at the graduate level could be interpreted as a means

for me to escape from my parents' control again and build up my confidence to be an independent person. So far, it would be a good excuse for me because studying was congruent with their belief that better education would lead to a brighter future. It would be almost embarrassing for them to say "No"! I decided not to tell my parents that I wanted to continue my study but I planned to spend the summer of 1976 with them in Hong Kong and then return to Canada. My decision did not really help me settle down. I actually practiced several times how to tell them about my plan! Suddenly the idea of immigration flashed into my mind! I wondered if I could be an immigrant, I might afford the tuition fees by myself because the fees would be much lower for local students. I felt a bit worthless since I was entirely dependent on my parents' financial support. However, I could not think of any other way that could liberate myself from their domination. Yet when my parents told me to stay in Hong Kong, I felt guilty to refuse. So I was in Hong Kong ever since the summer of 1976!

Although I did not apply for immigration after my undergraduate degree, immigration was still a tempting idea to me. As a newly wed in the early 1980's, I did not feel that my marriage brought me the promise of which a lot of people mentioned, such as success and a sense of security. I was upset about my teaching job as well. I worked really hard on my teaching with the hope that my students would benefit. My students showed disrespect to me no matter how much

efforts I had spent on my job. I felt deeply hurt by their response! In addition to my dissatisfaction with the school administration, I was confused about what I should do in order to gain an upper hand on the teaching situation. I admitted to myself that I was not born with the talent of a brilliant teacher. However, I did try! I disliked the rejection from my students, which made me feel that I was a kid before my parents again. I needed respect and recognition. I guessed my mom noticed my unhappiness. She talked to me and suggested that immigration might be a possible solution for me so that I could try something new in Canada. Canada would be an ideal place for me because I had been there before. What a good suggestion! I felt very pleased with such an understanding mom. She also hinted that she could give me financial support for my application because I did not earn much from my job. Excited by such an amazing idea, I put it forward to my wife.

Just as I expected, my wife was a bit puzzled by my reasons for immigration. I told her about my job dissatisfaction and tried to convince her with various reasons. Nonetheless my argument did not satisfy her. She did not agree that immigration was the best solution to alleviate my job dissatisfaction and to provide a good opportunity for me to start a new life. Her hesitation annoyed me because I wanted to do something for both of us. Wondering how deeply she loved me, I tended not to speak to her and retreated to my own thoughts. Soon, my wife noticed my disappointment. She consented to apply for immigration at last. I felt guilty

about that because I did not want to force her to do anything she did not like. I wanted to make sure that I could make her happy, yet I was uncertain about my ability to be a good husband. I had the urge to get frequent assurance from my wife. She did give me some assurance by telling me how much she needed me. It was such a good feeling! I then applied for immigration. I had no information about the possibility of my application because none of my friends had such an experience and I could find nothing from the newspapers and magazines. What I could do was to tell myself to be positive and to prepare for rejection. Even though I was a bit surprised by the rejection from the Canada Consulate (since I had overseas experience in Canada), I could only accept the fact that I lost a precious chance for immigration. Already overwhelmed by disappointment, I had to face the same old school and the same old students again. My sense of hopelessness overshadowed my optimism. It might be my fate, but I had to accept my fate because no one could change it. To forget about the unsuccessful application was the solution I chose to calm myself down.

The year of 1987 was frustrating to me. My wife changed her mind and told me that she wanted to emigrate to Canada. In fact, immigration was no longer attractive to me any more. Unlike most of the people in Hong Kong, the take over of Hong Kong by the Chinese government was less threatening to me. My job as a high school teacher was not politically sensitive. I asked myself several times what would be the worst that could

happen after 1997. Nothing came into my imagination. I could only picture that Hong Kong would be more or less the same. Why bother about something that might not happen? After I changed to a new school, I discovered that I had chosen the right job. I enjoyed the freedom I had in planning my teaching schedule. I loved my students as well. We had a very good relationship. Their respect consolidated my confidence and self worth. I was enthusiastic about my job and had lots of idea in planning new strategies for my teaching.

My wife seemed to have changed her mind completely about immigration to Canada. She now seemed to be very interested in applying for immigration. I did not respond to her request for immigration, believing that she might withdraw. However, she kept on asking me about immigration because Canada had more quotas for secretaries at the time. She said that it would be a golden chance for us because her occupation as a secretary meant a higher chance of success. She urged me to agree since the quotas for independent immigrants in various occupations changed from time to time. I was indeed angered by such an excuse and I guessed that the real reason behind her decision was that she missed her family, her parents and two of her sisters who had already emigrated to Canada recently. The rest of her family also planned to emigrate too. I did not believe that her intention was based on her expectation about the uncertainty of the future of Hong Kong, or the well-being of our family. My anger was further aggravated because my wife did not appear to understand me and, especially, my aspirations about my job. Anyway, I felt

guilty to say that she was selfish, but she seemingly did not consider me and my family. Yet I did not want to express my confusion and anxiety to her as she was not prepared for my opposition. In order to please her, I told her we might try. I dared not to do anything to ruin our relationship. I cared for her and I did not want to be blamed by anyone that I was a bad husband. I still remembered what my mom had told me when I was young, a bad person would be punished and tortured after death. What a scary scenario! I did not want to be punished. According to my previous experience, I believed that the chance of success for our application was very low even though she was the main applicant this time. I did not want to cool down her enthusiasm, so I consented. Well, I felt a bit relieved by telling myself not to worry about our application since the possibility of success was minimal. This kind of thought pattern did help me a lot until we were informed that our application was successful three months later! I was very shocked by the notification from the Canada Consulate. In addition, the deadline for arrival added further anxiety to me. All at once, I felt nervous because I loved my job and I cared for my students. I might lose my job satisfaction and I miss my family, particularly my parents. My parents were getting old, so I had the responsibility to take care of them. Their support and encouragement for our immigration made me felt even more shameful and guilty to leave them alone.

Hong Kong appeared so different to me after I noticed

that I had to leave. It was so dynamic, busy and beautiful. The traffic congestion, the air pollution, the hectic lifestyle, almost every aspect of Hong Kong now became extremely appealing to me. I could see myself in every corner in Hong Kong. It was the only place that reminded me of who I was. But I would soon lose my sense of belonging. How dreadful it was! I hated to tell myself that I had to leave such a lovely place. I regretted that I did not struggle with my wife about my unwillingness to apply for immigration. My remedial action was to tell her that it might be possible for me to stay in Hong Kong, because George, our four years old son could go to Canada with her if she wanted. What I could do for them was to make sure that whenever I had holidays I would visit them or call them if I had time. She was furious with my suggestion and was upset about my selfishness. She stressed that the unity of our family was of prime importance to her. She could not tolerate any separation like that. I tried to convey to her my fondness about my teaching job but she turned a deaf ear to me. Eventually I gave up. My struggle and search for the meaning of work started all over again upon the very first day I arrived at Canada.

Immigration has truncated my career development. Worried about the poor job market in Canada, I always dove into deep thought in order to figure out what I could do. I hardly showed my uneasiness in public because I did not want to upset my wife. I had enough grumbles from her because of my unwillingness to leave Hong Kong. Time to be alone was definitely necessary for me to reduce my sadness about

leaving my parents and a place that I really loved.

