JOB TRANSFERABILITY OF CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN VANCOUVER: THEIR VOICES

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ABSTRACT

The raising of immigration standards for entry into Canada in recent years has resulted in many Chinese immigrant women from Hong Kong being admitted as "independent applicants", on the strength of their academic standing, official language proficiency, and professional training. However, many of them are not able to access jobs for which they would seem to have the appropriate credentials. No studies have yet systematically examined the barriers these women face in the job market in Vancouver.

A literature review shows two main approaches to the problems of immigrants adapting to life in their new country. The cultural approach concentrates on the effects of the immigrants' own culture on the adaptation process, and the cultural conflicts between the mainstream culture and the culture immigrants bring with them. The structural approach emphasizes the impact of the social structure of the host country on immigrants, and examines structural barriers which bar immigrants from moving upward in the labour market.

The first approach concentrates on immigrants and their culture while the second focuses on the structural constraints experienced by immigrants. The present research argues that examining employment issues of immigrants from only one of these two approaches is inadequate. Both perspectives are important.

Other informal barriers which could not be categorized under these two approaches should not be ignored.

This is a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with 20 Chinese immigrant women from Hong Kong. The research problem is limited to the employment experiences, as well as to the meanings of events and processes, described by these women. The central questions are: (1) What do Chinese immigrant women who come as "independent applicants" experience in the workplace in Vancouver? (2) What does their work in Vancouver mean to them? And (3) What are the factors, in terms of cultural barriers, structural barriers or other elements, that affect these women in the process of job transferability? Suggestions to eliminate barriers are proposed, and recommendations for further studies are presented.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Owing to economic and political changes in Hong Kong and a more open Canadian immigration policy in the late 1960s, Chinese from Hong Kong have become one of the most significant components of Canada's stream of immigrants. Many have chosen Vancouver as their new home. According to Immigration Canada, Hong Kong Chinese topped the ten major groups of immigrants to British Columbia in 1993.[1]

Among these newly arrived Hong Kong immigrants, some were women who came as "Independent Applicants" - people whose occupational skills are in demand in Canada. These Chinese women carried with them competitive educational and professional qualifications, extensive working experience and good overseas business connections that would be valuable to their new jobs in Vancouver.

How successful are these women when they settle in this new home country? Given the fact that they have been "selected" to come to Canada, have they been able to secure employment in the same occupation as that held previous to emigration? And, have they experienced barriers which have prevented them from advancing in their jobs? These questions are the focus of the present study.

Identification of Problem

Historically speaking, societies developed by successive waves of migrants reserve certain high status positions for the native born and citizens, while conferring lower "entrance status" positions upon newcomers (Ujimoto, 1973). According to Porter (1965), "Entrance status implies lower level occupational roles and subjection to processes of assimilation laid down and judged by the charter group" (p. 63). Some of the immigrants have been able to move from jobs with "entrance status" position to those with "equity status" - that is, securing employment in the same occupation as that held previous to emigration, a process Ujimoto (1973) termed "job transferability".

The changing of Canadian immigration regulations in the 1960's has led to a large increase in the number of Hong Kong Chinese immigrating to Canada. Political uncertainty in Hong Kong, especially towards 1997 when China takes over the British colony, has also become a driving force for many Chinese deciding to immigrate to this country. These Chinese, together with other immigrants, are admitted under the three classes of "family", "refugee" and "independent". Among the three, the "independent" class is heavily weighted toward Canada's economic needs, and particularly to the country's labour market needs.[2]

The economic growth of Hong Kong has enabled many financially secure and professionally trained Chinese women to be eligible to immigrate to Canada as "independent applicants". In the 1980's, a new genre of Chinese immigrant women were attracted. These women had earned at least 70 out of 100 points in the immigration "point system" - proving that their academic

standings were sound (maximum 12 points), work experiences were relevant (maximum 15 for specific vocational preparation; 8 for experience), they were proficient in one of the official languages (maximum 15 points), and their occupations were in demand in Canada (maximum 10 points).

This point system is not an alien process for me, for I underwent such a highly selective immigration process when I applied for Canadian immigrant status as an "independent applicant" in 1982. Despite having obtained both my bachelor and master degrees in Canada, being within the desired age range and proficient in the English language, and being sponsored by my parents who were Canadian citizens, my application was turned down. I made the second attempt in 1989. I applied as a "dependent applicant who has never been married" (a very short-lived immigration policy based on humanitarian reasons which encourages family reunion). I did not want to take any risk this time by applying as "independent applicant", even though I had a longer employment history and more competitive work experience than when I applied the first time. I was successful this time.

Having gone through the vigorous selection process and being turned down, I realized that the Canadian Immigration and Employment assesses applicants heavily on their vocational preparation, work experience, kinds of occupations and arranged employment. Only those women, whose skills and occupations met the market needs of Canada, were successful. In this case, I assume that they would have no difficulty acquiring jobs equivalent to the ones they had had in Hong Kong. Are their employment experiences any better than those of other Chinese

immigrant women who came under the categories of "family" or "refugees"? Are they stuck at the entrance status jobs? Or, are they able to acquire jobs with equity status? These questions became my concerns ever since I landed in Canada. From the stories I heard and observations I made in the past few years, the picture is bleak. My experiences with the immigration application process and my everyday contact with Chinese immigrant women who share with me their discouraging employment stories in Canada motivated me to investigate these issues systematically, and to theorize about the phenomenon methodically.

The study Chinese Women's Needs in Richmond conducted by the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS) of Vancouver in 1991 disclosed some discouraging figures about the work experiences of Chinese women in Canada. Based on 222 responses to questionnaires which were randomly distributed among Chinese women living in Richmond, British Columbia, the survey showed that nearly half of the respondents (49.1%) who came to Canada did so under the "independent" category. Close to 70% of these women had worked before immigrating to Canada, while less than half of them were working at the time they were surveyed. 78% were dissatisfied with their opportunities for job promotion, and 87% of them faced difficulties at work. The report concluded:

> Many of the problems such as low salary, boredom with work, limited job advancement may stem from the fact that these women occupy jobs in the lower echelons of the economy. (p. 16)

This survey, similar to other studies, such as the one prepared by the Immigrant Services Society in 1993 which

identified the needs of new immigrants in the Lower Mainland and Fraser valley, only focused on identifying the problem areas. The shortcoming of these reports is that they do not examine the nature of the obstacles experienced and factors which contributed to such problems. In the case of the Chinese immigrant women who were professionals or highly skilled workers, factors which forced them to occupy jobs at the bottom rung of the employment ladder and prevented them from moving upward in the job market remained untackled.

I focus on the experiences of Chinese women for two reasons. The first reason is that Chinese immigrant women have rarely been made the center of study in the literature. Their experiences are subsumed under the general topic of the adaptation issues of Chinese immigrants, with Chinese men given priority. Their problems are usually lumped together with those of men as if their experiences are similar (e.g. see Lai, 1971; Yao, 1979; Li, 1988; and Mak, 1991). Even though Chinese women may have adaptation problems which they share with Chinese men, they have unique needs due to different demands on their lives, such as the intertwining of private and public spheres. The experiences of Chinese women deserve special attention.

The second reason is that only a few studies have explored the experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Canada. Chiu (1980) examines English language needs of Chinese women seamstresses in Toronto, Ng (1982) concentrates on the problems of Chinese housewives in Canada, and Adilman (1984) documents the employment experiences of early Chinese women settlers and the first generation locally born in British Columbia from a

historical perspective. Lai (1971), Chang (1980), Lee (1984), and Yiu (1989) emphasize the impact of cultural differences on Chinese immigrant women and their adaptation process to their new home country. The majority of these studies concentrate only on Chinese immigrant women who were either unskilled labour or "sponsored immigrants" under the "family" class and who spoke little or no English. The most recent quantitative study (1991) done by SUCCESS identified social needs and settlement problems of Chinese immigrant women. Almost half of the respondents were "independent applicants". However, employment issues constituted only a small segment of the many research areas in the study. On the whole, research studies about professional and highly skilled Chinese immigrant women and their employment experiences in the workplace are lacking.

I am particularly interested in exploring the employment issues confronted by Chinese immigrant women in British Columbia, a province which is marked by a long history of racism. Immigrants of Chinese origin have been exploited and discriminated against for more than a century (Roy 1980; Wickberg, 1982; Barman, 1986; Creese, 1986; Johnson, 1989; and Stanley, 1991). Information about early Chinese women settlers in the province is scanty as their resettlement experiences were largely ignored in the literature. According to the limited sources such as the studies done by Adilman (1984), Van Dieren (1984), and Yee (1988), these women, who either came to Canada as merchants' wives or were sold as housemaids or prostitutes, were discriminated against because of cultural norms and systematic exclusion. Because of traditional stereotyping the role of women

in the family, no Chinese woman came to Canada independently during that period. And, because of institutional discrimination, Chinese women were severely deterred from coming to Canada as permanent residents for almost seven decades (Yee, 1988). Once they were in Canada, they were exploited by ethnic Chinese employers and discriminated against by the white society.

In contrast to Chinese women in earlier phases of immigration, their contemporary counterparts came to Canada on their own choice, and were admitted on the strength of their academic standing or advanced professional training. How has this changed their reception? To what extent do the obstacles of cultural baggage and structural barriers, encountered by their forerunners, continue to persist as significant factors affecting their employment opportunities? Do skills and training for the labour market override the role of cultural factors in the way in which immigrants are received? It is with these questions that the work experience of a group of professional and highly skilled Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong is examined in this study.

Traditional theoretical approaches underpinning the studies of the process of immigrant relocation have led to the predominance of either cultural or structural perspectives. A review of the literature shows two main approaches to the problems of immigrant adaptation. The first approach (e.g. Park and Burgess, 1921; Malinowski, 1944; Wagley and Harris, 1959; Gordon, 1964; Shibutani and Kwan 1965; Weber, 1968; Schermerhorn, 1970; and Adler 1975) concentrates on discontinuities between the old and the new cultures, the influence of the immigrants' own culture on the adaptation process, and the processes of

acculturation and assimilation that immigrants undergo in order to integrate into the new home country.

The second approach, which gained more ground in the 1980s, emphasizes the effects of the social structure of the host country on immigrants, and concentrates on structural barriers which account for the employment inequality of the immigrants. The studies done by Yancey, Ericksen and Juliani (1976), Ujimoto (1981), Henry and Ginsberg (1985), and Li (1988) examine structural barriers which exist at all levels of the social, economic and political context, bar immigrants from moving upward and trap them in "entrance level" jobs in the job market. Studies done by Ng (1981, 1982), Anderson (1987, 1990), and Ralston (1991) identify the social structure from the perspective of the immigrants, the human agents.

Examining immigrant adaptation processes from either the cultural aspect or from the social structural perspective reflects two poles in dealing with the questions. However, neither perspective alone is adequate. Several feminist scholars, such as Bottomley (1984), Jeannie (1984) and Stasiulis (1991), advocate a combination of both approaches by making an attempt to connect gender, race and class. They opt for alternative theoretical approaches which are sensitive to the differing material circumstances and experiences among women differentiated by race and ethnicity, as well as by class.

Along the lines of analysis by Bottomley (1984) and Stasiulis (1991) who maintain that the two traditional approaches are not mutually exclusive and should, in fact, be bridged, this study concurs that both cultural barriers and social structure

are factors which account for the adaptation problems of the immigrants, that both have crucial parts to play in the process of job transferability of the immigrants. However, these two dimensions do not take into account other barriers which do not lend themselves to a categorization under either cultural or structural barriers. Various barriers, which relate to social structure, cultural aspects or other elements that affect Chinese immigrant women's job transferability in Vancouver, are identified in this study.

To review the two objectives of the present study, the first objective is to examine the work experiences of the professional and highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada as "independent applicants", and the second objective is to identify barriers and to locate their origins in terms of social structure, cultural factors or other aspects that affect them in the process of job transferability in Vancouver. My intent is to understand the work experiences of professional and highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in Canada, the meaning of work to them, and factors which prevent them from moving up from a job with "entrance status" position to one with "equity status" in the job market in Vancouver. The research questions are as follows:

1. What do Chinese immigrant women who come as "independent applicants" experience in the workplace in Vancouver?
2. What does their work in Vancouver mean to them?
3. What are the factors, in terms of cultural and structural barriers, and other elements that affect these women in the process of job transferability?

This study attempts to peer inside the "black box" of these women's experiences in the job market in Vancouver.

Limitations of the Study

In the present study, more complex background issues such as the examination of various licensing bodies' guidelines concerning assessment, certification and licensing, or the problem of non-recognition of foreign credentials will not be examined. The reports of Abella (1984), Fernando and Prasad (1986), McDade (1988), Merlet (1989), and Access! Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario (1989) have already addressed the recognition of credentials in trades and professions. Policy recommendations, such as collecting information about entry procedures, developing methods of evaluation, and establishing retraining programs for immigrants, were advocated in these reports.

Significance of the Study

The new five year Immigration Policy was released on 1 November 1990: From 1991 to 1995, the intake of immigrants will be increased to the total number of 250,000. The "independent applicant" category will be increased from 19,500 to 29,500 (Annual Report to Parliament, 1990). Some government officials speculated that many of these immigrants will arrive in Vancouver and many will be from Hong Kong. Those immigrants who are selected on the basis of what they can contribute to Canada should have equal employment opportunities and their skills should be fully utilized. We should establish policies to ensure that they should not be subjected to undue hardship after their arrival. The findings of this study may help to identify areas

of concern and to facilitate other research to inform policies that achieve these goals.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One has identified the research problem which provides the focus for this study as well as revealed my personal interest in relation to the study. The purpose and the intended contributions of the study have been highlighted.

Chapter Two examines the two major theoretical perspectives underpinning studies of immigrants and their experience of relocation, and explores both the historical and contemporary social contexts of Canada, from which the current experiences of the Chinese immigrant women might have arisen.

Chapter Three explicates the theoretical and methodological perspectives underpinning the present research design.

Chapter Four profiles the twenty respondents.

Chapter Five examines both informal and structural barriers at the pre-working stage faced by the Chinese immigrant women.

Chapter Six investigates the two kinds of barriers at the working stage.

Chapter Seven highlights the issues raised in the study. Suggestions to eliminate barriers are made and recommendations for further studies are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the literature pertaining to the occupational mobility of the Hong Kong Chinese immigrant women and the kinds of barriers they might have encountered in the labour market in Vancouver, three foci have been developed: (1) a historical overview of the experiences of Chinese immigrant women in British Columbia from the mid 1850s until the 1960s; (2) policy responses in the contemporary social context of Canadian society and analyses of such government policies including immigration, multiculturalism, and employment equity; and (3) a review of theoretical perspectives for examining immigrant resettlement and adaptation. The first and second areas provide an understanding of both the historical and contemporary Canadian responses to migration, within which the current experiences of the Chinese immigrant women might be contextualized and understood, while the third area aims at placing the present study within the context of approaches used in other studies of a similar nature.

Principal Features of Discrimination Against Chinese Women in British Columbia from Mid-19th Century up to 1960

The rationale for examining the problems of Chinese immigrant women from a historical perspective is that history not only provides background information, but also constructs the

social context which gives rise to the experiences of human agents. According to Sharp (1982), individual actors are themselves "constituted through historically specific structural forms and processes and are acting within historically specific institutional contexts and situations" (p. 51). Therefore, any understanding of the present contexts in which continuity and change are negotiated or contested requires an understanding of the relevant history which has led to those contexts (Angus, 1986). Thus Simon and Dippo (1986) suggest that history should not be regarded as a collection of background data, it should become an integral part of the explanation of the regularities explored in any specific analysis. They even point out that "to historicize within ethnographic work is to show the conditions of possibility of a definite set of social forms and thus simultaneously establish the historical limits of their existence" (p. 198). Based on this rationale, I explore the experiences of early Chinese women settlers in Canada in order to understand the social context from which the experiences of contemporary Chinese immigrant women have, in part, arisen.

Early Chinese Women Settlers in British Columbia

In the studies of early Chinese settlers in Canada, the experiences of Chinese women have been largely ignored, even though the first Chinese women settlers came to British Columbia around 1858 (Adilman, 1984). They have been treated as an afterthought or as only a demographic statistic (ibid., 1984). Despite the fact that the number of the Chinese women was small, their experiences were not any better, and in some cases even

worse than those of the Chinese men. These women were not only discriminated against by the white society, but they were also exploited by the Chinese community. It is argued here that two major factors account for their experiences in British Columbia: cultural baggage and institutional discrimination.

Historical Background of China

Chinese women, who first settled in British Columbia as early as the middle of the nineteenth century, were mainly from Guangdong province of China with a few from Fujian province and Hong Kong (Yee, 1988). The southern part of China had suffered from foreign invasion, banditry and piracy, and natural disasters such as flood and drought ever since the turn of the eighteen century. The first Opium War (1839-1842) which led to the opening of four new treaty ports put many people in Guangzhou, the capital city of the province, out of work. The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), which was a Chinese local movement against foreign invasion, claimed twenty million lives in all of China. Wars, famine, and disease had forced many Guangdong residents to emigrate to North America, a place they heard had many job opportunities available. The first Chinese men who settled in British Columbia in the 1850s were merchants, peasants, and labourers. Only a few women, mostly merchant wives, were among them (Wickberg, 1982).

Characteristics of the Early Chinese Women Settlers

Women were not as mobile as men in China in those days. Women were "nei-ren" or "inside people" (Lai, 1988). This stereotype emanates from centuries of Confucian philosophy which defines women's ideal place in the domestic sphere. While many men borrowed money from relatives for the passage to the New World, women were expected to stay at home to take care of aged parents and children, waiting for their husbands to send money home. A few might have tried to borrow money, but they were usually turned down. Women were not viewed as productive workers who would be able to pay their debts; instead, they were thought to be "expensive economic liabilities" (Adilman, 1984, p. 55).

Other than merchant wives, those women who came to British Columbia were prostitutes, and "slave girls" or maid servants. These women were sold to wealthy people or merchants by their parents because of political turmoils and economic difficulties in China and were shipped to North America as commodities. Some of them were resold for up to $1,500 and some had to work for their owners as maidservants until they were married off (Van Dieren, 1984). Other than these three categories of women who made up the handful of Chinese women in British Columbia, scarcely any women came to this province because of traditional stereotyping of women's role and shortage of monetary support. At the 1871 census, fifty-three Chinese women were reported in the province. The ratio was thirty-five women to every one thousand Chinese men (Adilman, 1984).

Institutional Discrimination Against Chinese Women

The first Chinese settlers in British Columbia did not include women mainly due to cultural mores and economic difficulties of women in China. From the 1880s until 1950, the legislation and policy of Canada also severely deterred Chinese women from coming to Canada as permanent residents. This kind of institutional discrimination was rooted in the anti-Chinese sentiment in British Columbia. Chinese men were discriminated against because of their competitiveness in the labour market. Chinese women were discriminated against on two grounds:

1. They posed a serious threat to Canadian society because they undermined the morals and health of the white community;

2. In a society that preferred to maintain a European, and ideally British, ethnic heritage, Chinese women were also feared because of their potential to increase the Chinese population. (Van Dieren, 1984, p. 80)

This latter reason had made the Chinese women the subject of exclusion by the Canadian government for more than seven decades. Government officials firmly believed that Chinese men were transients or sojourners and would eventually return to their homeland because they had brought neither their wives nor children.

The restrictive Chinese immigration acts which enshrined this belief to ensure that the majority of Chinese men would never be able to bring their wives, let alone single women, to British Columbia began in 1886. The Act of 1886 was the first and most important constraint on Chinese women's entry to Canada as it levied a head tax of $10 on all Chinese who entered Canada. The subsequent Acts in 1900 and 1903 raised the tax first to $100 and then $500 (Wickberg, 1982). Such measures not only disrupted

the entry of Chinese men into Canada, but also stopped Chinese men from bringing women with them or later sending for them.

Before 1900, the government allowed some Chinese men to enter Canada without paying a head tax. This "exempt" classification included merchants and clergymen and they were also allowed to bring with them their wives and children. The policy only retarded the entry of the wives of the labourers. The exemption was also abused. Young girls were still purchased in China to be servants to merchant families, tearoom waitresses, or even prostitutes and were disguised as daughters of the merchants when they were shipped to Canada (Lai, 1988).

Before the Chinese Immigration Act was passed in 1923, racist attitudes were intensified because of economic and labour difficulties in British Columbia at the end of World War I. The fear and hysteria towards the competitiveness of Chinese in the labour market led to a complete restriction of Chinese into Canada. In the House of Common debates, women were discussed solely in terms of polygamy and population control. It was noted in the record:

> If Chinese were allowed, without restriction, to bring their wives to Canada, they would reproduce at an alarming rate and might eventually out-number whites....(Adilman, 1984, p. 64)

Policy makers clearly saw their roles as having to subvert the intent of the Chinese whom they believed were systematically striving to outnumber and inevitably overpower white Canadians. Such convenient excuses resulted in a complete exclusion of most Chinese men and women. In the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, only four classes of immigrants could enter Canada; all were categorized as temporary settlers (Wickberg, 1982):

1. University students
2. Merchants - clearly defined and included only those engaged in large scale trade
3. Native born - returning from several years of education in China
4. Diplomatic personnel.

No women were likely to be in any of these categories. The Exclusion Act was in effect from 1923-1947.

Though the Exclusion Act was repealed in 1947, the new legislation still contained implied restrictions on women. The government only allowed those Chinese men who were Canadian citizens to bring their wives and children to Canada. In previous years, the courts could grant citizenship to aliens, but judges rarely did so for the Chinese (Yee, 1988). Once again, the number of women eligible to enter the country was restricted, because many Chinese men were not citizens. In 1956, this policy was finally abandoned so that Chinese men who were not Canadian citizens could bring their families to Canada (Lai, 1988).

To conclude, systematic exclusion became the dominant factor accounting for the scarcity of women who came to Canada independently after the legislation and policy of Canada became more rigid in 1886 and remained so until 1960. Chinese women were discriminated against because of their reproductive capacities. White Canadians were driven by the fear that Chinese not only competed with them in the job market but also wanted "intentionally" to reproduce at such a rate that they would outnumber whites and eventually overpower them. The motivation of discriminating against Chinese women in Canada was different from that of Chinese men, yet it aimed at the same goal - restricting Chinese from entering Canada and maintaining a white society.

Work Experiences of Chinese Women in British Columbia from 1858 Until 1960

Chinese women, in some respects, had a tougher life than that of the Chinese men in Canada. They were not only discriminated against by the white society, but also exploited by the Chinese community. Generally speaking, discrimination against Chinese women can be categorized into two types: those experienced by the early women settlers from the middle of the 1850s until the 1930s; and those experienced by the first generation of Canadian-born Chinese women from the 1930s until the 1950s. The former group mainly suffered from being exploited by the Chinese community itself, while the latter suffered both from being exploited by the Chinese community and discriminated against by the mainstream white society.

Before the Chinese Immigration Act was legislated in 1923, Chinese women who were able to drift into Canada were either merchant wives, prostitutes, or slave girls. Adilman (1984) categorizes the kind of work these women performed into three types: unpaid work in the home, unpaid work outside of the home, and paid work. Unpaid work in the home was labour including food preparation, cleaning, childbearing, childrearing, the manufacture of clothing, as well as many other varied and time-consuming tasks. The majority of Chinese women were primarily responsible for these tasks even when they were also involved in additional work. Unpaid work outside of the home was labour performed for money, although women did not directly receive money for their labour. Instead, a male in control of a family business or a male "owner" or "contractor" of women controlled

the money earned by women and benefited economically from their work. Work done by prostitutes and slave girls was in this category. Paid work was labour for which women received money for wages. This category included work at home such as home sewing or laundry, and in family-owned businesses. These women were mostly wives or daughters of the merchants.

Until the 1920s, Chinese women's unpaid work was much representative of their work experiences in British Columbia. The Chinese women who came to this province as merchant wives usually took up unpaid work in the domestic realm. Some merchant wives might help out by doing some paid hand work such as featherstiching or making buttonholes. Prostitutes and slave girls were "owned" unpaid labourers, until they were sold into marriage, neither of which labour realized any monetary return. The majority of Chinese women who were paid labourers worked as seamstresses. Some Chinese women and girls worked long hours for low pay for Chinese tailors in urban centres. The actual number of females who participated in home sewing is not known, but the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that many did (Van Dieren, 1984).

In addition to working at low paid job and for long hours, some of the Chinese girls were badly treated at work. Elsie Hong, who became a maidservant in 1900 at age seven, recalls her exploited work experience:

> Yip Yen's family brought me over, but they gave me to Yip Yen's brother's second wife. She wouldn't let me go to school. She worked me all day long. I got up at seven in the morning to light the stove in the room. They would still be sleeping. The stove burned coal, so I had to rake out the ashes. Of course that made noise, and she would scold me for waking her.

> When she got up, I make her toast and tea and coffee. Then I washed the dishes. I cooked the rice, I scrubbed the clothes and the floors. After she ate her fill at dinner, she'd go out to play dominoes with the Jung Kee lady and leave me working. There used to be seamsters in Chinatown, and she brought home clothing for me to work on: featherstiching, buttonholes, butterfly buttons - I did everything. I worked from morning until night without stopping.
>
> When I was about eight or nine, I hurt my foot. Dr. Munro wanted to cut it off, but they said, "Don't! Who will want a wife without a leg? Just let her be! If she lives, she lives. (Yee, 1989, p. 45-46)

A Rescue Home operated by the Methodist Women's Missionary Society was open from 1888-1942 in Victoria for runaway Chinese girls and prostitutes. Most suffered from abuse and addiction to opium. Some wives and domestic servants also took refuge in the Home. The use of the Home indicated that no social structure either funded by the government or the Chinese community itself existed to help these women (Van Dieren, 1984).

Between 1900 and 1923, some Chinese women took up jobs in other areas but most worked in family-run business, or in Chinese operated businesses, as restaurant workers, laundries, or teahouse workers. Although the specific jobs these women performed, their working conditions, and pay are not known, it is clear that Chinese women were working for wages (Adilman, 1984).

Cultural norms confined employment opportunities of the early Chinese women settlers at home or in the business run either by family or Chinese businessmen. Racial antagonism against Chinese became more obvious when the first generation of Canadian-born Chinese women entered the job market.

From 1924 until 1950, Chinese women's participation in the labour force increased marginally as the first generation of Canadian-born Chinese women entered new fields of work while their mothers worked in past spheres of activity. Their work

experiences were not much improved because of racial antagonism and cultural norms. Adilman (1984) comments, "Discrimination defined work opportunities" (p. 68). They were most represented in three main industries: the manufacture of food products; doing laundry, cleaning and drying; and garment making. Most women worked in Chinese-operated businesses. They were paid by piecework and worked long hours. Although some entered fields run by white employers, their situation was not any better.

Chinese women had difficulty gaining entry into professions. Public opinion and racial discrimination were prime reasons. Whether they tried to be nurses or secretaries, Canadian-born Chinese women faced strong opposition. The following excerpt was recorded in Paul Yee's Saltwater City:

> My sister Aylene wanted to become a nurse. She finished high school and tried again and again to get into nursing school, but they wouldn't take her. My dad tried all the well-known white doctors. No dice. My other sisters wanted to get in, too, but they couldn't. After that, they took up stenography. But it was hard to get into an office also because they said, "We're doing white people's business, why would we hire Chinese?" (Yee, 1988, p. 67)

For many years there were no Chinese nurses in British Columbia. It was not until 1930 that Anna Lam became the first Chinese nurse to graduate (Yee, 1988).

Degrees from the University of British Columbia in the period of the 1930s to the 1940s did not open doors into mainstream jobs and careers. "In those days no matter how smart, how brilliant you were, you could not get ahead because they would not hire you," William Chu, a dentist, states (Yee, 1988, p. 78). "There was no place for a nurse, no place for a pharmacist, no place for a chemical engineer, no place for a doctor, no place for any person of educated capacity" (Ibid, p.

99). Canadian-born Chinese who were studying in the University usually stayed on with reduced expectations. These experiences shaped the psychology and outlook of an entire generation. Bill Wong remarked: "You're brought up kind of brainwashed. You accept that you're not expected to feel completely equal....Live well enough, why rock the boat?" (Ibid., p. 102-103)

Discrimination continued, as women continued to work under the constraints which greatly limited their job opportunities. It was not until the 1950s that the situation had marginally improved. Professional associations gradually began to admit Chinese-Canadian members. In 1952 Vancouver City Hall hired Jessie Lee, its first Chinese-Canadian employee. In 1953 Diana Lam was the first Chinese-Canadian admitted into a sorority. The year of 1954 marked the admission of the first Chinese-Canadian woman lawyer in British Columbia (Ibid., p. 121).

In summary, the history of Chinese women in British Columbia from 1858 until 1960 was a history of exploitation and discrimination. Cultural baggage, racial antagonism and systematic exclusion kept them from living on an equal basis with local whites. In the first place, Chinese women were being deprived the right to enter into Canada for the fear of their reproductive capacities. Those who were in Canada were either exploited by their own Chinese community or discriminated against by the white society. Both the cultural norms of Chinese and institutional barriers of the Canadian society were dominant factors accounting for their discrimination in Canada from 1858 until 1960.

Immigration Policy From the 1960s, the Policies of Multiculturalism and Employment Equity

The 1960s were the turning point of immigration history in Canada. The new immigration policy has been more open to accepting new immigrants into Canada, and government policies such as the policies of multiculturalism and employment equity aim at combating racism and discrimination and promoting equal employment opportunities. In this chapter, the development of the Canadian immigration policy since 1967 and characteristics of the new Chinese immigrants are described. The evolution of the policy of multiculturalism and employment equity initiatives is traced. Responses of the Chinese community towards the policy of multiculturalism are presented. Shortcomings of employment equity initiatives in promoting employment opportunities for visible minorities are analyzed.

Canadian Immigration Policy After 1967

Since the 1960s, the Chinese have become one of the largest components of Canada's stream of immigrants. Such a drastic increase in number is mainly due to the changing of Canadian immigration regulations and to the political and economic situations in Asia.

In 1967, the "points system" was introduced to the immigration policy of Canada. Potential immigrants were selected on the basis of points they had earned in nine areas such as education, work experience, language, work availability in Canada, and family connection (see Endnote 2). Immigration

regulations also established three classes of immigrants: family, independent, and refugee. Country of origin, ethnic and racial criteria were eliminated. This was the first time immigrants had been selected based on qualifications and suitability for living in Canada. The door was thus opened to many Chinese who met the requirements.

In 1979, the category of independent applicant was expanded to include entrepreneurs. In 1982, when the high unemployment rate in Canada had practically forced the country to close the door on immigration, the category of business investor was the only one left open; wealthy businesspeople who were able to invest $250,000 in Canada still trickled in. The immigration door opened again in 1985 for more investors and highly selected professionals and technical workers. In 1988, Canada allowed those over twenty-one-years old and never married children to be re-united with their family, attracting many already established and experienced Hong Kong professionals (those whose professions do not score well or are less welcome in the point system, such as teachers, doctors and lawyers) to Canada (Lai, 1988). It was the same year that Chinese from Hong Kong first topped the ten major sources of immigrants to British Columbia.

The economic growth of Hong Kong and other Asian countries since the early 1960s has enabled more financially secure and professionally trained Chinese to be eligible to immigrate to Canada. Another reason has been the political uncertainty in the region. Hong Kong residents have always been anxious about the political situation of Hong Kong since the Cultural Revolution in China in the middle of the 1960s. In 1968

after a riot caused by a clash between the communists and the supporters of Kuomingtang (KMT), a Taiwan-based political party in Hong Kong, thousands of wealthy people, professionals and businesspeople left the British colony, and Canada was viewed as an ideal shelter with an appealing immigration policy. In 1976 the Taiwanese government liberalized their exit requirements, allowing citizens to migrate overseas, and, in 1979 the People's Republic of China also allowed Chinese nationals to resettle abroad (Kwong, 1987).

Characteristics of New Chinese Immigrants

Most Chinese immigrants entering Canada after 1967 were different from their nineteenth-century predecessors with respect to their origin, wealth, education, occupation aspirations, and motives. These Chinese immigrants came from an array of Chinese communities scattered throughout the world: Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Southeast Asia, Britain, and the United States of America. The great majority were from sophisticated urban backgrounds. Many spoke English and had been educated in English (Lai, 1988). In 1981 seven per cent of immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan listed their intended occupations as professional ones such as doctors, engineers and architects (Lai, 1988, p. 106). Other intended occupations included clerical workers, teachers, and mechanical technicians. A considerable number of them planned to set up business in Canada ranging from restaurants to banking (Ibid, 1988).

Since many of the new immigrants from Hong Kong are concerned by political uncertainty of the British colony,

especially after 1997 when Hong Kong reverts to China, their major reason for settling in this country is political stability. Some still keep Hong Kong as their business base; after settling their family in Canada, they then go back to Hong Kong for their business. These "sojourners" or "astronauts" only come back once every six months in order to have their immigrant status renewed (Ibid, 1988). When they think they have made enough money or if the political situation in Hong Kong deteriorates, they intend to settle in Canada.

Development of Multiculturalism Policy, and Employment Equity Initiatives

The policy of multiculturalism was a government response to the negative reaction to the Official Languages Act recommended by the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Among the opponents of the bilingualism and biculturalism policy, Senator Yuzyk claimed that its primary mandate was to devise a mechanism for enhancing francophone participation in Canadian society, and the "two nations" concept was a denial of Canada's diverse cultural and linguistic heritage. They pointed out further that the status of Canadians of non-British and non-French origin, the so called "others", would be diminished to that of second-class citizens. They strongly suggested a policy of multilingualism and multiculturalism to integrate all Canadians in one nation (Kallen, 1982).

Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal government did not support the notion that culture and language were indivisible and that multiculturalism necessitates multilingualism; rather, they

advocated a multicultural policy within a bilingual framework. In 1971, the policy of multiculturalism was formally introduced.

Multiculturalism as a state policy contains four objectives (House of Commons. 3rd Session. 26th Parliament. Vol VIII, September 13-October 19, 1971):

1. The Government of Canada will support all of Canada's cultures and will seek to assist, resources permitting, the development of those cultural groups which have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, as well as a clear need for assistance.

2. The Government will assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society.

3. The Government will promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity.

4. The Government will continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society.

The focus of the policy of multiculturalism has undergone some changes since 1975. The emphasis has shifted from "maintenance of language and culture" to "group understanding". To combat racism and intolerance, the federal government has begun to emphasize race relations and issues concerning immigrants. In 1981, a Race Relations Unit was established within the Multiculturalism Directorate. Also in that year, multiculturalism, as a state policy, became enshrined in the Constitution's Charter of Rights and Freedoms through Section 27 which provides for "the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada" (Secretary of State, 1981). In 1988, the Multiculturalism Act was affirmed as a national policy by an act of the Canadian Parliament.