The date of our departure to Canada as ordered by the Canada Consulate was not long enough for us to plan or even pack everything. We just had three months! All I could do was to write to my friends and relatives in Canada for information about the job market in Canada. Besides, I contacted friends who had returned to Hong Kong from Canada recently. Though not as shocking as having a heart attack, I was indeed very disappointed with all the negative feedback! They told me that my teaching experience would not be recognized by the Canada School Board, but it took me almost a month to accept that fact! Besides teaching, I had two years of administrative experience in a college and two years of experience working as a technical drawer in an architectural firm. These might be useful for my job hunting. Rather than feeling hopeless, I just told myself to prepare for the worst. What I planned to do was to accept downward mobility, That meant I might end up doing a job that would not give me the same status, reward and satisfaction. In addition, I would consider changing my area of specialization and taking up apprenticeship in whatever business that attracted or accepted me.

Staring at the passengers in the plane that brought us to Canada, I was not surprised to find that almost 98% of them were people from Hong Kong. What were their dreams for immigration? I attempted to look for someone who was similar to me, a man overwhelmed by uncertainty. My mind was too

preoccupied by my worries about my career future in Canada, so I fell asleep eventually.

The first thing I did after we found a place to live was to call my cousin, who had already been here for over ten years. Working as an interior designer, she had an extensive social network which might provide a job opportunity for me. As I expected, I was introduced to work in an interior design firm as technical drawer. Although I was not excited about the job, I felt a little relieved because of the financial support. Technical drawing sounded interesting to me because I only needed to follow instructions. The lack of creativity did not prevent me from expressing my aesthetic sense in drawing. I was pleased to know that my skills did not vanish, even though I did not practice it for more than 12 years. The new job was not very demanding and gave me no burden at all. The only thing that annoyed me was the temporary nature of the job. Having a family, particularly with a four years old son, I really needed job security. I asked the company manager about the possibility of changing the job into a full time one. But I was quite disappointed by his negative reply because I thought it might be a good chance for me to start a career in some area related to architecture, a field I wanted to try a long time ago. I remembered when I graduated from high school, my examination result was not good enough for me to apply for any matriculation class which prepared students for university entrance examination, or to get admitted into any post secondary college. My discontent about my performance did not drive me nuts, since I knew that somehow

my parents would do something for me. As expected, they did blame me for a while, but their concerns over my future overrode their dissatisfaction with my performance. Even my grandmother (who had passed away one year after this incident), the most powerful person in my family, urged my parents to help me. My father was busy with his work in banking. He left all the parenting work to my Mom. My Mom used to be very passive, especially when she was with my grandmother. I could see that my mother was afraid of her, so she tried to do everything to please her in order to avoid troubles. When I was young she kept on reminding me that the best way to save trouble was to remain silent. My grandmother was a bit aggressive to my Mom and their relationship was at best superficial. It might be because my grandmother insisted on maintaining her influence in my family and she thought that the best way to do so was to control my parents in order to consolidate her power. Anyway, she was extremely kind to me, but also rather protective. Talking back was a taboo in my family, especially with my grandmother. No matter how hard I tried to break this unwritten rule for the sake of standing up for my rights, I lost every battle. Finally, I discovered that the best way to survive was to keep my mouth shut. Modeled after my Mom and my elder sister, my silence shielded me from any harassment from my family or friends. My acquiescence increased not only my reliance on my family, but also my inertia. Their overprotection discouraged me from deciding for myself and taking up responsibility while

strengthening my perception of being a worthless person. To keep everything inside my own mind became a norm in my life. My grandmother's excitement of having a grandson (that was me), brought my parents a lot of pressures. Their care and love for me later developed into overprotection. I remembered that my grandmother had requested a neighbor to take me home on one occasion because she could not do it on that date. She was so worried about my safety that she told my neighbor to bring me home hand in hand. I was embarrassed by their overconcern. I did not want to have anyone to go home with me hand in hand! Just like the rest of my classmates, I could go home by myself. The school was only one block away from my home. I did not want to be treated like a little kid! I protested again, but no one listened. Although I was not surprised by their response, I felt hurt that they never had confidence in me or allowed me any chance for independence. Their protection did not fade away even when I grew up. Believing that they needed to provide the best for me, they certainly tried their best to find me a job. Consequently, one of my uncles was willing to hire me as a technical drawer in his architectural firm. My grandmother was pleased with such an arrangement. On one occasion, she talked to me in a serious manner, saying that lawyer, accountant and architect were jobs with high status and lots of economic reward. To work in any of these areas could provide me prestige and financial stability. I was not thrilled about my job because it was again a courtesy by a relative, I understood that there would be a lot of limitations because my uncle would

report to my parents about my behaviors and performance. I had to exchange my compliance for his kindness. Anyhow, it provided me an excellent opportunity to work in an area which was closely related to my interest, i.e. my appreciation of the structure of buildings.

Leaving the interior design company in Canada seemed to be the only option for me. My decision would disappoint my wife. I believed my frankness would draw us closer together. I explained to her that her understanding and support would be invaluable for me to adjust better in Canada. My job searching process would not be as smooth as hers, however, her immense patience about my job hunting would be much appreciated. Hopefully, my honesty softened our tension. Staying at home was not easy for me. I did not mind taking care of my son, but I could feel my tension whenever I opened the newspapers. There was no magic in the newspapers! My level of my disappointment went up until I read the advertisement on selling education publications one month later. For almost 30 days, such a refreshing possibility finally stirred my mind and body. I was not totally overwhelmed by the advertisement because it was only a job that was slightly associated with education and which demanded marketing skills that I might not possess. Anyway, it would not cause me any loss to try. I registered for the 3-day free-of-charge seminar in a resort area organized by the company. I was surprised and impressed by the invitation offered by the manager for me to join his team on the last

day of the seminar. The idea that it might be worth a try came into my mind immediately when he told me about the job and its remuneration. With the financial and emotional assurance from my wife, I was encouraged to try something new, even though I wondered if I had the marketing potential. Saying no meant more than a loss of job opportunity; it might also deter me from exploring a new horizon for career development. My excitement about the new job apparently surpassed my concern of risk taking.

Taking courses on marketing skills offered by the company was insufficient for me. Reference books on this particular area also captured my attention. My job as a sales representative started with some successes, but the supervision provided by the manager was far less than I expected. His record of sales was eye-catching. However, he never demonstrated his skills to me. We paired together but worked independently. I desperately wanted to learn more from him by watching how he did his work or letting him see my work and comment on my skills. Expressing my concerns to him did not work since his compliments could not cool me down.

The best time for selling the publications was from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.. I did not really enjoy such working hours because it was so dark and cold to work during winter. After two months, doubt about my decision began to develop. In addition to the lack of further training and supervision, I was tempted by an invitation by one of the customers to sell computer in his office. First of all, I felt a bit proud because my potential in marketing was proven by his

invitation. Moreover, a regular working time and stable income meant a lot to a man with family. It was scary to follow my father's model, a busy man with no time reserved for his family. Communication between my father and I was scanty. There was no bridge between us. To a certain extent, he was so strange to me that I was afraid to talk to him. No nourishing relationships existed between us. I made a promise with myself when I was young, I wanted to be a nurturing father one day. After discussing with my wife, I took up the new job. Selling computers was a new challenge to me. I could identify some similarities with teaching, such as the need for knowledge of the product, sincerity and enthusiasm. Spending four months in this company was a bit too long for me. I noticed that my boss's performance was remarkable owing to his extensive personal connections. My sales record was less significant because I had to rely on those who came to our office. I was pretty discouraged by my performance and I did not totally agree with my boss's sales strategies. Job advertisement in newspapers again provided hope for me. Reading job advertisements was more than a leisure to me. I flipped and flipped over the newspapers everyday just to make sure that I did not miss a page! Consequently, a teaching post offered by a Chinese organization served like a life saver to me. I could not believe my eyes! A teaching post! Could I teach again? The application and interview served like a torment for me, even though the whole process took about three weeks. I almost burst into tears when I got the

offer! A teacher for English as a second language for immigrants. Oh! my exhilaration was hard to control! This was very encouraging for me. Anyway, it was incredible to get a teaching post in Canada. My devotion to teaching contributed to my eagerness to help. There were, in fact, many people who were in need of support and help. My loneliness during my undergraduate study had urged me toward a solution. Thank God! I found refuge in religion; Christianity emphasized love and sharing. I hoped I could practice my beliefs in helping people. Nevertheless, it took me a very long time to discover how much I loved teaching.

The summer in 1976 was the first time I found a job by myself. I had no idea what types of job I wanted to do since I planned to go back to Canada to pursue postgraduate study in geography. However, my plan was strongly opposed by my parents. Without their financial support, I could hardly supported myself to continue my plan. After spending about a month in Hong Kong, I also changed my mind. Hong Kong had changed so much. It was such an energetic city! My sense of belonging began to develop gradually. My parents kept on persuading me to find a job and stated that teaching was good for me. I wondered about my interest in teaching though I agreed with them that teaching was a decent job. My hunch about their suggestion was that I might be well respected by my relatives if I were a teacher in a high school. I did not explore the job market and applied for only teaching posts with the idea that my parents had a better idea about me and the job market. My first experience in teaching was terrible.

I did not agree with the management style of the school and I found it very difficult to handle the young kids. Moreover, my compliance with my parents' suggestion bothered me. I was so disappointed with myself because I could not act on my own and I still depended on my parents. My anger motivated me to search for another job. The job market was not that promising at that time. It took me more than a year to change job. My new post as an administrative assistant in a college was not entirely satisfactory. My efforts were well recognized but I was not able to build up a harmonious relationship with my boss. I was so furious that he always took advantage of me. I left after I had spent two years in that college. Administrative duties was not attractive to me anymore. My limited working experience prevented me from making attempts in other areas, such as business or industry. Instead of trying something different, I preferred teaching again because, at least, I had more freedom in my work. I found that my parents might be right since teaching seemed to be good for me. As I spent more efforts in planning new teaching methods and took time to interact with my students, I developed my interest in teaching. My enthusiasm in teaching remained even after I came to Canada.

The first day of my teaching in the Chinese organization in Canada was so refreshing. But the students were not the same. No uniforms! No school bags! Yet they had the same aspiration, they wanted to learn. My willingness to spend more time in preparing for my teaching revealed my commitment

in the job. However problems of the organization soon became apparent. The organization was subsidized by the government and supported by donation. The adequacy of funding for running the organization was closely linked to the stability of the jobs provided. My boss was a wonderful person. She was considerate but she was not a good administrator, she seldom mentioned fund raising for the organization which was indeed necessary to its survival. I worried about the future of the organization. My attempt to discuss with my boss about fund raising always ended in vain. She did not seem to respond to me. I was very discouraged by her reaction and I believed that I better keep my opinions to myself. The old concerns about taking a new job revived. Teaching was not the only means for me to offer a hand to others. Although the Canada School Board gave me a favorable reply regarding my application for registration because I was educated in Canada, I wanted to reconsider that option. To take ten more credits in education in university was not very demanding to me, but once I made up my mind in taking the credits, I would be a teacher forever! My past experience in marketing did trigger my interest in business, particularly in sales. Marketing could also be considered as a means to help people, only the product was different. The blooming of the real estate business captured my attention because I could have the opportunity to explore various types of buildings that I wanted to look at since I was a child. I thought it provided me a good opportunity to help needy people to find a home, to learn more about the structures of buildings, earn more and

even contribute to the funding of the organization. I was really confused whether I should give up my teaching post. I was pleased to know that my parents would emigrate to Canada in May, 1989. Well, they would shoulder part of my mortgage. I was pretty excited that it might now be the best time for me to quit my present job and explore the real estate business.

CHAPTER V: Analysis and discussion

Having reviewed the three theoretical approaches in decision making and describing the case history of my two subjects, this chapter will carefully examine which of the approaches is most useful in explaining their career choices. These approaches will be applied to each of these two cases and evaluated in accordance with the empirical evidence. Put simply, the conflict model and rational decision making models seem to be inadequate in explaining the career behavior of both subjects. The subjects did not have very definite or clear ideas about their career values and preferences, nor did they follow the systematic steps of information gathering and selection of options as postulated in these models. Stress did play a part in their decisions, but it evidently did not bring about the kind of vigilance which Janis and Mann considered as facilitative of making quality choices. Rather than behaving like calculative and rational decision makers, they were both strongly affected by their relations with their respective families and their personal histories, which were in turn shaped by their Chinese cultural background. Therefore, the deciding-in-context model offered by Sloan provides the most useful and relevant analytical framework in examining and explaining the career behavior of these two new immigrants from Hong Kong.

Comparison

Let us begin our analysis by discussing a number of interesting similarities and differences in the career decision making behavior of Linda and Michael. While both

have been strongly influenced by their relationships with their parents and spouses, they not only hold different career values, but also have adopted quite dissimilar strategies to achieve their career objectives. Yet these two case still show many similar features.

The stories of Linda and Michael have a number of remarkable commonalties. Both are in their early thirties and both have a child about 3 to 4 years old. They obtained decent jobs in Hong Kong and felt good about their jobs before going to Canada. However, both were reluctant to come to Canada, not because the country itself is not attractive, but because they did not want to leave their families and former jobs. Their decisions were primarily a "compromise" with their spouses in order to avoid confrontation. Linda's husband had long wished to study abroad, ever since he graduated from university, while Michael's wife wanted to reunite with her family members in Canada. Since these decisions concerning immigration caused feelings of anger, anxiety, and tension in Linda and Michael, they withdrew whenever conflicts with their spouses arose and, ultimately, they followed their spouses' preferences.

Serious pursuit of career does not seem to be the most significant issue to either Linda or Michael. It is also important to note that they did not have very clear ideas about what types of jobs they would like to do. But they strongly believed that they should obtain a decent job, primarily to fulfill the expectations of their parents.

Their struggles for independence were in fact hampered by their continuous efforts in seeking approval from their parents, particularly regarding their career choices. The taboo regarding "talking back" in the Chinese culture has been strongly planted in their minds through their early childhood training. Hence they were inhibited from standing up for themselves and summoning their courage to pursue their own preferences. This kind of attitude has also affected their career behavior. In addition to the financial need to getting a job that would allow them to make ends meet, their job hunting in Canada stemmed more from a need to follow the well-established pattern to seek approval from their parents and achieve the role expected of them.

Most importantly, it should be noted that both Linda and Michael were both engaging in a struggle for identity and independence. Without more independence, they would not be able to realize their own meanings in life. Linda discovered some independence in the private spare time allowed in her job, something which she treasured most. It was the only time that she could be alone, without any pressure from her boss or family. Her independence was possible only when she could retreat from her family life and workload.

Though similar to Linda in his struggle for independence, Michael chose a more active strategy. The first time he quit his job as a teacher after he returned to Hong Kong was more a protest than a reasoned decision about his own career. His career change in Canada, however, indicated his desire for self realization and career development. The

process of job hunting was actually a means in itself for him to find himself again because he could then think about his own values and interests without being burdened by his family. In terms of career change, Linda was clearly more passive while Michael was more active. Their struggles were clearly conducted in different ways, but their desires to achieve some degree of self realization and independence are both salient and quite similar.