As a means to achieving the second objective of the multiculturalism policy, that is, to assist members of all cultural groups to overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society, the federal government has taken some steps toward formalizing policy to promote equal employment opportunities and to combat racism among the four target groups: immigrant minorities, disabled people, women, and native people. Some remedial measures, advocated by various reports such as Equality Now! (1984) Equality in Employment (1984) and Equality for All (1985), have also been implemented. Among them was the affirmative action policy.

The legal foundation of affirmative action was laid with the passage of the Canadian Human Rights Act (Bill C-25) in 1977. It allows for "any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions for disadvantaged individuals or groups" (Agocs, 1986, p. 151). The goal of affirmative action is to counter the cumulative effects of institutionalized or systemic discrimination. Such discrimination is a pattern of inequality built into the occupational structure because of organizational practices that effectively exclude minorities from entry or promotion (Agocs, 1986).

Affirmative action strategy involves a commitment to increase the representation of target groups at all levels of an organization where they have been underrepresented because of discriminatory barriers. This "proactive strategy" (Jain and Hackett, 1989, p. 190) refers to a comprehensive planning process voluntarily adopted by an employer to identify and remove discrimination in employment policies and practices, to remedy

effects of past discrimination through special measures; and to ensure appropriate representation of target groups throughout the organization. The spirit of this endeavor is reflected in the term "employment equity", recommended in the Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment in 1984 as an alternative to the American expression "affirmative action" with its connotation of imposed and rigid quotas, from which Canadian policy disassociates itself (Abella, 1984).

The Canadian Human Rights Acts also established a Canadian Human Rights Commission with powers to use persuasion and publicity to discourage and reduce discriminatory practices, and to investigate and conciliate complaints by individual employees of discrimination by the employers.

Responses of the Chinese Community towards the policy of multiculturalism

It is instructive to trace the responses of the Chinese community towards the policy of multiculturalism from Chinese newspaper clippings and books written by Chinese Canadians. The emphasis in Chinese publications is slightly different from that of the mainstream literature.

The overall reaction towards the policy of multiculturalism is positive and encouraging. Such support can be shown by the resolution passed by four hundred representatives from two hundred and eighty Chinese organizations in a Chinese Canadian Association National Meeting held in Toronto this year. The resolution stated that all Chinese Canadians fully supported the policy of multiculturalism, and called upon the three levels of

governments to continue achieving the objectives set in the policy (Sing Tao Daily, 21 May 1991, p. 3).

What are the reasons for the Chinese community's unanimous support for the policy of multiculturalism? Several Chinese scholars and community leaders share the same view. "The policy recognizes the uniqueness of ethnic cultures, therefore, we are encouraged to maintain our Chinese culture; and we are also encouraged to respect and to accept other ethnic cultures. In this manner, we can all help enhance the Canadian culture," Dr Ka Yean Ip of the Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia remarked (Poon, 1990).

Professor Paul Lim, a retired professor of McGill University, shares similar views with Burnet (1975). Lim points out that the most powerful element of multiculturalism is its recognition of the uniqueness of individual cultures. Such a recognition is essential, especially for new immigrants, because it helps them to maintain their self-dignity by keeping their own culture. Since they feel that they are respected and accepted, they will become more involved in the new home country, will then develop a new sense of belonging, and will eventually contribute more to Canada. Hence, Lim advocates full support of the policy (Sing Tao Daily, 15 July 1991, p. 4).

Jimmy Toa, a lawyer in Vancouver, further indicates that the policy of multiculturalism is a good mechanism for nation building (Sing Tao Daily, 27 May 1991, p. 5). Toa points out that the mainstream culture of Canada should not be that of the white (anglo/franco) culture. It should be a multiethnic culture. Based on the policy of multiculturalism, all ethnic

groups are able to contribute the best part of their culture to Canada so as to build a more unified country.

While recognizing the significance of the policy, Chinese scholars and community leaders also make several criticisms about the actual practice of this policy. Maggie Ip, the Chairwoman of the board of the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS) criticized the lack of government funding to help ethnic organizations to develop more multicultural programs (Sing Tao Daily, 9 March 1991, p. 2). Tommy Toa pointed out that, because the government only emphasizes the expressive aspect of the policy and ignores the importance of helping the ethnic groups to understand and to accept each other, racism and discrimination are inevitable (Sing Tao Daily, 27 May 1991, p. 5). A concluding statement made by a group of participants in a seminar organized by the Chinese Canadian Association of Public Affairs criticized the government's lack of long term commitment to develop more initiatives to carry out the objectives of the policy. As a result, there are not enough programs, or where programs exist, they often fail for lack of funds (Sing Tao Daily, 16 July 1991, p. 3).

To sum up the views of the Chinese scholars and community spokespersons about the policy of multiculturalism, the policy is generally supported by the Chinese community for it recognizes and accepts Chinese culture in Canada. In addition to maintaining Chinese culture, the Chinese community leaders also encourage Chinese Canadians to respect and to accept other cultures. They also promote the importance of participating actively in political as well as voluntary community activities.

By doing so, Chinese as one of the ethnic groups will gain the respect of and acceptance by Canadian society.

It is interesting to note that one important element mentioned in the mainstream literature - equality, that is equalization of access to political, economic, and social power - has not been mentioned by the Chinese community leaders and spokespersons. Its absence might indicate that the Chinese community is still very conservative and the leaders are afraid of "rocking the boat". Another speculation is that those who speak for the Chinese community are already well established and their class position makes it easier for them to speak for those who "have already made it", while ignoring many who are still facing inequality or discrimination.

Employment Equity Initiatives and Social Reality

Despite the existence of a multicultural policy and employment equity initiatives, several major studies show that visible minorities are still being discriminated against in the job market, and that their representation in the employment sectors is still bleak.

Racial discrimination and employment inequity.

Research in the 1980s has been very revealing concerning the extent to which visible minorities have experienced discrimination in the job market. Studies have focussed on the effects of the social structure of the host country on immigrants (Ujimoto, 1981; Henry and Ginsberg, 1985; Fernando and Prasad,

1986; Li, 1988; McDade, 1988). These studies indicate that immigrants who belong to minority groups are either underemployed or unemployed and they do not have the same employment opportunities as other Canadians. Ujimoto (1981), in commenting on the chances qualified Asian-Canadians have of securing suitable work in professional and technical fields, concluded that Canadians of Pakistani, East Indian, Japanese, Chinese and Filipino origin were literally "the last to be hired, first to be fired" (p. 23).

Among all the studies, the one done by Henry and Ginsberg (1985) provided the most compelling evidence of the kinds of barriers immigrants face. The two researchers examined how responsive the Canadian employment arena has been to the needs of minorities and identified several barriers which prevented Blacks and Indo-Pakistanis from securing many types of jobs in Toronto. They confirmed a distressing feature of the Canadian job market which continues to exclude minorities on the basis of colour, accent, supposed deficiency in training, lack of Canadian experience, and inability to establish Canadian equivalence in training and experience.

Li's study (1988) assessed whether Chinese Canadians had encountered racial discrimination in the job market. He used the 1981 Census data to illustrate that Chinese who worked in the same sector for the same number of weeks as other Canadians of the same schooling, age, gender, social class and nativity status did not receive as much income as other Canadians. A Canadian of Chinese origin earned $821 per year less than an average Canadian in the labour force, the third lowest paid of the seventeen

ethnic groups compared in the study. Despite the educational and occupational mobility of the Chinese, they had not attained income equality relative to people of other ethnic origins. There was a price, the cost of discrimination, to being Chinese in the Canadian job market. Li concluded:

> If the Chinese have overcome the historical obstacles of racism, they have yet to cross the barriers of racial discrimination in the Canadian labour market. (p. 120)

Wong (1982) also uses the 1981 Census data to assess the extent to which racial discrimination exists in the labour market, and his study yields different result from that of Li's (1988). Wong challenges the existence of serious racial discrimination, but admits the existence of statistical discrimination. According to Wong, this is a type of discrimination exercised by the discriminator who applies his/her own experience - 'statistical' assessment - and discriminates against others because they do not seem to possess certain attributes, due to their lack of information. Such a shortage of information, as Wong believes, might be connected to traditional culture and beliefs. Wong also gives weight to "cultural capital" and its role in adapting well to the mainstream Anglo tradition and culture in Canada. Wong's study, which emphasizes the ignorance of the discriminator and the effect of the cultural baggage immigrants bring in, gives short shrift to the effects of social structure.

In addition to studies showing how immigrants of various ethnic groups experience inequality in the job market in Canada, there are reports which reveal the malfunctioning of employment equity programs due to lack of employer support.

Although the legislative framework is in place for both voluntary and mandatory approaches, the number of employers who voluntarily adopted the Employment Equity programs was appallingly low. Of 1400 employers offered assistance by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission Directorate in 1984, only 71 agreed to develop an affirmative action plan (Abella, 1984).

The Employment Equity policy has been criticized for its lack of specific goals, timetables, systematic monitoring mechanisms, and effective sanctions for non-compliance. Agocs (1986) comments that the federal government has used such a policy as a double-edged sword. He remarks:

> In failing to commit resources or pursue tactics that could make employment equity effective in both the private and public sectors, the federal government has not precipitated a backlash or alienated employers. At the same time, by going on record as sympathetic to some form of affirmative action government appears to favour progress toward equal employment opportunity. By muddling along the federal government had fended off both those who would move vigorously ahead toward affirmative action, and those who would retrench.
> (p. 159)

The federal approach to employment equity in Canada has been to encourage voluntary initiatives, with government agencies offering support, persuasion and incentives rather than regulation and the threat of penalties. With the exception of the Federal contract compliance which requires that employers receiving over $200,000 in Federal grants and revenues are compelled to comply, employers are being invited and even implored, but so far not required, to take affirmation action. Such a path has not led to effective results in the form of significant change in patterns of occupational inequality.

Effects of affirmative action on the representation of visible minorities.

Despite the fact that some programs initiated by the policy of multiculturalism and employment equity initiatives have been carried out, evidence indicates that discrimination in the job market still exists.

The picture of the representation of visible minorities in the job market is discouraging, as several studies show. Those who are able to achieve upward mobility are a few upper or middle class visible minorities, while the majority are still trapped at the bottom. And among them, visible minority women benefit least from affirmative action (Jane, 1988; Stasiulis, 1989; and Winn, 1985).

According to the survey conducted by Jane (1988) of selected police forces in Canada, visible minorities are not well represented despite the fact that police forces are government agencies. For example, the data supplied by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) indicated that very few RCMP officers were fluent in languages spoken in Third World countries. The prime reason for this low representation is that government agencies, including police forces, are not required to undertake any federal affirmative action programs, nor are they covered by the employment equity legislation. Jane remarks, "It is ironic that the government is requiring employers in the private sector to undertake affirmative action programs, while government agencies, like the RCMP, are not required" (p. 481).

In 1988, Commissioner Inkster of the RCMP announced that the number of visible minority police officers would increase from

the present one per cent to five per cent in fifteen years. As visible minorities, according to the 1981 census, comprise close to two million people or approximately seven per cent of the country's population, Jane argues that police organizations still have a long way to go before they begin to adequately represent visible minorities in their respective communities.

Moodley (1983) argues about the problematic aspects of affirmative action in Canada, which put together immigrants of all economic backgrounds and countries of origin under the term "visible minorities" regardless of their position in the labour market.

Stasiulis (1989) points out that, among the visible minority groups, only a small number of upper and middle class entrepreneurs and professionals benefit from affirmative action programs. The problem of affirmative action is that it "avoids the question of articulation of class with ethnicity and race and fails to alter class-based inequities" (p. 238).

The main argument of Stasiulis is that two distinctive classes have been formed among the minority groups as Canada has long accepted both cheap, unskilled immigrants and professional and highly skilled immigrants from Third World countries. The outcome of affirmative action programs, which tend to target upper and middle levels of management, provides channels for minority candidates in these two classes to achieve upward mobility, while ignoring class exploitation and racism among the least privileged strata within minority groups. Stasiulis maintains that affirmative action "as a strategy to redress

inequities in the employment of racial and ethnic minorities is bound to be ineffectual" (p. 238).

Winn (1985) shares Stasiulis's view that affirmative action "rigidifies" (p. 40) the class structures, but elaborates further that such a polarization of class does injustice to low-income women. Winn's argument is that affirmative action programs always place a distinct emphasis on the advancement of the most upper-status of all women, those being prepared for positions in senior management. Hence affirmative action programs and quota hiring intended to benefit all women have the effect of benefitting upper-status women.

A study done by the Coalition of Visible Minority Women (1988), a women's group in Toronto, substantiates Winn's argument by showing that the majority of minority women interviewed was working in low-waged and highly exploited positions. The report concluded that these women must be given special attention since government bureaucracies tend to divide issues into race and gender, and "visible minority women always fall in between the cracks" (p. 23).

In summary, the overall representation of visible minorities in different employment sectors is discouraging. Surprisingly, such a representation is not any better in government agencies. Affirmative action programs on the whole only benefit the upper and middle class minority groups by providing them a channel to move upward in the job market. However, the lower class has always been ignored, and among them minority women get trapped the most.

Theoretical Perspectives Underpinning Studies of Immigrants and Their Experiences of Resettlement

Two major approaches predominate in the literature about the problems of immigrants adapting to life in their host country. The first approach emphasizes the conflicts between the old and the new cultures and the influences of the immigrants' own culture on the adaptation process. The second approach concentrates on the structural barriers which account for the employment inequality of ethnic minorities. Because of different theoretical assumptions, several research methods are employed in this approach. Some researchers only examine the social structure itself, while others analyze the social structure through the perspective of the immigrants, the human agents. Some feminist scholars attempt to explore problems experienced by minority women and immigrant women by examining gender, class and race together.

In this section, a brief description of the two approaches is provided, outlining their individual theoretical assumptions and reviewing criticisms against them. Studies emanating from these different approaches with a particular focus on Chinese immigrants in Canada will be highlighted.

In addition to Canadian literature, studies done in the United States and Australia in this area will also be explored. Australia and Canada, for instance, share similar social, political and economic backgrounds as both countries are "white settler colonies". The migration of Asians to these two countries has also been mediated by two often competing objectives in the traditional immigration policy: the desire to

populate the country with people of white, British origins and the demands of the capitalist labour market. By incorporating Australian studies into this section, a more substantial review will be made.

First Approach: Transplanted Culture and Assimilation

The first approach concentrates on the study of acculturation and assimilation, terms which are usually used interchangeably to refer to the adjustment process of immigrants to the host culture as a result of cross-cultural contact (Lee, 1984). The race relations cycle developed by Robert E. Park at the University of Chicago in 1921 was an important starting point. Park studied both white and black American migrants and represented their interaction as a cycle. It consists of successive phases of initial contact, competition, conflict, accommodation and eventually assimilation (Gordon, 1964). According to Park's theory, assimilation is defined as "a process of interpretation and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in common cultural life" (Gordon, 1964, p. 62). The essence of Park's definition lies in the realm of cultural behavior which is expected to be acquired through a single cycle of natural process.

Other anthropologists and sociologists, such as Malinowski (1945), Gordon (1964), Shibutani and Kwan (1965), Weber (1968), and Schermerhorn (1970) who advocated the cultural dimension of assimilation, shared the same basic theoretical assumption.

Culture is ascribed, or given at birth, and it is a sense of peoplehood or identity based in part on descent, language, religion, tradition and other common experiences (Weber, 1968). It is also a set of values, attitudes, and beliefs which is a reflection of childhood socialization, and it is through this set of culturally influenced values that people experience their world (Adler, 1975).

Hence, immigrants bring with them their own values to the host country; when they interact with the new cultural environment, they experience and re-construct their world through this previously established frame of reference. These values largely influence their adjustment, achievement, and community development in the new country. New patterns of coordinated activity of immigrants emerge to cope with the needs of the situation (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965).

Life conditions in the host country are also altered when the culture of immigrants make contact with that of the new country. Sometimes, new patterns or "third culture" (Malinowski, 1944) are invented in situations where the culture of any of the groups is not adequate. This new culture usually features the interests of the dominant, more powerful group. If the culture of the immigrants is markedly different from that of the host country, immigrants might find that much of the meaning, order and direction of their lives is lost, and the process of integration will be obstructed (Adler, 1975). On the contrary, when the ethos of the immigrants have values in common with those of the host country, integration will be facilitated. Hence, "cultural congruence" (Schermerhorn, 1970) becomes an essential

element of integration. Some immigrants are faced with the possibility of expanding and revising their values and identity, but with a feeling of regret and loss of their former security and traditional emotional bonds (Lee, 1984).

Gordon (1964) suggests two important stages of assimilation - cultural and structural. Cultural assimilation refers to the change of cultural patterns to those of the host country, and structural assimilation refers to large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society (p. 71). Gordon further states that cultural assimilation is likely to be the first to occur, although it may not necessarily lead to structural assimilation.

The cultural approach is also used to explain the socioeconomic situation of minority groups in the new home country. Some scholars (e.g. Wagley and Harris, 1959) believe that some cultural characteristics have more "adaptive capacity" than others, and that such a capacity helps determine the socioeconomic status of the minority groups.

Research on assimilation of Chinese immigrants and their socioeconomic achievement in North America is scanty. Studies conducted by Lai (1971) and Yao (1979) applied Gordon's theoretical framework (1964) to examine the assimilation pattern of Chinese immigrants in Canada and the United States with respect to cultural assimilation and structural assimilation.

Lai (1971) concluded that the Chinese immigrants she studied in Toronto are only partially culturally assimilated, and partially structurally assimilated. With regard to economic assimilation, which is included in structural assimilation, Lai's

study shows that not all Chinese immigrants transfer their skills successfully to Canada. Length of stay in Canada is a crucial factor for these immigrants to recover their original status. She also agrees with Richmond (1967) that not all immigrant Chinese will recover their original status; some may have full recovery, some may have partial recovery, and some may remain at the entry level without recovery.

In examining cultural and structural assimilation, Yao (1979) compares two types of cultural traits: intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic assimilation traits consist of religious beliefs and practices, cultural values, and other aspects of cultural heritage. The extrinsic cultural traits consist of dress, manners, lifestyle, patterns of emotional expression, social-class experience, and mastery of English (p. 108). Yao concludes that the intrinsic cultural traits of the Chinese immigrants in his study reveal less assimilation than the extrinsic cultural traits. In other words, their traditional Chinese value system and the use of mother tongue still play an important role in their lives and tend to be resistant to change. Further, these Chinese immigrants only partially attained structural assimilation in areas such as integrated residence, membership in professional groups, social acceptance, and economic position.

Both Lai and Yao's studies only address the question of the extent to which the Chinese immigrants are assimilated. Important questions of why they cannot be fully assimilated, and why they are at the economic positions that they hold have not been explored.

This "transplanted culture" thesis has been under attack by scholars, such as Lieberson (1980), Bolaria and Li (1985), Castles (1988) and Ujimoto (1989). Lieberson (1980) argues that a single cycle of race and ethnic relations suggested by Park is not tenable. A distinction in the nature or form of superordination or subordination at the initial contact must be introduced before attempting to predict whether conflict or relatively harmonious assimilation will develop. According to Lieberson, the "race relation cycle in areas where the migrant group is superordinate and the indigenous group subordinate differs sharply from the stage in society composed of a superordinate indigenous group and subordinate migrants" (p. 69). Ujimoto (1989) also notes that too much emphasis is placed on the importance of assimilation as a naturally occurring phenomenon. Ideas related to social exchange and access to available resources are not entertained. He argues the race relations cycle will not pertain when immigrants who are selected on the basis of technological and entrepreneurial skills are admitted and might become the superordinate class. He concludes, "The race relations cycle may be repeated, but according to a different tune in that accommodation stage will become rather blurred, especially in a global environment in which the usual assimilation and acculturation criteria are meaningless" (p. 81).

Bolaria and Li (1985) further argue that placing too much emphasis on the cultural aspects of adaptation and assimilation not only overemphasizes cultural identity but also ignores the role of institutional racism. They point out that assimilation theories have failed to account for the racial phenomenon in

Canada and the United States, as Ogbu (1978) has pointed out in his study of caste-like and immigrant minorities.

Bolaria and Li assert that race problems begin as labour problems. These problems are not a matter of cultural differences but of confrontation based on power relationships between the dominant and subordinate groups. Racism, they argue, is not an outcome of cultural misunderstanding, but rather a deliberate ideology designed to rationalize the unjust treatment of the subordinate group for the purpose of exploiting its labour power (p. 1).

Those critics in Australia such as Castle et al (1988), who oppose the cultural theory, echo similar points of view with their North American counterparts. They analyse Australia's immigration policy and the labour market, and illustrate how culture is made into a social construct which discriminates against migrant workers in Australia. They conclude that the concept of assimilation is an ideological construct which has taken on a political meaning.

These arguments, which focus on the social structure rather that cultural differences or assimilation problems accounting for the socioeconomic hardship experienced by immigrants, constitute the backbone of the second approach.

Second Approach: Structural Barriers

Research in both North America and Australia has been very revealing concerning the extent to which minority groups have experienced discrimination in the job market. Several Canadian studies have emphasized the effects of the social structure of

the host country on immigrants (Ujimoto, 1981; Basran, 1983; Henry and Ginsberg, 1985; Fernando and Prasad, 1986; Li, 1988a, 1988b; McDade, 1988; Merlet, 1989).

These studies indicate that immigrants belonging to minority groups are either underemployed or unemployed and they do not have the same employment opportunities as other Canadians. The major cause of the problem is the structural barriers - the barriers which exist at all levels of the social, economic and political context and which discriminate against immigrants and prevent them from moving upward in the job market. The identified barriers found in these studies include inability to establish Canadian equivalence for educational and professional credentials, supposed deficiencies in training, poor language proficiency, and lack of "Canadian" work experience.

Among studies relating to the impact of social structure on the work experience of immigrants, Basran (1983) examines Canada's immigration policy and points out the necessity to understand the nature of capitalism and the role of the Canadian state in order to understand the nature of immigration and the adaptation problems immigrants experience in Canada. He concludes that immigration policy is based on economic condition, and it is used by the ruling class to produce reserve labour which can be utilized according to their needs.

Li's theoretical framework concentrates on economic and political arguments. Li (1988b) analyzes the immigrants' employment experiences in the structural context of Canadian society and illustrates it with the experience of Chinese residing in Canada. According to Li, Canada has always been a

society structured on systematic inequality, and race remains a salient factor in employment inequality. He argues that in a racialized society, in which racial origin affects prospects for employment, disadvantaged groups are compelled to seek lower-paying and less desirable jobs as discrimination makes higher-paying and more desirable jobs less accessible to them. In other words, social fractionalization ensures a constant supply of cheap labour by classifying some racial groups as undesirable, thus making them less marketable for higher-paying positions and more available for lower-paying ones (Li, 1988b).

Li argues that the key to understanding the economic position of Chinese in Canada lies in the structure of Canadian society rather than in a traditional culture supposedly brought over from China. For example, Chinese Canadians have made socioeconomic advances in recent decades, and their mobility has to do with overall changes in the occupational structure of Canada after the war, as it changed from an agricultural economy to an industrial power (Li, 1988a). In other words, the improved opportunities of the Chinese have more to do with the industrial expansion of Canada than with the social equality striven for by immigrants in the host country. The economic advancement of some of the new immigrants is also due to their expertise and experiences meeting the needs of the labour market, and it has little to do with greater equality for racial minorities (Ibid., 1988a).

Li sums up the reasons which account for the experiences of the Chinese in contemporary Canada:

> The post-war changes among the Chinese community were influenced by the changing economic conditions and

> immigration policies in Canada, and were not necessarily a result of the Chinese becoming more assimilated into Canadian society. Likewise, the apparent occupational and educational mobility of the post-war Chinese has had more to do with the overall shifts in the occupational structure in Canada than with greater equality for racial minorities. (pp. 133-134)

Therefore, the theoretical approach suggested by Li locates inequality in a larger social context, beyond individual attributes and cultural idiosyncrasies.

However, Li's premise that economic considerations are solely or largely responsible for discrimination against Chinese immigrant workers is debatable. Some scholars (e.g. Roy, 1980, 1989; Barman, 1986) have made an attempt to suggest an interesting twist to examining anti-Chinese agitation, especially in the period before World War II. Their thesis is that the discriminatory acts against the Chinese were due to white Canadians' fear of the Asian, and their sense of insecurity (Roy, 1980). Studies which apply this perspective to analyze the problems of contemporary Chinese and discrimination against them are still meager. Horn (1989) in his review of Li's book <u>The Chinese in Canada</u> remarks that, when white people confronted the Chinese and other "coloured" people, they often saw them as almost incomprehensible aliens, and "alien" translated easily into "inferior". His suggestion coincides with Johnson's comment, which calls the latest discriminating acts against Chinese in British Columbia, part of the white "predilection to react negatively to other ethnic groups" (in DeMont and Fennel, 1989, p. 154).

Creese (1986), on the other hand, criticizes Li's thesis and argues that race and gender are constitutive elements in the structuring of class, rather than functioning to reproduce class

domination. Her approach to the 'race-class' question firmly rejects economically determinist notions of class, but shapes class simultaneously by economic, political, and ideological relations (p. 166).

In their analysis of the Australian immigration policy, Castles et al (1988) claim that the Australian government's policy of promoting assimilation is not merely an economic one but has the intention of maintaining British superiority. They define assimilation in the Australian context as follows:

> ... (assimilation is) an ideological response to a structural contradiction: the need for mass multi-ethnic migration to service expanding labour-intensive industry in a country where traditional cultural norms and practices, at a number of levels, ensured widespread popular opposition to such immigration (p. 51)

Australia, which has been a culturally homogeneous society based on British values and institutions, was caught in a dilemma after the Second World War as it experienced serious labour shortages. Traditional immigrants from Britain had ceased to come since the British found they were better off in their home country where industry had been expanding during the post war period. The Australian government's need to accept ethnic groups other than British as migrant workers was not prompted by the desire to create a multi-ethnic society. This forced the government to play a key role in the process of ideological construction (p. 54). Highly selected immigrants from "racially acceptable" Eastern and North European heritage, and later from the more "racially distanced" Southern European heritage, were recruited, and the public was promised that they would be fully assimilated as "New Australians". The demand that migrants should assimilate quickly and totally to "Australian" culture has

been under attack by many scholars who pointed out that such a policy implicitly asserted the superiority of Australian culture over that of the migrants. Worse still, it substituted a covert racism based on supposed incompatibility of certain cultures for an overt one based on the supposed superiority of certain racial-biological features (p. 45).

The assumption that some cultures were inferior when compared with the dominant Australian culture and that some cultures were less able to assimilate than others led to a highly segmented Australian labour force. By comparing occupational status among migrant workers from 12 countries, Castles et al (1988) found that Australian-born workers, or migrants from English-speaking countries employed in manufacturing, are far more likely to be in professional, administrative or clerical jobs than were non-English speaking workers. Migrant workers from non-English speaking countries, particularly from Southern Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia, are overwhelmingly manual workers in manufacturing and construction. This in turn leads to lower income and poorer working conditions. Migrant women workers from non-English speaking countries are likely to be in the lowest income groups. Such findings indicate a link between language in place of birth, gender and types of job in the Australian labour force. Segmentation means that job opportunities are based not just on a person's abilities, qualifications and productivity, but also on non-economic ascriptive criteria linked to gender, race and ethnicity. Labour markets are structured to place women, non-English speaking migrants and racial minorities at a disadvantage, and their low-

status positions are in turn taken as practical proof of innate inferiority (p. 26).

Some Canadian feminist anthropologists and sociologists (e.g. Smith, 1975, 1978, 1987; Ng, 1981, 1982; Anderson, 1987, 1990; Anderson and Lynam, 1987) also criticize studies that merely focus on culture or ethnicity as the explanation for the difficult adjustment of immigrants in their new home country. The strongest criticism is that culture is usually treated as "static" or as a "set of beliefs" which determines the "non-compliance" of a person to a situation. For example, Anderson (1990) argues that treating culture and ethnicity as givens obscures the material circumstances of women's lives, and the way their place in the social structure denies them access to the resources in the society. The conditions under which immigrant women work have a profound impact on their health. Ng (1982), in her study about immigrant housewives in the work force in Canada, indicates that immigrant women's ethnicity has been conveniently used as "reasons" for the "incompetency" of these women. Ng (1981) points out that "ethnicity" is always reinforced when there is a disjuncture between how the every day world works and the woman's understanding of it.

The theoretical approach of these feminist scholars attempts to bring in the human agents, by understanding social structures from their perspectives and experiences. Smith (1975, 1987), who bases her research on Marx's work on political economy, adopts such an approach to examine the problems of women in the broader context of social organization. Smith (1987) points out that the everyday world experience of women is not random, and the social

context which they are in is usually structured and organized in a way that is beyond their control. Smith further remarks that the subjective experience of these women is generated by the existing ideological structures and the organization of social relations, which in turn are determined by a particular mode of production.

Smith defines ideological structures as images and symbols available to us in our daily lives which organize our experiences. Furthering Marx and Engels's concept of "ideology", Smith argues,

> Ideological structures are ideas, images, and symbols in which our experience is given social form as to what is actually produced by specialists and by people who are part of the apparatus by which the ruling class maintains its control over the society. (p. 54)

This ideological structure has provided women with forms of thought and modes of expression, in which they are constrained to examine themselves from outside of themselves. For example, female academic professionals have learned to work inside a discourse that women do not have a part in making. There are also professional institutions which alienate women from their experience. These institutions include advertising and media services, school systems, theology and religious institutions, health care systems, law and psychiatry (p. 53). Smith criticizes all of these structures as coming from men who dominate and penetrate the social consciousness of the society in general, and structure the subjective experience of all women.

The term "social relations" which Smith uses in her argument is drawn from Marxist theory, and is defined as:

> The social relations constituting commodities are distinctive. They are relations in which individuals are

> necessarily present and active but in which they do not appear as such. They are the relations of an economy in which money is exchanged for commodities and commodities for money. The invisibility of subjects in the commodity as a social relation is not a concept effect, but a feature of the particular way in which exchange relations are organized in a capitalist mode of production. (Smith, 1987:133)

Hence, social relations are sequences of activities in the process of production. Smith argues that it is during such a process that women have provided a cheap source of labour and the material substratum on which our mode of production is based. In order to capture the social organization which their experience is related to, we should examine their everyday experiences from their own perspectives (Smith, 1987).

Smith's line of analysis of women's position is followed by Epstein, Ng and Trebble (1978), Ng (1981, 1982), Anderson (1987, 1990), Anderson and Lynam (1987), and Ralston (1991), who have all studied the experiences of immigrant women in Canada. They agree with Smith that the experience of immigrant women is generated by an objective organization of material social relations which in turn are determined by a particular mode of production. Ng (1981) points out that immigrant women are at a special disadvantage in this type of society as the organization of social relations is beyond their control. In order to understand the particulars of immigrant women's experience in Canada, we must examine the larger social and economic processes which generate the specific character of the phenomena (Ng, 1982). These processes are inextricably tied to their lives in fundamental ways and are embodied in very ordinary features of their lives, which come to be taken for granted. By examining the "lived experience" (Ralston, 1991) of the immigrant women or what they actually do in the labour force, we will be able to

find out how women's work is an integral part of a determinate social organization and what features constitute the class location of immigrant women in Canadian society (Ng, 1982). As Anderson (1987) remarks:

> we need to continue to make visible the structures which shape women's experiences, and hold up for questioning the taken-for-granted notions about everyday life. (p. 87)

While a growing body of socialist feminist literature criticizes the shortcomings of the cultural approach, and emphasizes the necessity of examining the experience of immigrant women using the structural approach, several feminist scholars (e.g. Stasiulis, 1991; Bottomley, 1984; Jeannie, 1984) make an attempt to connect gender, race and ethnicity, and class. They argue that such a dimension has rarely been examined since the theoretical orientation of traditional feminism is based on a white middle class bias.

Stasiulis (1991) not only criticizes the shortcomings of the existing socialist feminist theories, but also suggests a Black feminism which she finds most appropriate to examine the problems of Black women and women of the minority groups. Marxist analysis of immigration and racial oppression, as Stasiulus points out, is a mere reflection of production and class based relations. Failing to account for the differences and hierarchical structuring in material and discursive conditions that govern Black and white women's lives, socialist feminists' understanding of the relationship between racism and class exploitation is inadequate despite their effort to incorporate race and class into their theory and practice (p. 282).

Stasiulis challenges the theoretical assumptions of white feminists by saying that they basically ignore race and ethnicity but rather generalize from the experiences of Anglo-celtic women to all women. In addition, white feminists also place their priority on gender and class issues over race and racism. Black feminism, as suggested by Stasiulis, insists that racism, rather than sexism, is the primary source of oppression. Its theory focuses on historical and contemporary circumstances and is sensitive to differing material circumstances and experiences among women differentiated by race and ethnicity (p. 282). Stasiulis sums up the criticism of the white feminism by Black feminists,

> What is at issue in the critiques of white feminism by Black feminism is not merely the conceptualization of women's role in the family, but the role of racism in differentiating the material circumstance of white and black women in relation of both production and reproduction. (p. 286)

Due to the acceptance of more immigrants with different financial and qualification backgrounds under the current immigration policies, Stasiulis indicates that, in addition to the dimension of race, class should be examined closely in resource-based Canada. The form and effects of racism experienced by immigrant women of different classes might be different because of their different material circumstances.

Along with Stasiulis, Australian feminist sociologist Bottomley (1984) advocates an approach useful to understand the specific situation of immigrant women in relation to both gender-based and class-based inequality (p. 98). Bottomley examines the family life and political activity of Greek immigrant women both in Greece and Australia, and points out that class analysis,

which has rarely been taken on as one of the important aspects to examine inequality of immigrant women, is in fact crucial. She explains that such an ignorance is due to the traditional feminism being developed as a predominantly urban middle-class phenomenon. These problems are exacerbated by concerns with ideological purity and hence, feminist theories rarely make links between women of different class situations.

Bottomley concludes that the three dimensions of gender, race and class must be examined together if the sources of oppression are to be meaningfully identified. She also recommends the need for recognition of "specificity" - the specific analyses of women's class situation, and of the particular referents of different groups of women - as an appropriate approach.

To conclude, the cultural approach, which argues that cultural traits alone determine the adaptation problems experienced by immigrants, has been refuted by the structural approach which emphasizes the impact of social structure. Because of different theoretical assumptions, several methods of work have been developed within the structural approach. Li's focus (1988) strictly on the social organization and economic considerations accountable to the discrimination against Chinese immigrant workers has come under criticism. Smith (1987) and a growing number of feminists who base their work on Marxist political economy focus their study on social structure and social relations. They emphasize both the role of human agency and the social structure, and examine the latter from the perspective of the human agent. They place human agents and the

process of their interaction with the social context at the centre of analysis. While the cultural approach and structural approach are developed as two distinctive approaches to examine the adaptation problems of immigrants, Stasiulis (1991) and Bottomley (1984) advocate a combination of both by making attempts to connect gender, race and class.