However, there are also several major differences between Linda and Michael. First, the gender difference and its influence on role expectations have exerted a decisive impact on their career values. As a female, Linda was not expected to be highly educated by her family, who followed a very traditional way of Chinese thinking. In her parents' viewpoint, the completion of high school education was considered good enough for her because she would get married and become part of another family someday. Even though she seemed to accept this idea, at least on the surface, she worked very hard to get into university in order to prove her own ability and to compete with her brother. She struggled hard toward this goal, seemingly without any visible support from her parents. The fact that it was a lone struggle, did not erode her determination. However, this determination was limited to her studies. After she graduated from university and started working, she still had to follow the role expectations of being a wife and a mother and put the interests of her family above those of herself.

As the only but also the youngest son in his family, Michael's position in his family strongly molded his role expectations and career behavior. His parents and particularly his grandmother had held great hopes for him. They expected him to become a professional, an accountant, lawyer or architect when he grew up. Not surprisingly, his parents and grandmother had been very active in helping him fulfill his career goals. Yet their zeal and actions created a legacy of dependency on his part.

Second, as an extension of the first point, both Linda and Michael derived their career values and job satisfaction from different sources. A major career value for Linda evolved around her strong sense of strong responsibility and commitment toward her work. Her time and energy invested in her job was a means for her to command respect and recognition as an autonomous individual, not just a wife or a mother, from her supervisor and colleagues. Her serious attitude toward work was thus closely related to the fact that her job enabled her to experience and achieve her own identity, one that was separate from her familial roles.

For Michael, having been granted a great deal of freedom and support, he focused heavily on the helping relationship in his career values. Although helping others was based in part on his religious beliefs, he also strove to acquire respect and recognition, through selecting helping professions such as teaching. A job allowed Michael to help others would give him a sense of meaning and offer him the respect and recognition he so desires and feels he deserves.

Such credit would also be achieved by his own efforts, not tainted by the assistance of his family members.

Third, owing to differences in upbringing and role expectations, the job finding processes of our two subjects were also different. While their job information was mostly from their friends and newspapers, their attitudes toward gathering this data were quite dissimilar. Linda and her husband visited Canada before they emigrated in order to get some first hand experience of Canada. Their trip, though not uncommon among new immigrants from Hong Kong, served as a means for networking with other friends, gathering information from newspapers and other sources, as well as searching out potential employers through friends. Therefore, Linda was clearly much more active than Michael in preparing for her job hunting in Canada.

Michael chose not to take an exploratory trip to Canada at first because he believed that his credentials, e.g. his degree from a Canadian university, would still be valid and useful. His information search was restricted to contacting friends via telephone or mail. One might even extrapolate that his tardiness in job hunting was influenced considerably by his dependency on his parents. While there is no explicit indication that Michael would be able to fall back upon the support of his family and relatives, this possibility to establish a kind of inertia which could partly explain his half-hearted efforts in job hunting.

Finally, there is also a marked difference between Linda

and Michael in their motivation for career change, although this difference is partly rooted in the possibility for each to pursue their own career values and interests. Linda's motivation was lower than that of Michael. Immigration had already brought major changes in her life. Her responsibility to satisfy her husband's needs after immigration seemed to leave no possibility for her to have any real development in her career. In addition, she was not clear about her own career values. This, of course, is partly due to the fact that family, rather than career, was the top priority for her. Thus she would work in any field in order to achieve her familial goals. She continued to work in the same field in Canada, even though the prospect of career change in a new place would have allowed her to think more carefully about whether her former job was the one she really liked. Instead of thinking about her personal development and exploring her career values and interests, she was already glad to continue working as a system analyst because she badly needed money and stability, without which her husband's dreams would have been impossible.

Michael was in a somewhat different position, He did have some freedom to change his career and more time to explore because his wife could support him financially and emotionally. He did not need to be too worried about responsibility for his family. His worry about making mistakes in pursuing career change could thus be minimized. Therefore, the above difference seems to be rooted as much in their relationships with their spouses and their financial

situations, as in the different gender and role expectations as defined in traditional Chinese culture. Women in Chinese society are expected to sacrifice for their husbands and families while men are able to enjoy more flexibility in planning for their career.

The Conflict Model

Janis and Mann suggested that choice behavior can be best conceptualized as a type of hot cognition. Decision makers are considered as calculative beings that search for information, examine payoffs for each alternative, and then select the best choice. Instead of ignoring emotions, they argued that a medium level of psychological stress caused by the decision making situation motivates decision makers to become more vigilant and careful in searching for information and alternatives.

If Janis and Mann are correct, then the decision maker would think carefully about the risks of change and the risks of maintaining the status quo. While Linda was eager to know if she could find a job after immigrating to Canada, she ended up working as a system analyst in a Canadian subsidiary of her former company. Theoretically Linda should have thought about the risks and consequences if she did not change her career when she arrived at a totally new environment. Her situation did create stress for her and she seemed to be fully aware of the risks in her choice. However, in order to fulfill her role as a good wife and mother, she was compelled to find a job as soon as possible.

Although stress should have caused her to carry out an extensive information search, as suggested by Janis and Mann, she actually did not show vigilance in her job hunting. Therefore, while she was motivated to make a decision and consider different options, she did not do this in a vigilant manner. The influence of her roles as mother and wife seemed to motivate her to find a job, but the emotions and stress generated did not bring about more vigilance in information search and calculations.

Without considering the possibility of a career change, she believed that she was lucky to get a job from the Canadian subsidiary of her former employer. She found that it was the only choice for her, even though she had not even explored whether there were other better alternatives. Any other solution seemed to be a waste of time, even if she had ample time to collect information and explore other alternatives. According to Janis and Mann, she should cope with the situation with vigilance and reject opinions that might reveal the shortcomings of her chosen course of action. Nonetheless, there was no sign that she had reached this stage.

Linda was clear about her priorities and in particular family considerations seemed to have outweighed other concerns. The expectations of significant others, rather than the calculation of career interests, have thus profoundly shaped Linda's choice. As long as she could support her husband and daughter financially and give her husband the freedom to pursue further studies, she appeared

to be quite satisfied. She was much more affected by her concern for family harmony and financial security than by her concern for career development. Family harmony was crucial to her and she did not want to upset her relationship with her husband, which therefore required that she support his further studies. Security was equally important for her because she was to be the main breadwinner in order to provide full financial support for her husband and daughter.

Further, the psychological stress which has been highlighted in the conflict model does not appear to have operated in the way suggested. While Linda clearly had to bear the burden of being a wife and mother, her stress level has neither motivated her to be more vigilant in searching for information or options, nor hampered her from taking any action at all because of panic. A strong sense of familial loyalty seemed to be the most motivating factor in her career decision making.

Michael seems to be different from Linda in that he had to change his career when he arrived in Canada. Therefore, he perceived that there was risk if he did not change. In fact, he had no choice but to change his teaching career to another one since he was not qualified to work as a certified teacher in Canada. He was under great pressure to reconsider his career choice in Canada, but he could still adopt a wait-and-see attitude and examine which of the professions would be best for him.

In Michael's case, the risk for not making any career

change was his inability to find a job. Although he did not mention the consequences of failing to make any career changes in his conversations, we can imagine that he would find it harder to make a living and fail to support his family. The risks would, therefore, be quite serious if he refused to change. However, his past working experience as a teacher did not enable him to have many choices. Thus, he could only think of his experience in technical drawing, which was also one of his interests. Although he was unclear about his career values and interests, he could still single out his urge to help others as a justification to his career choice. Instead of considering all available alternatives and seeking a better solution, he preferred a trial-and-error approach, hoping that this would allow him to understand more about himself and help him find the right job. It appeared as though he had not considered whether it was realistic for him to find a better solution since he had no firm idea about what would be the best choice for him. He also appeared consistently quite optimistic about his job finding. Even with sufficient time to collect career information, it would seem that his chosen career choice was greatly hampered by his lack of self understanding. According to Janis and Mann, Michael should cope with this situation by defensive avoidance. However, he was quite open to any information and opinion about his new job and did not show any avoidance in receiving negative comments from others.