Studies using any of the above approaches to examine the adaptation of Chinese immigrant women in the work force in Canada are scanty. The majority of these studies only focus on Chinese immigrant women who are either unskilled labour workers or 'dependent applicants' (sponsored either by husbands or parents). In traditional literature, these are usually portrayed as victims oppressed in their new home country either because of their cultural baggage, or by the social structure. The problems of Chinese immigrant women who come to Canada as 'independent applicants' because of their skills, qualifications, and relevant work experiences have not been adequately explored. Stasiulis's suggestion may give a direction as she argues,

> It is important to distinguish between the forms and effects of racism experienced by wealthy female immigrants from Hong Kong and those experienced by Indo-Chinese refugee women who have few income and job options apart from the highly exploitive needle trades (p. 292).

Even though Stasiulis's generalization of skilled and professional immigrant women from Hong Kong as wealthy is questionable, her suggestion to look at different forms of oppressions provides a promising guideline for the present study.

Conclusion

Early Chinese women settlers were exploited and discriminated against in British Columbia from 1858 until 1960. Cultural norms women brought with them and institutional barriers were two dominant factors accounting for their ill-treatments during that period of time. The open door policy of Canada since 1968 did and continues to attract a new genre of Chinese women who are professionals and highly skilled workers from Hong Kong. Despite the policy of multiculturalism and the fact that employment equity initiatives are set in place to increase representation of visible minorities at all levels of different employment sectors, evidences have shown that racism and discrimination still exist. Hence, the success of these Chinese immigrant women, who are admitted to Canada on the strength of their skills and relevant work experiences, in obtaining jobs with equity status is questionable. Tracing their employment experiences and identifying barriers they might have encountered become the focus of this study.

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that a different approach to examine the adaptation of immigrant women is necessary. The new dimension of such an approach is to explore not only cultural factors and the social structure, but also other elements which obstruct Chinese immigrant women from moving upward in the job market in Vancouver.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical and methodological perspectives of the qualitative approach and its suitability for a study of Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada from Hong Kong as "independent applicants". The chapter also includes a description of the criteria for selecting respondents and a detailed report of the design and the methods of data collection and analysis used. I conclude with a discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the research design.

Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

The research design of the study was a case study with a qualitative approach. I chose this research methodology because of the nature of my research problem - to describe and to identify issues involved in job transferability of Chinese immigrant women in the job market in Vancouver. Two key theoretical perspectives, which underpin the qualitative inquiry method, inform the methodological procedures used in this study: that human agents and their interaction with the social context are made the subject of inquiry; and that the subjectivity of the researcher is recognized as part of the research process.

The first theoretical perspective has been well developed in studies done by Smith (1975, 1978, 1987), Ng (1981, 1982),

Anderson (1987, 1990), Anderson and Lynam (1987) and Ralston (1991) which explore the subjective realities of women's lives in general and those of immigrant women in particular. These researchers grounded their theoretical assumptions on the interpretive research tradition. According to this tradition, human actors themselves construct the social world through the interpretation of, and interaction with, other human actors. The negotiations of human agents in the actual construction of meaning systems are emphasized (Angus, 1986). The interpretive approach also attempts to understand the world through the subjective perceptions and meanings of its human actors. In other words, it "places human actors and their interpretive and negotiating capacities at the centre of analysis" (Angus, 1986, p. 61). Smith and other feminist researchers further indicate that women's experiences are part of and determined by a social organization over which they have little control. Ng (1982) identifies this social organization as social and economic processes which are embodied in very ordinary features of everyday lives, which we have come to take for granted. Ng (1981) points out that this requires us to use research methodologies that will allow us to grasp the contextual meanings in the everyday life experiences of women, and suggests the following research objectives:

1. to study the perspective of immigrant women, and to describe their subjective experiences in Canada; and

2. to explicate the socially organized character of immigrant women's experience, as it is historically and materially located in the social relations of Canadian society. (p. 100)

By describing immigrant women's experiences and tracing the processes from their own perspectives, the social organization which gives rise to these experiences can be uncovered.

The second theoretical perspective of qualitative study, that the subjectivity of the researcher should be treated as an "overt subject matter" (Harding, 1987, p. 8) during the whole inquiry process, is essential. Being an immigrant woman from Hong Kong and sharing similar employment background with some of the respondents, I found my understanding of the issues of Chinese immigrant women constantly affected by my own experiences, beliefs and perceptions. How to establish the trustworthiness of the data and to minimize my personal bias when interpreting findings became a major concern.

Researchers such as Hammersley (1983), Angus (1986), Lather (1986), Harding (1987), Anderson (1989) and Wolcott (1991), point out that the researcher should be recognized as part of the social world she/he studies. As scientific "neutrality" only mystifies the basic ideological nature of research in human sciences (Lather, 1986), these researchers argue that the researcher should not seek for "objectivity" as if she/he were separated from the research. Hammersley (1983) emphasizes the researcher being part of the examined social phenomenon is an "existential fact" (p. 15), and it is not possible for her/him to stand outside the social world and examine it. Harding (1987) goes further by suggesting that,

> (t)he class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture she/he attempts to paint. (p. 9)

Being both an insider and a researcher, I found being neutral and objective difficult as I shared comparable backgrounds with the Chinese women who participated in this study. The qualitative research approach allows me to recognize my subjectivity in the process of inquiry. However, recognizing the influence of my perceptions in the research study and accepting my personal bias are not sufficient to develop a body of empirical work suitable for theory formulation; a more systematic method of work is required in order to establish the reliability and validity of my study. The procedures and methods used in this study are adopted from the work of a number of qualitative researchers including Spradley (1979), Taylor and Bogdan (1984), Goetz and LeCompte (1984), Miles and Huberman (1984), Anderson and Lynam (1987), Lather (1986), and Marshall and Rossman (1989). Research methods suggested by educational researchers such as Wiersma (1986) and McMillan and Schumacher (1989) are also used. Suggestions for strengthening the validity and reliability of the study are made.

I treated this study as a "case" because I limited the research problem only to the employment experiences in which some phenomena as well as meanings of events and processes were described by a group of Chinese immigrant women from Hong Kong. According to Stake (1988), "A case study doesn't tell the whole story. It deals with the unity of the case, the unity of the experience" (p. 258). The "unity" of the present study was confined to searching out issues, themes, and patterns of meaning of work experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Vancouver, and identifying barriers in the process of job transferability from

their perspective. Voices of the women were used because I wanted to understand their work life and to examine ways they interacted with their social context from their perspectives.

Selection of Participants

Twenty Hong Kong Chinese immigrant women who had the attributes listed below were involved in my study.

(1) Aged between 28 and 50;
(2) Cantonese speaking (the mother tongue of Hong Kong Chinese residents);
(3) "Independent applicant status" when applying to Canada; and
(4) Resident of Canada for at least three years.

These Chinese immigrant women were between 28 and 50 years of age because I assume working women at this age range would be quite established in their career if they had stayed on in their former jobs before emigration. Because I was aware that what becomes "data" is socially produced by both researcher and informant within the context of an encounter (Smith, 1978; Anderson and Lynam, 1987), one of the criteria for participation in the study was the ability to speak Cantonese, the mother tongue of both the researcher and respondents. Linguistic competence of both parties ensures direct communication. Respondents were "independent applicants" who earned at least 70 out of 100 points in the immigration "point system" in nine areas, which include education, specific vocational preparation, experience, occupation, arranged employment, age, knowledge of official language(s), personal suitability and level control (see Endnote 2). They had been residing in Canada for at least three years. Since my research problem is to identify issues involved in the job transferability of these Chinese immigrant women, the

minimum of three years residency in Canada was necessary to enable me to trace employment process and to examine work experiences.

I adopted a network or snowball approach to sampling. Participant referrals were the basis for choosing respondents. In other words, each respondent was asked to suggest others who fit the attributes of the profile. The subsequent respondents were in turn asked for names. I will discuss the shortcomings of snowball sampling and suggest ways of strengthening this research method in a later section. However, this strategy is very important when involving Chinese people as informants. Perhaps because of the competitive living environment in Hong Kong, they do not usually trust strangers. They are particularly cautious about people approaching them for interviews as they are not accustomed to expressing their opinions publicly. Nevertheless, they are trusting of friends, and regard social contact as the means for ensuring the successful accomplishment of one's goals.

In the initial stage of the study, I anticipated that it would be difficult to get names of potential respondents. I contacted several immigrant service organizations, as well as educational institutes such as school boards and community colleges which ran adult ESL programs, and asked school administrators and teachers to provide me with names of people who might agree to be my respondents. I also made special efforts to attend workshops and conferences about immigrant women in order to contact organizers, guest speakers and participants, informing them about my project and expressing my wish of finding potential respondents through them. With a "middle-person" to

help me start networking, I hoped to gather a group of "ready-to-talk" respondents. Many resource people were very supportive and referred me to an initial group of 45 Chinese immigrant women. I contacted all of them formally with a "Letter of Initial Contact" (see Appendix A) and followed with a telephone call to ask for their consent.

The process of searching for suitable respondents was at times agonizing and discouraging. Quite a number of Chinese immigrant women did not want the interview to be audio-taped. Among them, one women explained that she would go for her Canadian citizenship hearing very soon and she did not want anything to affect her chance of obtaining citizenship. Another woman, who was referred by her employer, agreed to be interviewed only if the interview was noted down in written form. She was afraid that any taped information about her employment experiences might jeopardize her job if it were made known. Since the purpose of tape recording the answers was to collect complete information, and this was an important criterion for data collection, those women who did not agree to have the interviews taped were not invited to be my respondents. A few others pointed out that a three hour interview was too long and they could not afford the time. I did not attempt to persuade those women who were reluctant because I wanted to find a group of women who were willing to spend their time sharing with me their experiences.

Twenty women who accepted my invitation readily showed interest in my study. Some of them indicated that they were also concerned about the employment experiences of other Chinese

immigrant women. A few revealed that they were confident with using Cantonese as the interview medium; they would have refused my invitation were it conducted in English. All these women were very generous with their time and were very relaxed when they were sharing their stories with me.

In the literature, there is no preferred sample size for qualitative research. The intent of this study is to describe the employment issues of twenty Hong Kong Chinese immigrant women in Vancouver. Their experiences are part of what constitutes the totality of immigrant women's working lives; they thereby shed light on the lives of other immigrant women (Anderson and Lynam, 1986). It should be noted that the number of interviews is consistent with many qualitative studies using similar methodology. For example, Epstein, Ng and Trebble (1978) report on 22 respondents; Bendalow (1984) reports on 15 respondents; Chase and Bell (1990) report on 17 respondents; Russell (1993a) reports on 24 respondents; and Morley (1993) reports on 12 participants.

Data Collection

Since this case study was exploratory in nature, I used the multi-method approach suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (1989). The combination of several data collection methods makes possible the triangulation of data (Wiersma, 1986) and enables me to verify data from different sources. I undertook four tasks. The first three tasks were completed well before the last one - intensive semi-structured interviews. These three tasks included: familiarizing myself with the problems of immigrants in

the job market through examining the literature and published documents; talking to four ESL instructors and two settlement counsellors who had some sense of the problem; and informally interviewing three Chinese immigrant women, who shared a similar background with my potential respondents, about their employment history and barriers they encountered in the workplace, starting from the time when they arrived in Vancouver. Collecting data from professionals working with immigrant women and from Chinese immigrant women themselves was important at the initial stage of the study. They were informants who "possess special knowledge, status, or communication skills" (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984, p. 119) which they were willing to share. Since the purpose of these informal interviews was to elicit preliminary information and discussions were wide ranging in order to draw on individual expertise and experiences, interviews were not directed by a standard guide. Although all interviews were audio-taped, only a summary of key points or themes discussed rather than a detailed transcription was derived. The information I gathered from this range of methods was used to test and develop interviewing strategies, and to supplement and corroborate later findings.

The fourth task was to conduct intensive semi-structured interviews, the main research tool in this study. As one of the objectives of this study was to find out the leading barriers of job transferability and to examine the core of the problems, I did not think a written questionnaire survey could yield an in-depth study. The intensive interview enabled me to probe subjects for further detail. Daniels (1989) points out that "an alert, experienced interviewer is sensitive to non-verbal

communication ... which can serve to give the interviewer important clues on when to press for additional comment or clarification." Intensive interviews, therefore, can offer more substantial results as they "help bring the researcher closer to the individual's thinking" (Mohan, personal communication, March 1989). I adopted the interview guide approach suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (1989), in which topics were selected in advance but I decided the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview.

Using the studies of Ujimoto (1973), Ginsberg and Henry (1985), Fernando and Prasad (1986), Ng (1981, 1982), Anderson (1987, 1990), Anderson and Lynam (1987), Ralston (1991), survey reports such as Chinese Immigrant Women's Needs Survey in Richmond (1991), as well as the information collected from the nine informal interviews with immigrant settlement specialists, ESL instructors and Chinese immigrant women as references, I designed a preliminary interview schedule. It included questions which covered the following areas:

- previous job experience
- job search process in Canada
- Canadian work experience or related work experience
- job routine and workplace culture
- proficiency in an official language
- cultural barriers
- coping strategies

The questions were pilot tested with two Chinese immigrant women whose Canadian immigrant status and employment history were similar to those interviewed for the study. The procedures of the pilot study were comparable to those implemented in the study. I took special note of any cues suggesting that the respondent was uncomfortable or did not fully understand the

questions. After the pilot interviews, the respondents were asked to evaluate the questions. The pilot tests provided a means of checking how reliable the content of the interview schedule was, assessing the length of the interview, and giving the interviewer some idea of the ease with which the data could be summarized.

The two test interviews were transcribed and analyzed to determine the relevance of the information elicited. Based on that analysis it was decided that with minor adjustments (e.g. personal data such as age, marital status, educational background and official language proficiency was placed separately in a two page personal fact sheet) the interview schedule was ready.

A nine part interview guide (Appendix D) served as the basis for the interview. Areas covered by the guide include employment history in Hong Kong; employment in Canada; proficiency in official language(s); cultural barriers; workplace habits; coping strategies; "meaning" of work; comparison of employment experiences between Vancouver and Hong Kong; as well as additional comments or views not covered by previous areas. Because the most difficult questions for respondents may be those relating to personal values and opinions on meaning of work and a comparison of work experiences in the two cities, these were reserved for the last part of interview when rapport had been established and interviewee interest had been aroused (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). The nine major headings of the interview schedule served as an outline, providing structure and consistency for each interview. The sub-questions under each heading were used to help the interviewer elaborate or clarify

points. During the actual interviews, the sequence of sub-questions was not always strictly followed. As Goetz and LeCompte point out, a semi-structured interview technique permits the interviewer to be more natural and responsive.

Data collection also included field notes (Spradley, 1979) of my observations about objective information such as the individual's work or home environments. Subjective hunches and preliminary impressions were recorded.

Interview Procedure

A total of 91 hours was spent on the 34 interview sessions (see Table 1). Each interview was between three and six hours. The interview was scheduled at the convenience of my respondents. Eleven interviews were completed within one session, and seven in two sessions. One interview was arranged in four sessions of an hour each, and another one was five sessions of forty minutes each.

Each interview began with information about the purpose of the study, how the interview data would be used, and how confidentiality and anonymity would be protected, such as use of pseudonyms in this study (see Appendix B). Personal information was collected by means of a standard "Personal Fact Sheet" (see Appendix C). The in-depth interview followed, with the interview schedule used as reference. Clarification of information usually took place in the follow-up session. For the eleven interviews which were only one session long, respondents were asked after the interview if they could be contacted later by telephone to answer any questions that might come up during transcription and

Table 1
Interview Arrangement

*Respondents	Schedule	Interview location	No. of hours
1.**Cindy	May 5, 7	interviewer's home	5
2.**Kitty	May 10	Kitty's home	4
3. Alice	June 27	Alice's home	3
4. Susan	June 30	Susan's home	4
5. Vivian	July 6	Vivian's office	5
6. Amy	July 8, 10, 14, 16	at the park, in a restaurant	5
7. Pam	July 12	Pam's home	4
8. Gin	July 19	Gin's home	5
9. Jo	July 20, 21	Jo's home	5
10. Molly	Sep 12,14	Molly's home	6
11. Tina	Sep 15, 17, 18, 21, 23	Tina's office	6
12. Bessy	Sep 24	interviewer's home	3
13. Eva	Sep 25	Eva's home	4
14. Emily	Sep 29	Emily's office	4
15. Sally	Oct 2, 6	Sally's home	5
16. Jenny	Oct 8	Jenny's home	4
17. Lucy	Oct 18	Lucy's home	4
18. May	Oct 23, 30	in a hospital cafeteria	5
19. Mary	Nov 4, 11	Mary's home	5
20. Cathy	Nov 6, 13	Cathy's home	5
		Total number of hours:	91

* Pseudonyms for respondents are used throughout the study
** Respondents interviewed in the pilot study

analysis. They agreed to the request. Ultimately, all respondents were called for supplementary information.

The interview was usually conducted in the respondent's home, office, or a place they designated, such as my apartment, the park, a restaurant, or a hospital cafeteria. Wiersma (1986) reports that life-history interviews are often conducted in respondents' homes or offices, settings interviewees tend to find more comfortable. Since the respondents decided on the place and the time convenient to them, they were very comfortable and relaxed during the interview. Cantonese, the mother language of both the interviewer and the respondents, was used.

The interviews were all audio-taped. Since one of the criteria was willingness to be recorded, the sight of the tape recorder did not deter my respondents. To preclude the influence of different interviewing styles on the respondents, I was the sole interviewer for the study.

Data Transcription

In most cases I transcribed the data immediately after the interview. Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest the idea of analysis during data collection because it enables the researcher to produce a "guiding hypothesis" (p. 114) which allows the researcher to collect new data to fill in gaps. I transcribed and completed a preliminary analysis of each interview before proceeding with the next.

The data collected in the tapes were transcribed verbatim. Because the interviews were conducted in Cantonese, all transcriptions were likewise in Chinese. Each hour of recorded

interview required approximately four hours to transcribe, a total of 350 hours for data transcription. English translations were done only for those sections which were quoted to support my arguments in the study. The accuracy of my translations was verified by a linguistic specialist who has a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in English and Chinese literature, and a Master of Arts degree in linguistics.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis did not proceed in a linear way; it was an interactive process - both proceeded concurrently. As recommended by Spradley (1979), the researcher attempts to conduct a preliminary analysis of each interview before proceeding to the next. By doing so, I was not only able to clarify certain points, but also to consolidate findings.

I selected and transformed raw data by such means as summaries, data grouping, and "teasing out themes" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21). The forms which the data took included audio tapes, field notes, and photocopies of documents such as academic or training certificates, relevant business correspondence, or work performance appraisals. Since only minor changes such as the rephrasing of some questions were made as a result of the pilot interviews, the data collected during the pilot was deemed valuable and hence counted as part of the twenty formal interviews. I constantly related the experiences of the women derived from the data to perspectives provided by the literature.

According to Taylor and Bogdon (1984), "in qualitative research coding is a systematic way of developing and refining interpretation of the data" (p. 136). In this study, each transcript was reviewed for content and during this process, I made notes in the margin. Data were colour-coded on the transcript using highlighters, each main subject area in a different colour. This process facilitated grouping data for analysis. The colour-coded data were grouped, initially according to the main categories identified from the literature review. For example, various barriers experienced by the respondents were coded and categorized under the traditionally defined structural barriers and cultural barriers. In the process of grouping data, some key words were identified, such as those relating to professionalism, office structures, or life priorities.

Themes or categories, which were initially drawn from the literature review or early informal interview data, were evolved over the life of data collection and analysis. New categories were added as new data, and continuing examination of existing data also suggested new categories. For example, conflicts between colleagues with Chinese ethnic background were mentioned by several respondents as problems they had in the workplace, giving rise to the new theme "intra-group tensions".

Analysis of data led me to find two new developments in my argument: that many employment barriers encountered by this group of Chinese immigrant women from Hong Kong could not be categorized under either structural barriers or cultural barriers - a new dimension to identify barriers was necessary; and that

these barriers were salient not only at the working stage, but also at the pre-working stage. A detailed presentation of my arguments follows in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research Design

This research design had several strengths and weaknesses. Trust and rapport between the interviewer and the respondents were established. Speaking in Cantonese, the mother language of both the interviewer and interviewees, we were able to communicate with each other comfortably. A "community" was also developed between us since I had been referred to them by their friends. This kind of trust-based relationship helped strengthen validity.

Several "threats" (McMillan and Schumacher, 1989, p. 193) to the validity of this research design might exist. The first "threat" was that the respondents were volunteers referred either by resource people or former respondents in the process of snowball sampling, and they might be more motivated than nonvolunteers; hence, they might have responded differently to the questions from the way a nonvolunteer group might have. Another concern related to respondents was that those immigrants who were underemployed or unemployed might have been those who were unwilling to be interviewed; therefore, their experiences and perspectives on job transferability were not given a voice in this study. Anderson and Lynam (1987) suggest that the overriding criterion for participating in qualitative studies should be "the ability to speak to the phenomenon under investigation" (p. 69). Even though the 20 Chinese women in this

study were selected by means of snowball sampling, they had one characteristic in common - they were knowledgeable about the topic under investigation and were willing to speak about their employment experiences and barriers they encountered in the workplace.

The second "threat" was instrumentation. The questions prepared for the interviews might be biased, and some important issues might have been overlooked. Pilot interviews helped check this threat. Two pilot interviews were arranged, and respondents in the pilot interviews were invited to evaluate the questions for intent, reliability, and clarity.

The third "threat" was interviewer bias. In in-depth interviews, the interaction between the interviewer and the respondents is intense and hence vulnerable to interviewer bias. It is because the attitude, behavior or the way the interviewer presented the question might have affected the response of the respondents. As mentioned earlier, the researcher is an active participant in qualitative research. Realizing the "interactive nature" of the interview (Anderson and Jack, 1991, p. 23) allowed me to listen critically, to ask for clarification, and to be attentive when information was exchanged. Because of my constant awareness, I believe the effects of my presence on the answers of the respondent were minimized.

The last, but not least, "threat" was researcher bias. During the whole process of conducting the research and analyzing the data, I was very involved in searching for willing respondents, establishing rapport and building a trusting relationship with respondents, carrying out in-depth interviews,

as well as analyzing the research data. I constantly interacted with my respondents, and interpreted the data from my own theoretical framework. I was in fact part of the research process. Instead of striving to establish an objective research procedure in order to eliminate researcher bias, the qualitative method of inquiry allows me to acknowledge the existence of the effects of the researcher. Furthermore, some systematic research techniques were used to strengthen the validity of my findings.

Various research techniques such as self-awareness (Sharp and Green, 1975), triangulation, reflexivity, and member checks (Guba and Lincoln, 1981), reflexivity (Hammersley, 1983), self-corrective techniques (Lather, 1986), and maintenance of a dialectic between theory and data (Anderson, 1989) provide a better understanding of constructing validity and systematizing reflexivity. There is still a lack of guidelines on how to conduct a self-reflective research. Among these research methods, I found Lather's self-corrective mechanisms most relevant to my present study.

Lather's methods are used to check the credibility of the data and to prevent researcher biases from distorting the logic of evidence. As Lather (1986) comments: "Research within a postpositivist context mandates a self-corrective element to prevent phenomena from being forced into preconceived interpretive schemes" (p. 65). With no ready-made formulae to guarantee valid social knowledge, she suggests that the best way is to construct research designs that "push us toward becoming vigorously self-aware" (p. 66).

The self-corrective mechanisms suggested by Lather are summarized as follows: (from Lather, 1986: 67-68)

Triangulation: Measures such as multiple data sources and theoretical schemes are critical in establishing data trustworthiness. It is essential that the research design seek counterpatterns as well as convergences if data are to be credible.

Construct validity: A systematized reflexivity, which gives some indication of how the researcher's assumptions had been affected by the logic of the data, is essential in establishing construct validity.

Face validity: "Going back to the subject with the tentative results, and refining them in the light of the subject's reaction" needs to become a standard part of research designs.

Catalytic validity: Refers to the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1970) terms "conscientization", knowing reality in order to better transform it. It is not only a recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process itself, but a need to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ideally, self-determination through research participation.

With regard to triangulation, I constantly checked three independent sources: relevant literature and documents; informal interviews with settlement counsellors, and ESL instructors; and intensive interviews with the respondents.

Construct validity was also strengthened as I documented my theory from the analysis of my data in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Face validity was also verified. The 20 respondents were invited to be the readers of the preliminary copy of my dissertation. Five respondents agreed to read it. Among the other women, two had left Vancouver for an indefinite period of time, and others said that they did not have the time to do it because of work demands. Two respondents who read the preliminary copy of my study changed some minor details of their

employment history. All of them unanimously approved the authenticity of the content of my study.

Since it was not one of the research objectives of the present study to help research participants develop self-determination and transform the existing social structure, obtaining catalytic validity was not a concern of this study. However, some respondents evolved a different perspective of their own situation during the interview. For example, Molly realized that her conflicts with her colleague were due to the sour relationship between them, not because of her inadequacy in the English language.

Despite the self-corrective mechanisms providing several essential research techniques, such an approach lacks the historical perspective of examining the social world. Thus, I supplemented it with one technique suggested by Anderson (1989), "the reflection on the dialectical relationship between historical forces that inform the social construction under study" (p. 255). The rationale for examining the problems of Chinese immigrant women from a historical perspective was that history also constructs the social context which gives rise to the experience of human agent. This argument was presented in detail in a previous chapter. A comparison of the employment experiences of the early Chinese women settlers in Vancouver and those of my respondents also became one of the major sections in Chapter Seven. By constantly verifying my data using the above research techniques, I am confident that both misinterpretation of data and biases were minimized, and validity strengthened.

Since snowball sampling was used in this study and the respondents were not randomly selected, the data obtained is not generalizable. This case study did not aim at generalization of results but the extension of understanding of employment problems of a group of Chinese immigrant women in Vancouver. However, it may generate insights which contribute to a better understanding of women of other minority groups with comparable background in the workplace in Vancouver. The small sample size or the use of snowball sampling does not detract from the significance of the problems identified.

Conclusion

In summary, I have described in this chapter the qualitative methods which I have chosen for an examination of the employment experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Vancouver. I have explained ways in which these methods have allowed me to use my own experience as a basis for understanding different barriers these women might have encountered. A number of procedures, which are designed to check and validate and thus enhance the credibility of the study, have been described. While validity has been protected, it should be remembered that the findings are not generalizable. They can, however, provide significant impetus for future research about Chinese immigrant women and immigrant women in general.

CHAPTER FOUR

A PROFILE OF TWENTY RESPONDENTS AND THEIR EMPLOYMENT STORIES

The present research was undertaken in an attempt to investigate various barriers my twenty respondents had encountered in the process of job transferability. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general description of my respondents which includes their age, marital status, educational background, number of years of living to Canada, as well as the last job held in Hong Kong and current job in Canada (see Table 2). A profile of their English language proficiency is also presented. The last section of the chapter is a recapilation of their employment stories both in Hong Kong and in Canada.

General Description of Respondents

Among the twenty respondents, two of them were 28 years old. Six were between the age of 30 and 35. Another six were between 36 and 40. Five were between 41 and 45, and one was 50 years old.

As far as marital status is concerned, twelve were married, and one was a widow. Among the married women, nine had either one or two children. Seven were still single with no children.

The majority of the respondents had high educational status.

Table 2

Personal Information and Employment History of Twenty Respondents

Name	Age	Marital Status[1]	No. of Children	Education[2]	No. of Years in Canada	Last Job in Hong Kong	No. of Years	Current Job in Canada	No. of Years	Salary[3]
Alice	35	S	0	U	4	Personnel Manager	6	Secretary	3	-
Mary	37	M	1	G10 & Com	3	Personnel Manager	12	unemployed	3	-
Pam	30	M	1	G10 & Com	4	Sales Manager	10	self-employed	2	-
Sally	36	M	1	G	4	Merchandising Manager	6	unemployed	2	-
Gin	30	S	0	G10 & Com	4	Secretary	5	Secretary	4	+
Bessy	28	S	0	C	3	Personal Secretary	6	Legal Secretary	3	-
Molly	35	S	0	C	11	Secretary	3	Dietary Technologist	4	+
Cindy	33	M	0	G10 & Com	3	Senior Secretary	12	Secretary (PT)	1	-
Kitty	43	S	0	G10 & Com	5	Senior Secretary	18	Secretary	1	-
Amy	38	M	2	U	10	Magazine Editor	2	News Translator	2	-
Lucy	32	S	0	U	3	Newspaper Sub-Editor	4	Legal Secretary	3	=
Jenny	50	M	2	G10	3	Garment Designer	7	Garment Supervisor	1	-
Cathy	43	W	2	G	5	Lawyer	3	Housing Developer	2	-

Susan	46	M	2	U	4	Social Worker	21	Home-School Worker (PT)	2	-
Lily	36	M	0	U	5	Social Worker	8	Employment & Training Program Manager	2	-
Vivian	38	M	1	G	6	Student Amenities	8	Director of International House	2	+
Tina	36	M	2	C	5	Teacher	14	Banking Account Manager	2	=
Eva	44	M	0	G	10	Senior Lecturer	6	Assistant Professor	4	+
Jo	42	M	0	C	9	Registered Nurse	9	Registered Nurse	8	+
May	28	S	0	C	5	Occupational Therapist	4	Occupational Therapist	2	+

Keys:
1 Marital Status — S = single; M = married; W = widow
2 Education — G = graduate studies; U = university; C = college; G10 = grade 10; Com = commerce and clerical training
3 Salary — (+) = increase; (-) = decrease; (=) = same as before

Four of them held postgraduate degrees which included 1 Phd, 2 Masters, and 1 postgraduate Certificate of Laws. They obtained these degrees from universities in Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Britain. The remaining respondents included 5 university degree holders, and another 5 with college diplomas. The remaining six had only finished high school (equivalent to Grade 10), with five of them having one extra year of secretarial training.

Most of the respondents were professionals when they were in Hong Kong. They were managers, editors, social workers, a fashion designer, lawyer, student amenities officer, teacher, senior lecturer, registered nurse and occupational therapist. Five were secretaries, with two holding senior positions. Many of them had long working experience in Hong Kong. Six had been working from one to five years, nine from six to ten years, three from eleven to fifteen years, one for eighteen years and the last one for 21 years.

Among the twenty respondents, fifteen of them had been in Canada from 3 to 5 years. One had lived here for 6 years, one 9 years, two 10 years and one 11 years.

After settling in Canada for these numbers of years, seven of my respondents indicated that they spent about four to eight years to acquire jobs with equity status, in terms of salary and position. One woman pointed out that her present job position and salary were the same as those she had in Hong Kong. However, eleven of them said that their current jobs were lower in position, in terms of ranking and salary, than the ones they had before. The last woman said that she was not able to make any

comparison as she had not been working in Vancouver since she arrived.

English Language Proficiency of the Respondents.

Respondents were asked to rate their four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, according to a three level scale of Good, Average, and Poor, upon their arrival to Vancouver and at the current stage (see Table 3).

Table 3

Self-Rating of English Language Skills upon Arrival to Canada and at the Present Time

Four Language Skills	First landed in Canada			Present time		
	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor
Listening	14	5	1	20	0	0
Speaking	14	6	0	18	2	0
Reading	17	3	0	20	0	0
Writing	16	2	2	18	1	1

Fourteen of the respondents indicated that their listening skills were good, five indicated average and one poor when they first arrived in Vancouver. The same number of respondents said that their speaking skills were good, and six average. Seventeen said that they were good in reading and three average. Sixteen reported that their writing skills were good, two average, the remaining two poor.

At the present stage, all of them said that their listening and reading skills were good, and eighteen of them said their speaking and writing skills were good. Only two indicated that their speaking skills were average. One respondent revealed that her writing skills were only average and one said hers were poor.

Overall, the reading and writing skills of the majority of the respondents were good when they first came to Vancouver, with only a few indicating that both their listening and speaking skills were fair. As my respondents had more contact with local English speakers, all of them indicated that they were confident in the four language skills, with distinct improvement in both listening and speaking skills.

On the whole, all respondents believed that their English was proficient as a working language. Two reasons accounted for why my respondents were proficient in English before they came to Canada. The first reason was that all them were educated from English grammar schools in Hong Kong. Eleven earned their diploma or degrees from colleges or universities which used English as the teaching medium. One received her diploma in Canada and four went to England, the United States, Canada or New

Zealand for their graduate studies. Among them, Lucy, Susan, Vivian, and Eva had majored in English literature. Eva claimed jokingly that she knew the work of Shakespeare better than her local counterparts knew Chinese literature. Alice showed very keen interest in the English language even when she was a child. She recalled,

> English language had always been my favorite subject. I remember I cried broken heartedly when I had to memorize a text in Chinese. All along English is my "thinking" language. I think more critically in this language. (3.1.B10)

Other than academic English, all of them indicated that English was their working language in Hong Kong. This job requirement was the second reason for their high language proficiency. Twelve of them pointed out that they had English native speakers as their employers or superiors. The remaining eight also used English at work. Some always attended business conferences, seminars, or workshops conducted in English. Some made frequent overseas business trips, negotiating with their foreign customers in English. The majority handled English business correspondence such as memoranda, circulars, letters, and different types of reports. Among them, Cathy also handled all her court cases in legal English, while Tina used English as a teaching medium. The majority of them had good English proficiency because it was one of their job requirements.

Their proficiency had also been screened by Immigration and Employment Canada when they applied to Canada as "independent applicants". They were required to gain a maximum of 15 points in the Selection Criteria under the category of "Knowledge of

official languages", one of the two highest scores required, other than "Specific vocational preparation". (see Endnote 2)

The following section of this chapter presents the employment stories of twenty respondents. My intent is to provide background information which helps "set the stage" for the subsequent analysis in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. In order to keep the essence of the Cantonese language spoken by the women, translation of direct quotations is literal. I have not provided a literal translation when I recount the stories because I want to convey the meaning of the story as a whole.

Employment Stories of Twenty Respondents

Alice

Alice is 35 years old and single. She was trained as an executive secretary in Hong Kong. She then went to Hawaii and received a diploma in Hotel Administration. After she graduated, she worked as a personnel services manager in an international hotel in Hong Kong for four years.

She had never thought of emigrating. In one social gathering, one of her six best friends told the whole group that she had got an application form to apply to Canada and suggested they should apply at the same time. They all did and were approved as "independent applicants". Alice decided to leave Hong Kong because the city was too crowded and she wanted to find a better living environment. She settled in Vancouver four years ago while most of her friends stayed in Toronto. Her reason for settling in Vancouver was that the hotel she worked for in Hong Kong had a branch hotel in Vancouver. She was highly recommended by her former boss and got a transfer to the job in the hotel in Vancouver.

She worked for half a year and resigned from her job because she did not like her superior who was suspicious, jealous, and narrow minded. Alice was so upset about things she did to her that she packed everything and went back to Hong Kong. After staying there for four months, she decided to come back to Canada again because she knew very well this time that she liked Canada more.

She started looking for her first job. She answered newspaper advertisements and received no response. She applied through employment agencies and was asked to write numerous assessment tests. She was told many times that she was overqualified for a secretarial position. Some even suggested that she would have better chances if she applied for hotel jobs as more hotels in Vancouver had been bought by rich Japanese and Taiwanese. Even when she did, one agency counsellor made a remark jokingly that she might be able to find a job in the hotel business if Alice's father owned a hotel.