Both Linda and Michael went through only some of the seven steps in the model postulated by Janis and Mann. Since

they had not really followed all the recommended steps in decision making, they should have experienced unanticipated setbacks and post-decisional regrets, if the arguments of this conflict model are correct. Yet Linda was quite satisfied with her career choice while Michael did not seem to be upset by any of his career decisions. The key question is whether they would have been better off if they had followed the advice suggested by Janis and Mann. Indeed, even if they have carried out the various steps, it is very likely that they would have made a better decision. The main reason is that their familial loyalty precluded other alternatives.

The Rational Decision Making Model

If one applies the rational model suggested by Horan, the decision maker is presumably able to recognize the decision problem, generate as many options as possible, identify criteria for judging options, and select the best choice among them. However, while Linda was aware that she needed to secure a job in Canada in order to make a living, her response repertoire was very limited. The information she collected about the job market in Canada came primarily from newspapers and some of her friends as well as her own impressions during a short visit to Canada. According to Horan, she should have failed to make a quality choice because she did not show much effort in learning more about alternatives. The fact that she behaved this way and that she was not dissatisfied with her choice showed how much she

deviated from the systematic and rational decision maker depicted by Horan.

Michael's situation was quite similar to that of Linda. He certainly found it necessary to change his career, but he did not explore alternatives thoroughly even though he could have done so. Both Linda and Michael seemed to find that information from friends and newspaper were already sufficient for them. If one applies the rational decision making model, it is obvious that there are many other resources and information which would be useful to them, e.g. using the service of personnel agencies and making inquiries to potential employers. Their lack of knowledge and motivation in identifying the resources might be influenced by their upbringing; they were seldom forced to make major decisions by themselves since they had to follow the dictates of their parents.

Both the conflict model and the rational decision making model presuppose that the decision maker is clear about his/her values. In this case, Linda seemed to be a little more conscious about her career preferences than Michael. Therefore, Linda did not really mind working in the same profession (i.e. as a system analyst) as long as she could support her family. Michael however adopted a trial-and-error approach in his job hunting.

As well, these two models assume that the individual decision maker is most important. The decision maker is considered as a distinct entity who is capable of shaping his or her own fate by making the right decision. On the

contrary, the experience of our subjects suggest that they were strongly influenced not only by their relations with their families and their personal histories, but also by their culture and social roles. Hence they were not autonomous, self-seeking individuals who can maximize their utilities. Rather, they were social beings who had been strongly conditioned by their environments. In sum, both the conflict and the rational models fail to describe or explain adequately the career choices of our subjects. The subjects did not really engage in any vigilant information gathering, nor did they search carefully for different alternatives which might best achieve their own career objectives.

Finally, these two models have not considered emotion as a serious factor in decision making. The conflict model emphasizes the role of stress while the rational model capitalizes on the significance of rationality. In both of our cases, familial loyalty is clearly a crucial element that motivated Linda and Michael to behave the way they did. Such decisions are made by human beings, who do not exist in a vacuum. As aptly reflected in these two cases, human emotions such as love, loyalty, and commitment intervene in decision making.

The Deciding-in-Context Model

The career choices of the two subjects seem best explained by Sloan's deciding-in-context model. Four contexts that are closely related to their career choices, namely life history context, character context, immediate

social context, and cultural context, will be examined. By relating these four contexts to the career behavior of our two subjects, we might achieve a deeper understanding of how they came to their career decisions.

Life History Context: Linda's life history, especially her upbringing and her relation with family, seemed to have exerted a powerful impact on her career behavior. Raised in a working class family, she learned the value of hard work. Since Hong Kong had little social welfare and people from a low socio-economic stratum were usually living at the subsistence level, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, her father had to spend most of his time at his job as a truck driver so as to improve the living standard of his family. Even her mother, who was already responsible for all household chores and child rearing duties, had to take up some part-time jobs, such as doing laundry for others, in order to earn more money to support the family. Her parents' arduous efforts to make a living seemed to have profoundly influenced Linda's perspective regarding a career. Not only had she learned that hard work was the only strategy for survival, she also realized that she should be practical and take up a decent job which would promise her financial stability.

Further, Linda's relationship with her family was crucial in shaping the way she made her career decisions. By the time she entered the job market after graduating from university, her own ideas and preferences about a career had been largely defined by her parents' expectations. The most

significant consideration for her was to find a job her parents found acceptable. Her decision to become a teaching assistant was mainly determined by her fear of her parents. She was simply afraid that her parents might question her efforts in finding a job. If she could not find one, she would be very embarrassed. She did not want to be labeled as "stupid" or "useless." Consequently, she took up the teaching assistant job as soon as it was offered to her and she ceased exploring the possibility of finding a job she really liked.

Linda's choice to be a system analyst, her second job, was also greatly affected by how her parents appraised the job. She felt very relieved and pleased that they approved. In this, as well as in the earlier case, she seldom put her own interests and preferences as top priorities because she feared that if she could not satisfy their expectations, she might lose their love and acceptance. In fact, her weak career aspirations and confused idea of career may be closely linked to her ambiguous identity. Since she did not make much effort to discover her own identity and she had a low degree of self validation, she had come to derive much of her meaning in life from her family. A job meant more than a job to her because it provided an opportunity to fulfill her parents' expectations and to prove her abilities. Her parents' attitudes have thus exerted a profound influence on her career values and decisions.

Michael's life history, especially his relations with

family, is clearly an equally significant factor that shaped his career values and decisions. Like Linda, he also came from a humble background, but his family seemed to be financially stronger than hers. Although his father worked very hard to make a living as an ordinary banking worker, Michael was not strongly influenced by his father's occupational history because he was the only and youngest son in his family. Such a protected and privileged status allowed him much freedom. He could afford to change at the expense of his parent's concerns, even though his parents almost always tried to plan for his future.

Michael's life has been quite smooth, except for his struggle for independence. Although the excessive protection of his parents prevented him from deciding on his own, it also provided him with a great deal of support, e.g. paying for his studies abroad. He was very frustrated by the struggle between gaining more independence and losing the continual support from his family. While he already developed the habit of relying upon his parents, he wanted to be in charge of his life by gaining more independence.

Therefore, he developed a love-hate attitude towards himself. His disgust toward his reliance upon family prevented him from accepting himself as a man of worth. However, no evidence is shown in his case history that he ever seriously contemplated the risks and benefits of departing from this dependency. Even when he emigrated to Canada, his dependency did not cease. He still waited for the arrival of his parents to share his mortgage so that he

could make a career change. Therefore, even if he chose to change his career, he could always count on the continuous, unfailing support from his parents.

Immediate Social Context: The impact of Linda's immediate social context on her career choice seemed to be more restrictive than facilitative. Not only did she lack confidence in getting a job because she had no Canadian work experience, but the information from her friends and her exploratory visit to Canada also did not assure her of any career opportunities. While the act of immigration already meant that she had to leave her home town and settle in an alien country, both of which evidently caused great anxiety for her, she also had to shoulder more of the burden in supporting her family at the same time.

When Linda settled in Canada, she did not have the benefit of help from her parents. Nor could she rely upon her friends because her social network in Canada was quite limited. As well, her ability to make friendships was affected by her relationship with her parents. She believed that it was bad to talk back, as she had learned in dealing with her parents, and therefore it became difficult for her to develop many friendships because she was afraid of being rejected. Hence she was quite limited even in learning about different sources of information about careers.