Alice saw an advertisement in the Chinese TV station looking for a secretary cum community affairs coordinator. She was desperate at that time and sent in an application letter. She had the first interview with the vice president but was discouraged that she was overqualified and did not have local experience. They still gave her another interview with the president. The president made the same remarks which was made by the VP. Alice was upset this time and she commented, "I do not mind to start from a lower position because I am prepared to do so. But if you don't give me a chance, how could I be able to

get local experience!" She waited for one day, and received the call that she was offered the job. She became the secretary of the president and the community affairs coordinator. The president made the same remark from time to time that if Alice had not make a strong statement about how desperate she was to get local experience, she would not have been hired because there were far too many eligible applicants applying for the same job.

Alice has been working in that company for three years.

Mary

Mary is 38 years old, married, with a ten year old daughter. Mary and her family immigrated to Vancouver three years ago.

She had been working in the field of personnel management and administration for more than ten years in Hong Kong. The last job she held was the personnel manager of an insurance company which was a subsidiary of a well established bank. Her job involved recruitment, training, staff welfare services, security and development of company policies. Including Mary, they had five staff in her department. She had one assistant personnel manager, two personnel officers, and one secretary working under her supervision. Each staff was responsible for certain specialized areas.

Mary had gone through many hardships in the first few years after she joined this company in Hong Kong. The newly recruited managing director from New Zealand had restructured the company two months before she started her new job. The former personnel manager who had been in that position for more than twenty years had been demoted to head a small insurance department, other department heads' authority had also been cut drastically. The turnover rate of the company reached a new high when she started working there. She spent a lot of time rebuilding communication channels between the company and all staff members, and helping establish the trust of the employees of the company. When everything was in the right track, she decided to leave for Canada because of the 1997 political uncertainty. The whole family left with strong determination that they should settle in Canada for good.

She had worked out a very well considered plan when the family settled in Vancouver. They bought a house in a semi-rural area with mainly English-speaking residents. They also sent their daughter to the nearby school, where the majority of students were white. After settling the family in, she started to do some volunteer work because her friends told her that it was the best way to adapt to life in the mainstream society. She began working for a volunteer social services organization and she found her work very unbearable. The full time staff was very unfriendly and the supervisor was very unorganized. She was always dumped with work which the full time staff did not want to do. She was exhausted with the inefficient work procedure. She quit and found another volunteer institution which was more organized and appreciative of the contribution of volunteer workers. In the second organization, she had her own desk to work on, a coffee maker which was working, and a place to store her purse and coat. She was also invited to attend some meetings and introduced to the staff and directors of the board. She worked in this organization for nine months.

During that period of time, she sent out two unsolicited application letters to a bank and an airline company for a secretarial position. Both applications were unsuccessful.

She considered seriously the option of opening a beauty shop. She had received beautician training before and she could do a better job running a beauty shop. This kind of service was very useful as she could be self employed and could also help other women take care of their appearance. When she was in Vancouver, she noticed that the standard of "beauty" was very different from that in Hong Kong. Beauty maintenance was a necessity in Hong Kong, but considered to be a luxury in Vancouver. If she were to open a shop in the west end of Vancouver, she could only attract a few better off housewives, and the income would not be sufficient to support her family. Because of such reservations, she dropped the whole plan of starting her own business.

Seeing that she was not able to get a job and to start her own business, she decided to go back to school. Getting a local diploma was her next move. She planned to get a diploma in personnel management but was discouraged by the office staff of the local community college. She said that Mary had sufficient training and work experience in Hong Kong and should explore the possibility of finding a job. Her request for arranging a meeting with the counsellor was turned down. She ended up taking an MBA degree program in a private college, taking some courses she found interesting.

Mary is now turning all her attention to her family. She arranges extra curricular activities for her daughter, driving her to attend all of them. Cooking has become her greatest hobby. She tries out different recipes and her dishes are always highly appreciated both by her husband and her daughter. She has even made her family life more productive. She is now pregnant, bearing twins who will be due in January.

Pam

Pam is 33 years old, married and has a five month old daughter. Her husband is an "astronaut", commuting between Hong Kong and Vancouver. He comes to stay with them once every few months. They decided to immigrate to Canada four years ago because of the political uncertainty in Hong Kong.

Pam was a sales and marketing manager of a US based watch and clock company in Hong Kong and had been working there for ten years. When the company planned to set up a branch in Hong Kong, she was hired to be the "boss" in that office, overseeing everything which included finding a good office location, and operating the everyday routine. Her main duties were to take care of buying and selling company products, deal with customers, organize exhibits, as well as handle shipping and inspect products.

When Pam first came to Vancouver, she did not have any friends and relatives. After settling down, she first decided to go back to school. When she found out that the program she planned to enrol in would not start until six months later, she started to find a job. She studied the newspaper ads, sent out letters, and managed to get an interview every one or two weeks. She applied for positions such as "sales representative", or "sales executive". She realized that she was at a disadvantage if she applied for outside sales jobs, because she was supposed to be on the road all the time. Being a new immigrant, she did not have a local driver's licence, knowledge about geographical location and local business. Therefore, she focused her job application on inside sales - providing customer services at a retailing store. She went for several interviews and thought they were all very promising, but she did not get any job offer. Besides, there were only a few watch and clock import companies in Vancouver, she knew very well that she had no good chance to get a job in this field.

Pam then took a six month secretarial and computer course at the school board. At least she hoped she could be able to find a job after graduation. After completing the course, she started applying for secretarial positions. The feedback she got was that she had been away from secretarial duties for too long, and in many cases, she was told that she was overqualified. Seeing that she was unsuccessful in finding a job, she decided to take another course about importing and exporting offered by a community college.

After the completion of the course, she was more eager to start her own business in Vancouver. At that time, one of her classmates invited her to start a watch importing business for him. She accepted the offer, agreeing to do so on a volunteer

basis. While she was helping her friend, a very good opportunity came up. Her former company invited her to do a consulting job for the company in Vancouver. She would be based in this city and travel to San Francisco and Hong Kong. Her duties were to produce a brand name watch for the Levi's company. During the time when she was planning to set up a branch in Vancouver, she needed to go to San Francisco to make a very important presentation. When she was at the airport, she was stopped by the US customs. They suspected that she was going to work in the US illegally when she told them that she went for a meeting. She was required to produce a company letter indicating that she was the employee and was going for a meeting. She had the letter with her the second time she made an attempt to go to the US. When she produced it to the customs, the officer refused to let her in, and worse still, he made a written remark on her passport, indicating she was blacklisted to enter to the States from then on. She was very embarrassed during that event. Not only was she not welcome to go to the States, but she also failed to complete the assignment for her former company.

Ever since she lost the opportunity, she decided to start her own business in Vancouver. During the first year, she was able to participate in two big gift shows, promoting the imported watches, with the help of her husband. She managed to make contact with ten customers, each ordering about two hundred dollars worth of goods. She then hired two sales representatives, a part time secretary, and a consulting accountant. Her business became worse in the second year because of economic recession in Canada and the GST. She had to lay off all her staff. Another blow to her business was that she was being cheated by one of her customers. This man had made a request of $5,000 worth of goods on credit terms but failed to clear the payment. She had kept on asking him to pay for one whole year, and he kept on giving her many reasons. Eventually, she hired a lawyer to take care of the matter for her because at that time she was pregnant. She was able to get some of the goods back and sold them out for very low price. That man still owes her $2,000.

Pam closed down her business when her baby was born five months ago. Seeing no point in staying alone in Vancouver with her baby, while her husband was stationed in Hong Kong, she decided to leave Canada for good. They left one week after the interview was conducted.

Sally

Sally is 36 years old, married with a baby boy. He is fourteen months old now. She has not been working since she started her maternity leave. She was then a marketing executive in a computer company. She thought of going back when her maternity leave was over, but eventually decided to stay at home to take care of her baby.

Sally came to Vancouver about four years ago because of the political uncertainty in Hong Kong. She graduated at the Hong Kong Polytechnic with an executive secretarial diploma. She then worked as a secretary for two years. Even though her boss treated her well by giving her many opportunities to handle things on her own, she decided to further her study in the United States.

She went back to Hong Kong after she obtained an MBA degree. She then worked in a garment factory as a merchandiser. Her company knew her academic qualifications when they hired her. She told them that she wanted to start in the garment industry and expected to be promoted to the management position. They asked her why she was interested in this particular industry. She told them her father was also working in the same field and she had been brought up in that environment. She was promoted to be the manager after seven months of working there and headed a small unit with five people under her supervision. Sally's company, like a "middle man", matched the buyers with the manufacturers and they earned the mark up price. Some times they also gained some textile quota every year from the government by performance. Therefore, her unit had to be responsible for disposing the textile quota and bringing in a certain amount of money to the company. Her job was to initiate business and to meet the annual target. Her everyday routine was to keep up with the day to day operation, to train junior merchandisers and to do follow up work if they had orders. She had great satisfaction every time they met the quota even though the whole unit had to work very hard. She worked in that company for six years before she came to Vancouver.

Sally enjoyed herself for seven months in this beautiful city before she started to look for work. She used the traditional way of looking for jobs - tracing the newspaper advertisements. Because she just wanted to find a job at that time and she did not care what kind of job it was going to be, she just applied when she spotted the vacancies in the newspaper. She had a job offer after she sent out five application letters and went for two interviews. It was a manager position in a fast food chain restaurant. She resigned after working there for ten months. She could not adjust to the awkward working shifts of the restaurant and most important of all, she had conflict with her colleagues. Since they did not see things eye to eye, and

she did not think that she should impose her value judgement on them, she quit her job.

She tried to find a job in the textile industry this time because she had tried other business sectors and she knew she would do a much better job as a merchandiser in a garment factory. She had quite a few interviews but they did not offer her any job. One factory owner was impressed by her experience but he preferred some one who was less junior. One of her friends introduced her to a computer company and she got the job as the assistant of the research and development manager. After she worked there for three months, she applied for a transfer to the shipping department as a manager. She was given the job. It was a hectic job especially for a woman because she had to be at the warehouse all the time and to deal with customers and staff from different departments. She managed to do her job well but gradually she noticed there was a lot of "dirty" company politics existing in various departments. She had to be tough herself if she wanted to survive in that company. She was pregnant after working in that position for three months, then her boss suggested that she should go back to the general office. She was then posted in the marketing department which was a newly established department. She did not have any mandate to carry things out. She was totally left alone, and worse still, computers were not an area that she was familiar with. She was very frustrated until she took her maternity leave. Her boss did ask her to go back if her leave was over. She did not give him a definite answer that she would go back.

Now her son is already fourteen months old and she has decided not to go back. She wants to see her baby growing.

Gin

Gin is 29 years old, single, and has been in Vancouver for four years. She finished her secondary school and had one year of secretarial training in Hong Kong. She then worked as a secretary in a tobacco company for one year, three years at the Regent Hotel and one year at the Mandarin Hotel before she left for Canada.

She was very unhappy working at the Regent Hotel and wanted to change to another work environment. Applying to Canada as an immigrant was an alternative, therefore she applied and was accepted. During the process of applying, she had a job offer at the Mandarin Hotel. She liked this job tremendously even though she just worked there for one year. She was the personal secretary of the regional director of the sales department. Other than doing everyday secretarial duties, she was responsible for organizing training projects for sales managers and social functions for staff and supportive customers. She did all the administrative work, co-ordination, booking and confirmation of transportation, accommodation, and catering, scheduling, and budgeting. She did her work so well that her boss sent her for a "familiarization tour" to the hotels in the S. E. Asia such as Singapore, Jakarta, and Bangkok. Many staff members had not been sent to this kind of tour even though they had been working at the hotel for many years. She felt honored because she was given such a chance after less than one year of working there. Shortly after the tour, she was informed that she would be promoted to be the secretary of the board of directors. Since her application to Canada as an immigrant had been approved, she decided to leave even though she loved the job very much.

Gin was a very organized person. Long before she came to Vancouver, she had prepared all her application letters. She sent about thirty of them out to all the hotels once she landed and asked the employment agencies for help. She had several job interviews including one with the hotel she is currently working for. The interview went very well but she sensed that the Human Resource Director was not keen on hiring her. She was not offered the job. The employment agency arranged a one week temporary typing job in a bank. Through the same agency, she got a temporary position in the sales department of the same hotel that she had a job offer turned down before. She was the sales secretary working for a female boss. In fact, all her former bosses including that one were females. Before the week was over, she was offered a permanent position. She has been working in that hotel since.

Her first boss was a very hard working and organized sales manager. Gin worked very well with her and she taught her many things. At that time Gin's parents were still in Hong Kong and she was living on her own. She did not want to stay at home

during the weekends, therefore, she worked part time at the stationary store owned by her manager's mother. She became her family friend. Later on, her manager took a six month leave to go to France and decided to stay there. She then worked with a new boss.

Even though Gin had gone through a tough time when the sales and the food and beverages departments merged and she became the only secretary for the original two departments, she found working with the current boss very unbearable. She senses that he does not trust her and has no confidence with her ability. He likes to pick on her for small things. So far, she has handled her duties very well and she is not afraid of being laid off. She would like to look for another job because, if she stays on the same job for another two years, she will most probably stick with it for ever. She thinks it is about time for her to make a move.

Bessy

Bessy is 29 years old, and single. She came to Canada about three years ago. She decided to leave Hong Kong because she was not certain about the political stability of Hong Kong. She also wanted to change to a new living environment so as to broaden her horizons.

She graduated at the Hong Kong Baptist College with a three year higher diploma of secretarial management. She then worked as a personal secretary of one of the company partners in a well established accounting company. She handled all her boss's correspondences and the everyday office routine such as typing, arranging appointments, filing, shorthand and wordprocessing. She made all the decisions related to everyday office operation. She worked for six years before she left for Canada.

When Bessy came to Canada, she spent the first month finding an apartment. She then looked for jobs in newspaper advertisements, employment agencies and the Canada Immigration and Employment Center. She did some typing and shorthand tests, and she went for interviews at the employment agencies. The test results and interview were very promising, but nothing turned up. She did not find any positions offered at the employment Center. Eventually, she saw a classified ads at the Vancouver Sun, called in, and was asked to go for an interview. She was offered the job and it was a secretarial position. She worked in that company for eight months.

She then decided to specialize in the legal secretarial field because the job prospects were much better. She took a four month legal secretary course at a local vocational institute. When she was still taking the course, a law firm was looking for a secretary/receptionist through the college. She had an interview with the personnel manager and got the job. The new company was a small sized law firm with five lawyers specializing in litigation and corporation. She worked with a pool of secretaries, sharing duties which included typing, dictaphone, and preparing documents.

She has been working in that company for two years.

Molly

Molly is 35 years old, and single. She came to Canada in 1981 because she wanted to be with her parents who came to this country quite some time ago.

She finished Form five (equivalent to Grade 10 in Canada) and had one year of secretarial training before she started her career as a secretary in a shipping company in Hong Kong. She worked in the sales department for three years and her duties included typing, filing, and handling telephone calls.

Molly arrived in Vancouver in a cold and wet December. After spending three months looking for a full time job and without finding one, she decided to complete her high school education. In the meantime, she had found a part time job in a fish and chips shop with her friend's help. She took two years to finish her evening schooling, and had also been promoted to be the manager of the store. After completing her high school education, she was thinking seriously of furthering her study in college. She was accepted by a technical institute and took a two year diploma course in dietary technology. She arranged to do her practicum at a general hospital in another province. After her half year practicum, she was asked to stay on for a contract job.

When her contract was over, Molly started applying for jobs in Vancouver and nearby cities. She first worked as a cook in a rehabilitation center for five months. She then got a temporary job at a food services company substituting for the assistant manager who went on maternity leave. She worked there for one and a half years and was promoted to be the manager. The management liked her to stay for another contract. She decided to leave because she did not like to work with some of the staff members there. She started applying for jobs and had several interviews. It took her about two months before she was offered a temporary job in a hospital. She was accepted as a dietary technologist for a six month contract. She was then offered a full time permanent position. She has been working in that position for three years.

Cindy

Cindy is 35 years old, married and has no children. She came to Vancouver three and a half years ago.

She worked as a personal secretary in a French national bank in Hong Kong for twelve years. She was the senior secretary to the director in the head office for four years before she immigrated to Canada. During that period of time, she was responsible for handling all the administrative work in the office, and the standard secretarial duties, such as typing, dictating and drafting letters, and filing. She had several junior clerks working under her.

She landed in Canada in 1988 as an "independent applicant" and went back to Hong Kong to get married. She came back to Canada in March, 1989, while her husband, who was also an independent immigrant, decided to go back and work in Hong Kong.

Cindy found a temporary secretary job in a bank through an employment agency. Even though she only worked in that bank for two weeks, she received very high recommendations from her manager. She was then offered a full time secretary position in another bank, working at a branch in North Vancouver. It was a long journey to go to work every day from her Coquitlam home. She woke up at six, left home at 7:15, and arrived at the office at 8:15. She did not mind the long journey because she needed a job badly - not because of financial need, but a job she could fill her time with, and most important of all, made her feel useful. Besides, she knew that only by accepting this position, would she have a better chance to be transferred to the one closer to home.

She completed her three month probational period with a satisfactory job appraisal. She kept on working in the same branch, driving to and from work everyday.

Several setbacks happened in 1990. Cindy had three car accidents; all were the responsibility of the other parties. She was slightly injured at one time, and was sent to hospital for treatment. Because her husband was not in Vancouver when she had these accidents, she was feeling extremely lonely, miserable, and was depressed for quite some time. Her body resistance decreased and she got sick very easily. She suffered from bronchitis twice and had to take sick leave, a total nine days with doctor's notes. Towards the end of December and beginning of January, 1991, she took two more days off: one day because of another car accident; another day because of adverse side effects from a strong dosage of penicillin.