While Linda was glad that she could continue the same occupation in Canada because she was familiar with the work, the growing burden of her roles as breadwinner, wife and

full-time professional almost overwhelmed her. Instead of offering support, the immediate social context for Linda left her feeling that she had little chance to pursue her career interests or to explore other fields. A job, or more precisely any job, was thus definitely very important to her.

Michael's case, on the contrary, was quite different from that of Linda's. His immediate social context allowed him more freedom in exploring his career interests. On the one hand, his familiarity with Canada and his preparation for downward mobility helped to make his process of adaptation smoother. On the other hand, he could also receive both financial and emotional support from his wife as well as from his relatives and extended family in Canada. He benefited a great deal from these social networks as revealed, for instance, by his third job being introduced to him by one of his former customers. The pressure for him to find a job was thus far less than that for Linda. These various supports were instrumental not only in allowing him to have more flexibility in choosing a career, but also in fostering a much stronger sense of security.

Since both subjects were new immigrants, they would also experience the pains of the process of acculturation. They had to face a completely new value system and accept the culture of the new country. As Kim (1979) has aptly pointed out, since an immigrant would continuously engages in first-hand contacts with a new environment and confronts new values, he/she may experience the effects of marginalization. Stonequist (1937) also suggested that immigrants become

confused, disoriented and frustrated because they have to adapt to a new environment. Therefore, Linda and Michael might also have experienced these difficulties in the process of acculturation, which would hamper their motivation and judgment in building social connections and exploring community services in their job hunting.

Character Context: Character is another crucial context in decision making. While competent and confident in her work, Linda's behavior was passive and obedient. As mentioned earlier, her character was strongly affected by her upbringing. In order to seek approval from her parents, she spared no effort in pleasing them by trying to avoid any conflict. She was trained not to talk back; she preferred to keep her mouth shut and withdraw from any confrontation. Having been brought up in a family that favored boys rather than girls, she was also severely threatened by the idea that she might be left alone. Being a passive person became an acceptable, even preferable, strategy for her because she could maintain her well-being and identity.

Linda's passivity and desire for security have influenced not only her interpersonal relations and personal decision making, but also her professional values and performance. She took her work seriously in order to get things under control. At the same time, she was also very practical. Such a character trait is, of course, related to the working class status of her family and her realization of the significance of financial stability. But, more

importantly, practicability promises her a degree of control as well as a sense of security. She was thus more conservative and reluctant to change than Michael. In this case, the availability of a job as a systems analyst in Canada clearly reinforced her practical and conservative character.

In contrast, Michael's character was less practical than that of Linda. He tended to be more "romantic" and optimistic. Like Linda, he was quite passive toward his family, especially his wife and parents, and preferred not to argue with them in order to avoid conflicts. As the only and youngest son in the family, he was much more idealistic and optimistic about life than Linda because he could afford to try different alternatives without worrying as much about the consequences.

While Michael appeared to be very dependent and indecisive because of the continual support and care from his parents, he had made a substantial effort to understand himself and to create a new self. His willingness to change was also partly instrumental in motivating him to reconsider his career in Canada. His enthusiasm in helping others also reveal his kindheartedness, generosity and a need for recognition. Partly due to the influence of his religious beliefs, he has developed an urge to help other people. Practicality is, therefore, not a quality of Michael's. His idealism and romanticism have blinded him to the harsher aspect of life. As a result, he explored a variety of jobs, first as a technical drawer, then as a salesman, before

becoming an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, while considering in each case whether the job would enable him to help other people.

Cultural Context: The Chinese cultural context is another significant context within which the two subjects made their career choices. In the broadest sense, Chinese culture has molded the values and structure of family, the conduct of interpersonal relationship, and the development of the self, some of the issues which have already been discussed above. But, in a more specific way, Chinese culture also directly determines the expectations and behavioral norms of social roles.

As Mei (1967) has aptly pointed out, role obligation is crucial in guiding one's behavior. Linda's role as daughter was not even listed in the Five Cardinal Relationships, which indicates the strong bias against women in Chinese culture. A relationship between husband and wife has been well defined in traditional Chinese culture, however. A wife is required to be subordinate to her husband and to put the interests of her family ahead of her own. Her husband simply becomes another authority figure deserves the same respect that she pays to her parents. Therefore, Linda's decision to work as a systems analyst in Canada can best be interpreted as a sacrifice of self interest in order to help realize her husband's objectives. She did not consider any other option which might be available to her so long as she could support her family. The conflicts between she and her husband before

they came to Canada arose out of her having to deny her own concerns, such as her satisfaction with her job in Hong Kong and her wish to stay close to her parents, in order to maintain family harmony as the prime importance. Her relationship with her husband seems to be strikingly similar to a parent-child relationship rather than a husband-wife relationship (in the sense of partnership with equal status). Such a pattern of marital relations has made her subservient to her husband, as best exemplified in her agreement to immigrate and to become the sole breadwinner of the family when they came to Canada.

Michael's role within his family as only son is prominently specified in the Five Cardinal Relationships in Chinese culture. It is so important that it is placed only after the one between the emperor and his subordinates. The special significance attached to such a high place in pecking order suggests not only that a son is to be the bearer of the honor of his whole family, but also that he should command respect and prestige. The eldest son is usually considered the most important figure in a family. Since Michael was the only son and the youngest in the family, his position was even more prestigious and important. As he would be the only bearer of his family name, he was able to inherit his family's property and represent the family. His family had developed very high expectations for him, yet his parents' eagerness to help him succeed only undermined his self confidence and generated a sense of dependency on his part. He had learned neither to be responsible for anything he did

nor to take initiative to change his life. In making his career choices in Canada, Michael was thus able to have more freedom in exploring the options he liked. He could still count on his family and his wife to support him because he was technically the one in charge. Interestingly enough, his dependency enabled him to change jobs more easily than Linda.

The impact of Chinese culture on our two subjects is indeed compelling. It is not coincidental to find that both Linda and Michael favored the value of remaining silent. Not only were they trained not to talk back as a means to show their respect for the elders, they were also discouraged to voice their opinions even when they felt they were treated unjustly. Their behavior, which was collaborated by the research by Hsu (1985), King and Bond (1985), suggest that Chinese child rearing practice stress the respect for authority. In short, our two subjects obeyed their parents in order to secure love and approval from them.

Chinese culture emphasizes compliance and obedience, not independence or self-initiative. As clearly indicated in the career choices of our subjects, it appeared that they preferred self-sacrifice in order to maintain the harmony of their families. Neither had the motivation to break the norm, which would be regarded as improper behavior in Chinese culture. Hence their career decisions were only of secondary importance to them as individuals, because their main concern was to maintain harmony in their family and respect the same rules which they had internalized in their youth.

As well, their pursuit of a decent job might well reflect the importance that their families attached to "face." Their parents expected them to bring respect and pride to the family. A job was regarded as a family matter, not just an individual one. Their efforts in finding decent jobs were to please their parents' demands for maintaining the "face" of the family. The "face" of family is supposed to be enhanced by the joint efforts of all family members. Those who cause the loss of "face" in the family is greatly degraded and discredited. The need to support and maintain the collective "face" of the family restrained Linda and Michael from doing whatever jobs they wanted. They were expected to consider first the reputation of their families, even at the expense of their own interests.

Both Linda and Michael complied with their spouses's decision to immigrate, though each followed a different career pattern. In Linda's case, her personal history, and social context, as well as cultural context, all suggested that she could not make any changes in her career. In Michael's case, while he could have exercised the authority of a husband, as endorsed in Chinese culture, and refused to leave Hong Kong, which would then cause no change in his teaching career, his passive personality and the support from others appeared to outweigh his prerogative as a husband. While the significance of culture must be taken into account in this case, other factors must also be weighed in our analysis.

The above discussion suggests that both the conflict

model and rational decision making model fail to provide a useful framework to comprehend the career behavior of our subjects. While these two models are not useless in understanding the behavior of Linda and Michael, they are insufficient to explain the complex and personal processes which are involved in their decision making. The chief arguments of these two models maintain that only rationality can ensure that one would arrive at a quality choice which would prevent post-decisional regrets or unanticipated setbacks. While these two decision making models do not ignore the role of significant others, they evidently consider individual needs and satisfaction as the most important factors in decision making. However, Linda and Michael, both tended not to place their own interests as top priority and they sacrificed their self interests for the sake of their families. Their decision making styles never really followed the step-by-step manner as proposed by these two models. Rather, they had a clear goal (e.g. family harmony) tacitly guiding them and simply used justifications for their already chosen direction.

Another weakness of the rational and conflict models is their stress on the systematic procedures used in decision making, hence ignoring the significance of individual uniqueness. From the case histories, the choices were not simply an isolated event. Their decisions were in fact closely related to their life history, past experience, character, culture and immediate social context. These

various contexts have almost preconditioned their career direction in decision making. Further, the rational and conflict models place strong emphasis on the mechanical side of human functioning. However, human nature is subject to the interaction among one's emotion, cognition and behavior, rather than only the cognitive and behavioral aspects. For instance, Michael and Linda both recognized the need to consider career change and experienced emotional disturbances brought about by the decision making process. In short, these two models are insufficient in explaining their decisions, which are indeed more complex and personal, and instead narrow attention to but a limited focus.

When compared with the conflict and rational models, Sloan's approach indeed provides a fresh perspective in understanding one's decisions. Instead of following the traditional approach in examining decision making, he highlighted the importance of contexts. The four contexts identified in the two case histories provide a vantage point to understand the reasons for their choices. The rational and conflict models fail to consider any of the contexts. In particular, they do not take into account the cultural factor. Perhaps because these two models are based on Western culture, they place too much emphasis on individuality and rationality, rather than collectivity and emotions.

The deciding-in-context model uses contexts as the key in examining decisions. It allows more flexibility and emphasizes the possibility of understanding one's decision

from one's own point of view. This model helps us depict a more comprehensive picture of one's choice. Sloan's argument regarding self deception in deciding seems to be true in Linda's and Michael's cases. Their decisions were more or less predetermined by authority and by subordinate relationships with their parents and spouses which kept them from satisfying their own needs. Their self interests were almost regarded as the lowest priority. In addition, Sloan argued that money has a profound effect on one's behavior. The two other approaches skipped this important element in explaining one's decision making. In Linda's case, we can clearly find that she was controlled by her financial situation and was compelled to stay in the same job. Sloan also addresses the very important aspect of self awareness. The more a person knows about himself/herself, the higher the chance that they will understand the reasons for their decision. With the increase of one's self knowledge, the decision maker has a greater possibility of finding a better choice for him/her. However the lack of self awareness of our subjects further contributed to their willingness to be dominated by their parents and spouses.

To conclude, the career behavior of both Linda and Michael cannot be fully explained by either the conflict model or the rational decision making model because they did not undertake the sequential steps of searching for information and selecting alternatives that would best serve their individual career interests. On the contrary, the

impact of different character traits and personal histories on career choices, which led to compromises, and personal sacrifices, cannot be fully comprehended without examining life histories and other contexts within which the career decisions were made. It seems evident that their career behaviors were also influenced by their search for meaning in their lives. As a result of socialization in a culture which stresses familial harmony and unity, they derived their meaning in life primarily from their relations with their parents and spouses. In sum, their career choices after arriving in Canada have been shaped not so much by their calculation of self interest, preferences, and implications of each alternative. Rather, their choices have been primarily shaped by the contexts within which they made their decisions and by the significance they attached to these contexts.

CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

According to mainstream decision making theories, rationality is the most important factor in making quality choices. Rationality is understood as the ability to carry out extensive information gathering and to make careful calculations. Decision making is thus widely believed to be a skill that can be learned through continuous practice and improved by following particular steps and guidelines. This study, on the contrary, has revealed that life history and contexts might be even more important in shaping decision making. This conclusion will discuss the limitations of this study, the implications for immigrant life and counseling and the recommendations for further research.

Limitations of this Study

This study has several obvious limitations. First, since this is an intensive case study of the career decisions of two recent Hong Kong immigrants in Canada, its findings cannot be generalized to all new immigrants from Hong Kong or other comparable groups. While this study has offered a rich analysis of the career behavior of two subjects, the number of cases is too small to generate universal generalizations.

Second, the conclusions of this study might not be applicable to all immigrants. For instance, there are several types of immigrants from Hong Kong, namely investment immigrants, independent immigrants, and family reunion immigrants. The two subjects of this study are from the independent category, but the interplay of personal, social and cultural contexts in the career decision making of other

types of immigrants might be quite varied. As for immigrants from other countries, they may be motivated by another set of social and political factors, which again might have a different impact on their subsequent career behavior.

Finally, while this study has provided a testing ground for three major theories of decision making, it is apparent that further research is needed in order to arrive at a more definite assessment of these different theories. Since these theories might apply better in some types of decisions but not in others, this study of career decisions of immigrants provides only a partial test of these theories.

Implications for Immigrant Life and Counselling

The first and foremost implication of this research is that decision making is not entirely a product of rationality. Rather, decision making is bound by life history and the contexts within which one makes a decision, as suggested by the two cases of this study. Therefore, as Sloan has argued, a more effective way in helping individuals make better decisions is to enhance their self awareness. Once individuals learn more about themselves, they will become more aware of their needs and the criteria that should be used in evaluating their choices. In this way they may exercise better judgment in deciding.

Therefore, counsellors should help clients gain better self understanding rather than simply teach them some specific, technical guidelines in making decisions, as

stipulated by the rational and conflict decision making models. The need for greater self understanding is particularly acute for new immigrants because they may be emotionally overwhelmed by the alien environment and frustrated by a sense of disorientation and instability. Since they have a strong need to re-establish their self-identities and develop confidence in a new society, the support and assistance from counsellors would be particularly urgent.

Second, while only two immigrants from Hong Kong are analyzed here, this study suggests that counselling is not a well-recognized service for people from a non-Western culture. For instance, counselling seems to be at odds with the authoritarian, moralistic orientation of the Chinese (Ho, 1985; Hsu, 1985). Chinese culture values harmony, mutual obligation, familial solidarity and face. Therefore the underlining assumption of individual autonomy and independence in many counselling approaches in Western countries might contradict the deep-rooted values of people from other cultures. As a result, counsellors should be aware that the promotion of individuality might cause psychological conflict not only for their clients, but also between their clients and their family members. In short, counsellors should be more sensitive to the special cultural traits of their clients before suggesting any interventions to cope with their problems.

Third, this study also reveals that social networks are a useful channel for helping people. For instance, this case

study shows that the Chinese have a strong tendency to rely upon social networks, such as family members and relatives, to cope with psychological problems. Therefore, while paying attention to the uniqueness of individuals, counsellors should sensitize themselves to social networks which might be extremely useful to clients from cultures that emphasize familial and other social connections.

Recommendations for Further Research

The paucity of research on career decisions among recent Hong Kong immigrants in Canada makes it difficult to offer empirical evidence to support or dispute my findings. Yet several recommendations for further research on decision making and counselling are suggested by this study.

First, there seems to be an urgent need for research on the decision making processes of immigrants, whether in Canada or elsewhere. Their choice behavior provides an excellent opportunity not only to study major changes in career choices, but also to test the major theories of decision making. Although the findings of this study have affirmed the usefulness of the deciding-in-context approach, further testing of immigrants from other countries or areas would be needed to ascertain the validity of different decision making theories.

Second, this study has supported Sloan's argument that decisions are often basically deceptions caused by a lack of self understanding. Deeper self awareness is often obstructed by other social, political, economic, and cultural

factors. Hence further research should concentrate on examining how these different contexts in deciding have shaped decision behavior. In particular, this study has highlighted the crucial role of culture in decision making. In view of the fact that decision making theories are based mostly upon empirical experience collected in Western countries, research on the importance of culture in decision making should deserve much more scholarly attention.

Finally, studies on the appropriate type of intervention in helping Chinese immigrants would also be valuable. These studies would improve the ability of service professionals to assist their newly arrived clients in adapting to a Western environment. The inability of many Hong Kong immigrants to integrate smoothly within the local community, as manifested in various kinds of conflicts and misunderstanding between them, testifies to the urgency of this type of research and the need for better counselling of this ethnic group in Canada.

In sum, this study has underscored the importance of life history and decision making contexts in understanding career decision making. This work has indicated that the career decisions of two recent immigrants from Hong Kong do not simply involve choices about jobs. Rather, their decisions involve a much more complicated process that is affected by their early childhood experiences, their social, financial, and family backgrounds, as well as other personal characteristics. Rationality has always been identified as the key element in decision making by dominant decision

making theories, but it cannot be regarded as the most important factor, as maintained by the rational model. Nor does psychological stress constitute a positive factor that helps one make quality choices, as suggested by the conflict model. The role of self in decision making, as suggested by Sloan, should receive due attention. In fact, it seems that the higher the level of self understanding one achieves, the higher the possibility that one will make a better choice. More attention to the impact of life history and contexts on decision behavior, I believe, is the most interesting and significant implication from this case study.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, K.A. (1970). Harmony and individualism. Taipei: Orient Cultural Service.
- Baker, H.R. (1979). Chinese family and kinship. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bond, M.H., & Wang, S.H. (1983). Aggressive behavior in Chinese society: The problem of maintaining order and harmony. In A.P. Goldstein and M. Segall (Eds.), Global perspective on aggression. New York: Pergamon.
- Chernoff, H., & Moses, L.E. (1959). Elementary decision theory. New York: John Wiley.
- Etzioni, A. (1967). A mixed scanning : A third approach to decision-making. Public Administration Review, 27, 385-392.
- Goldhurst, J. & Richmond, A.H. (1974). Amultivariate model of adaptation. International Migration Review. 8, 193-225.
- Goffman, E. (1955). On face-work. Psychiatry, 18, 213-231.
- Hayner, N.S., & Reynolds, C.N. (1937). Chinese family life in America. American Sociological Review, 2, 630-637.
- Hiniker, P.J. (1969). Chinese reactions to forced compliance: Dissonance reduction on national character. Journal of Social Psychology, 77, 157-176.
- Ho, D.Y.F. (1985). Cultural values and professional issues in clinical psychology: implications from the Hong Kong experience. American Psychologist, 40, 1212-1218.
- Horan, J.J. (1979). Counseling for effective decision making: A cognitive behavioral perspective. Massachusetts: Duxbury Press.
- Hsu, J. (1985). The Chinese family: Relations, problems and therapy. In W.S. Tseng & D.Y.H. Wu (Eds.), Chinese culture and mental health (pp. 95-112). Orlando: Academic Press Inc.
- Hu, H.C. (1944). The Chinese concept of "face". American Anthropologist, 46, 45-64.
- Janis, I.L., & Mann, L. (1977). Decision making: A psychological analysis of conflict, choice, and commitment. New York: The Free Press.

- Kelman, H. (1961). Process of opinion change. Public Opinion Quarterly, 25, 57-78.
- Kim, Y.Y. (1979). Need for a unified theory of acculturation: critical review and synthesis. Paper presented at the convention of the American Psychological Association, New York. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 180 918).
- King, A.Y.C. & Bond, M.H. (1985). The Confucian paradigm of man: A sociological view. In W.S. Tseng, & D.Y.H. Wu (Eds.), Chinese culture and mental health (pp. 29-46). Orlando: Academic Press Inc.
- Kuo, W.H., & Lin, N. (1977). Assimilation of Chinese-Americans in Washington, D.C. The Sociological Quarterly, 18, 340-352.
- Lau, S.K. (1981). Utilitarianistic familism: The basis of political stability. In A.Y.C. King & R.P.L. Lee (Eds.), Social life and development in Hong Kong (pp. 195-216). Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Lee, R.H. (1956). The recent immigrant Chinese families of the San Francisco-Oakland area. Marriage and Family Living, 18, 14-24.
- _____ (1960). The Chinese in the United States of America. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Levinson, D.J. (1978). The seasons of a man's life. New York: Knopf.
- Li, P.S. (1988). The Chinese in Canada. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Lyman, S.M. (1968). Marriage and the family among Chinese immigrants to America, 1850-1960. Phylon, 31, 321-330.
- Mei, Y.P. (1967). The status of the individual in Chinese social thought and practice. In C.A. Moore (Ed.), The Chinese Mind (pp. 323-339). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Obery, K. (1960). Cultural shock: adjustments to new cultural environment. Practical Anthropology, 7, 177-182.
- Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M.T. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. American Anthropologist, 38, 149-152.

- Rubin, V.A. (1976). Individual and state in ancient China. (S.I. Levine, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Schramm, W. (1971, December). Notes on case studies of instructional media projects. Working paper for the Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC.
- Simon, H.A. (1976). Administrative behavior: A study of decision-making processes in administrative organization. New York: Free Press.
- Sloan, T. (1987). Deciding: self-deception in life choices. New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Super, D.E. (1976). Career education and the meaning of work. Monographs on career education. Washington, DC: The Office of Career Education, U.S. Office of Education.
- Stonequist, E.V. (1937). The marginal man. New York: Charles Scubner's Sons.
- Sue, D.W. (1981). Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice. New York: Wiley.
- Sue, D.W., & Kirk, B.A. (1972). Psychological characteristics of Chinese American students. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 19, 471-478.
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, S. (1972). Counseling Chinese-Americans. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 50, 637-644.
- Tseng, W.S. (1973). The concept of personality in Confucian thought. Psychiatry, 36, 191-202.
- Vontress, C.E.R. (1981). Racial differences: Impediment to rapport. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 18, 7-13.
- Westwood, M.J. (1986). A follow-up study of Hong Kong graduate from Canadian universities. Report; Dept. of External Affairs, Ottawa.
- Wong, S.L. (1986). Modernization and Chinese culture in Hong Kong. China Quarterly, 106, 306-325.
- _____ (1988). The applicability of Asian family values to other socio-cultural settings. In P.L. Berger, & H.H.M. Hsiao (Eds.), In search of an East Asian development model (pp. 134-154). New Jersey: Transaction Books.
- Wu, D.Y.H. (1985). Child training in Chinese culture. In W.S. Tseng, & D.Y.H. Wu, (Eds.), Chinese culture and mental health (pp. 113-134). Orlando: Academic Press Inc.

- Yang, C.K. (1959). Chinese communist society: The family and the village. Cambridge, M.A.: M.I.T. Press.
- Yao, L.E. (1979). The assimilation of contemporary Chinese immigrants. The Journal of Psychology, 101, 107-113.
- Yin, R.K. (1984). Case study research. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.