During that period of time, her work partner, a lady who had been working in the same bank for ten years, was promoted to be

her supervisor. This new supervisor always checked on her since she was promoted. For example, she went to Cindy's desk three times a day and asked her to report to her what she had done on that day. On some occasions, she might say, "I know you don't like me because I'm now one grade senior than you are." Cindy confessed that she did not like this superior at all. But she had a better work and social relationship with the administrative officer whom she invited out for lunch once in a while.

It was after the eleventh day of sick leave that Cindy received a warning letter from the administrative officer. The letter indicated that because of her frequent absence from work, she had to be observed for thirty days, within which she had to excel in all aspects of her duties. If her performance was still not satisfactory, she would be put into a special training program. Cindy was very upset, but she signed the letter anyway. Two days later, she received the job appraisal report and was astonished to find out her job performance was marked only "FAIR" (according to the bank unwritten standard, a fair performance meant performance which was far from satisfactory). She felt the comments were not fairly made at all. She denied that her performance was not up to standard and that she was lazy. She did not go back to work because she was sick. They just twisted every thing she did the other way round and used it against her. She was hurt and felt she was useless.

Cindy wrote a letter requesting an unbiased reevaluation of her performance by the Human Resource Department. Because she was so frantic about the event, she went directly to the bank's headquarters in downtown Vancouver at 8:15 a.m. on Monday without calling in for leave. Initially the manager refused to see her, but she insisted on staying and the manager agreed to meet with her for a short meeting. The manager made a remark once she saw her, "You are in big trouble, Ms X!" She sensed at that moment that this manager could not help her. As the conversation continued, she knew that she was fighting a losing battle because the manager was not advocating her side. Eventually, she was even coerced to resign, and she did so because she was so helpless at that stage. After leaving the headquarters, she did not go back to her office to pick her things up. She had her one and half years of work experience in that bank completely erased from her work record. She knew very well that they would not give her a supportive recommendation.

She did try to call the Human Rights Commission for consultation, but the phone was always engaged. She gave up trying after several attempts.

She started to look for another job. She submitted an application letter to another bank and received a phone call the next day from the branch in Chinatown, asking her to go for an interview. She went and lied to the interviewer that after working for one bank for two weeks, she had gone back to Hong

Kong for one and half years because of some family commitments. She did not mention her work experience in the second bank because she knew too well that once her record was checked, she would not be hired for failing to get supportive recommendation from them. It was tough to have her one and half years of Canadian work experience given up like that. It was so important to have local experience in order to get a decent job in Canada. In her case, if she told the truth, she would have had ended up having no job at all.

Cindy got the job as a casual part-time receptionist. She has been working in the same position for that bank for one year.

Kitty

Kitty is 42 years old, and single. She came to Canada four and a half years ago.

She had been working for the same superior as a confidential secretary in a well established British international company in Hong Kong for eighteen years. Her superior, a British man, was the director of the board and the head of the legal department. She assisted him with matters dealing with taxation, and legal procedures of buying and selling subsidiary business. Her secretarial duties included shorthand, typing, word processing, and filing. Because she had been working with this superior for so long, he trusted her in taking care of some of his routine duties when he was on business trips or on holidays. She did not have junior clerks working under her, but very often she was responsible for redistributing some of the work load among several junior secretaries working in the same department.

Kitty was a very competent secretary. Her company was the first Hong Kong-based international company to pull their investment out from the colony because of 1997's political issue. During the move, she was one of the five people who made the arrangement, four senior management staff and herself. Right after the company announced its decision to the media, the stock market in Hong Kong dropped to its lowest point for quite some time.

Kitty landed in Toronto, where her parents were residing, four and half years ago. She had decided to start her own business once she was in Canada because she was tired of working for people. She wanted to be her own boss. She bought a little boutique in a mall. Not having conducted some market research before she started her boutique, she began to lose money. After one year, she sold her business.

At that time, a friend told her that a legal secretary position was available in a law firm in Vancouver. As long as she did not mind moving, it was open to her. She accepted the offer.

She worked in the law firm for two years. She had to confess that she did not like her boss at all because of his personality. He was messy in handling documents. Even when she worked overtime, without pay, he just took it for granted. He was very nasty with people, always gossiped behind people's back. He was stingy with money. After she had set up a more efficient filing system in the office, he was looking for a much lower paid staff to replace her. When she knew about his intention, she was very frustrated and quit her job.

She started to look for another job. It was her first time

in Canada hunting for a job. She sent out many unsolicited application letters and sought help from several employment agencies. Weeks passed and she just had a couple of interviews and a few letters of rejection.

The vice president of a bank in Chinatown was looking for a branch secretary, to replace the typist who was going to retire. He wanted to hire somebody who could assist him and several other department heads in the branch. This person should have good knowledge about Asia and had good Asian business ties. He did not think that anybody in the bank was qualified for the new post. Instead of promoting the existing staff from the same bank, a bank's traditional practice, he insisted that this person must be hunted from the outside. The vice president's request was approved, on condition that this new staff would pay the commission to the employment agency. The bank could not spend extra money because of financial constraints. He managed to talk to the manager of an employment agency who immediately started his file search. Kitty's application file was among the three most eligible candidates for the job and she was given an interview.

The agency told her that this job might be suitable for her, but the drawback was that the salary was low, much lower than she had expected. At this time, she was frustrated about the process of looking for job. She was very willing to take up any promising job with a lower salary. When she went for the interview, she made the point very vividly by saying, "I don't want my expected salary to jeopardize my application for the post." She asked the interviewers to hire her if they thought she was good for the job. Salary was not her priority. The interview went well. The vice president was impressed with her experience when he studied her resume. He knew immediately that she was the one he was looking for because of several reasons:

1. Her former boss in Hong Kong was well known in the field of finance. He had very good relationship with many top business people in Hong Kong.
2. She had been working for the same boss for more than eighteen years. She must be very competent to have remained this long.
3. The vice president was in charge of promoting business in Asia and he needed somebody who had good connections with that part of the world.

Kitty was the right candidate. This behind the scene story was later narrated by the employment agency's manager. The vice president was afraid that Kitty might turn down the offer because of the low salary, as well as one month waiting period (the typist would retire by then). He called her two nights in a row, telling her that he really liked to hire her but the two constraints were out of his control. She appreciated the vice president's assurance, and made a commitment that she would

accept the position.

The vice president was overjoyed and his wife even mentioned to Kitty at the farewell cum welcome party that he told her that he was really happy to have her working for him.

She has been working in that bank for half a year.

Amy

Amy is 38 years old, married with two children. She came to Canada ten years ago.

She graduated in the University of Hong Kong with a Bachelor of Science degree. The first job she had after her graduation was teaching in a secondary school, a job which many graduates landed. She was given more administrative duties in her third year of teaching, and in the fourth year she was thinking seriously of quitting. At that time, her husband was planning to further his specialized medical studies in Canada. She decided to change her career as she knew from friends that it was very difficult to find a teaching position in Canada. She found a science textbook editorial job in a publishing house. In 1981, after she had worked as an editor for two years, she and her husband together with their six month old daughter immigrated to Canada.

They first landed in Hamilton, Ontario and it took her half a year to settle the whole family down. She then wanted to find a part time job but she had no luck after searching for quite some time. Her husband had a chance to transfer his study to Vancouver; the whole family then moved to the West.

She was able to spare more time to find a job because her in-laws were in Vancouver. She spotted one posting at the government employment center. It was a part time pianist position in a ballet school. She had an interview and got her first job in Canada. Because of the connection in the ballet school, she managed to find some more hours in several other ballet schools. While she was playing piano at the ballet schools, she enrolled in a journalism course offered by a private college. It had always been her wish that she would be able to express her ideas clearly and explicitly in writing and she found the course interesting. After staying in Vancouver for two years, the whole family moved to Fort St James because her husband was transferred to this little logging town in the interior of B.C.

It was a turning point of her career when she was in Fort St James. After their arrival, she saw an advertisement in the local community newspaper looking for a permanent part time reporter. She sent out the application letter, highlighting her training as a journalist and some of her assignments. She received a phone call from the editor of the newspaper who was residing in a town close by, asking her to start working immediately. She got her first job as a reporter without even going for an interview.

Her duties were to report local news and to send them to the editor by electronic mail. She also distributed the newspapers

when they were shipped to our town. She did her job well but worked there for only half a year. Her husband, who still had one more year to complete his study, had decided to go back to Hong Kong. The whole family then uprooted again, thinking of moving back to the British colony for good.

Even though Amy had left Hong Kong for more than three years, she did not have any problems to find a job. She talked to her former colleagues and checked the advertisement columns at local newspapers. Very soon, she found an assistant editor position in a bilingual magazine. It was a "glossy" magazine which was all about the life of the rich and famous in Hong Kong, and she was responsible for the English section. She worked in that position for two years but was sick and tired of the lime light that she had to deal with and report about. She resigned from her job. At that time, her husband had decided to go back to the University of British Columbia to finish his last year of specialized study. She stayed in Hong Kong because they would like their daughter to further her education there.

After her husband had left for Canada for a month, she found a job working as an editor of a China trade magazine. She was very excited about the new job because she wanted to work for China. She also found the job very challenging because she was responsible for reviving the existing magazine. After one month, she found out that she could not stand the job as she had to entertain many Chinese officials both in China and Hong Kong. She admitted that she was not a good business hostess and did not like the idea of spending most of her working time to socialize with people. She then quit after she submitted a very detailed and intensive report of recommendation to her superior, addressing the existing problems of the magazine and providing some suggestions. Since she missed her husband very much, she decided to join him in Vancouver. This time coming back to Canada was unexpectedly for good.

Amy was then pregnant and gave birth to their second child. After resting for one year, she reached out to find a part time job again. She sent application letters to several local community newspapers. She received a call from one of the newspapers about a month later. She was offered the job as a part time assignment reporter. She loved the job because she was responsible for reporting community news. Other than this part time job, she also did some paid translation for some social services organizations and private companies. One of them was a local Chinese television station. She translated some news programs for this company and found media services very interesting. When the company expanded and had one position open for a translator, she was invited to take the position and she did. She has been working in that company for two years.

Lucy

Lucy is 29 years old and single. She came to Canada about three and a half years ago for a new living environment.

She graduated at the Hong Kong University, majored in English literature and comparative literature. She then started teaching English in a secondary school. After teaching for five years, she decided to quit even though she had a very good chance of being promoted to be a teacher trainer at a teaching training college. She found a reporting job at a local newspaper company, responsible for reporting news in the overseas English supplementary section. She found she could not adapt to the hectic life of the reporter; therefore, she applied for a transfer to be the subeditor of the business section of the same supplement. Her application was successful.

Being a subeditor, she selected and edited articles, arranged the section with both texts and photographs, and finalized headings. She made all the decisions related to her section. Since the editor usually started work at 5 p.m., she usually finished editing her section before his arrival so that she was able to get his approval before she sent it for printing.

Since the overseas supplement did not have a good market, the newspaper had decided to stop publishing it. Seeing that she might be laid off, and having no idea of what she was going to do, she decided to emigrate to Canada. She was able to obtain ten points as a journalist and her application was approved.

Her friend put her up when she arrived at Vancouver. After spending a few weeks looking for an apartment, she started to find a job by sending out application letters to several well established institutes, such as UBC and Simon Fraser University. Since she did not know what kind of job she was looking for, she just listed all her work experiences and qualifications, without specifying the position she wanted to apply. She was hoping that they would find for her a suitable job. Out of courtesy, UBC, the only institute among the several she had sent letters to, replied and informed her that they did not have any jobs available at the moment but would keep her file active for three months.

She also sent resumes to the employment agencies which gave her no reply at all. She also tried a career consulting company. The consultant explained to her that she would find it very difficult to find a journalist position in Vancouver. The prime reason was that the market was already saturated with local trained journalists. Besides, she would not be able to compete with those English native speaking reporters since English was her second language. Furthermore, being a new immigrant was also

a disadvantage because she did not have local connections, and would find getting around difficult. Without going for the second session, she decided to give up looking for a journalist position.

She kept on checking the newspaper advertisements and spotted a law firm which was looking for junior secretaries. Even though she had no secretarial training, she applied for the position because she could not stand the feeling of being out of work for too long. To her surprise, she was offered the job. It was a few weeks after her arrival in Vancouver, that she started working as a legal secretary. She has been working in that company for three years.

Jenny

Jenny is 50 years old. She is married with two grown up children. One is twenty three and the other is twenty. She came to Vancouver about three and half years ago. Her reasons for immigrating to Canada were that she was not sure about the future of Hong Kong, and she and her husband wanted to provide their children with a more secure place to live in.

She was a fashion designer of a small garment factory. She did not have to produce original design because it was usually provided by her customers. After the design was confirmed, she then passed it to her cutters. In the meantime, she had to order all accessories and necessary fabrics. She then distributed the cut materials to the sewers, checked their progress and controlled the quality. After the whole order was ready, she made sure it was shipped out properly. It was not until then that her duty was over. Because she had to make most of the decisions during the whole process, she usually worked till nine in the evening. She had no time to cook for her children who had to go to their grandmother's house for dinner every day. Sunday was her day off but she also worked on that day.

Jenny and her family landed in Vancouver one July. The summer day was very long. After they rented a place and she also sent her children to summer school, she and her husband were very bored. The day seemed to be too long to bear. Both of them started to look for jobs. She went through the newspaper advertisements and found some openings for seamstresses. She went to one high fashion factory which was owned by a Hong Kong investor in Gas Town. She was hired and her pay was $5.50 per hour. She felt very lucky that she found this job because all her friends told her that she must have Canadian experience in order to find work in this country.

She worked in that factory for one month because her friend had introduced her to another factory for a supervisory position. Her pay was increased to $6.50 per hour. She was in charge of the sewing section and her duties were not difficult to handle. She just did not like the people working there. The cutter who was the relative of one of the partners always made many serious mistakes. He ignored the "color shading" of the fabrics and the exact measurement of the patterns. The seamstresses found it very difficult to sew. He got by with the backup of his relative even though Jenny had complained many times. She could not tolerate the situation any more and she quit.

She then worked as a cutter in a wedding gown and lingerie factory. The owner was a young local designer specializing in silk fashions. Even though Jenny had little experience with electrical cutters, she liked to try the new job. She did her job very well and she liked her work environment. She liked to

see the models who looked very pretty when they tried on their product - wedding gowns. Jenny also liked her boss who worked very hard even though she was a single mother with two very young children. She worked in that factory for several months until they cut her days to three because of fewer orders. Her friends then introduced her to another garment factory. Since it was a full time supervisory job, she accepted the offer.

The new factory was run by a Chinese couple from Hong Kong. They were not in the garment field before, therefore they asked her for many opinions and ideas. She also provided them with sources so that they were able to buy sewing accessories at a very reasonable price. At first, they also invited her to go with them when they were negotiating contracts. They stopped doing that after some time. Many problems arose because they did not know how to operate the business. She also found it very difficult to work for them. Eventually, they closed down the factory and they all got laid off.

Now she has to plan her career again. She said she is already fifty years old and is not that healthy to work for long hours. She admits that she can not live without a job because she is one of the bread winners of the family. She only wishes that she was ten years younger, she would be more aggressive and have more energy.

Cathy

Cathy is 43 years old, a widow with two teen aged children. Her husband passed away two years ago in Vancouver, three years after the family landed in Canada. Her mother, who had been taking care of her children and her family, also died last year. She needed emotional adjustment instead of adapting to a new living environment.

Cathy had specialized in family law and ran her law firm in Hong Kong. Eighty per cent of her firm's cases were referred by the government legal aid department. She was the only lawyer in her office and had seven employees. They were two legal assistants, one secretary, two clerks, one receptionist, and one messenger. She also contracted an accountant to oversee the accounting matters of her office. Since the company size was considered small according to number of staff employed, she treated her staff as her family. She missed her staff the most when she left Hong Kong for Canada.

When the family decided to emigrate to Canada, she had planned not to take up any career in Canada. She wanted to be a full time housewife taking care of her children and her mother. A few months after they had landed in Vancouver, her husband was diagnosed to have nasal cancer. Despite the illness, he still decided to continue his career as a lawyer in Canada. He was accepted to the Faculty of Law at the UBC for one year. If he passed that year, he would be able to register for the roll after one year of articleship. Seeing that her husband was determined to start a legal business in Canada, she decided to help him when he ran his business. The best thing to prepare herself was to work in a law firm in order to find out how one was run in Canada.

She applied for a legal secretary position through an employment agency without informing them that she was a lawyer. She just indicated that she had been working in the legal field for several years. Being impressed by her superb typing speed and accuracy, the agency arranged a job interview for her at a medium sized law firm. During the interview, Cathy revealed to her prospective employer, a lady lawyer, that she was a Hong Kong trained lawyer and she needed a job. She was hired with a very good recommendation from her. She worked as her personal legal secretary for six months.

She quit her job when her husband's illness became worse. He died when he was doing his articling. She pulled her life back together after he passed away. She then started her career as a building developer. It was not accidental that she became a developer. Long before she started running her business at her home basement, she had made some money by buying and selling a house with a real estate agent. She knew that estate development

was a promising business in Vancouver. She then took two courses of Development, and Reality Appraisal at the BCIT. She then developed a business partnership with a builder, rented a small office, hired a clerical staff, and began her new career as a building developer.

She sends her children to school and starts work at nine o'clock every day. She usually finishes her work at four and goes back home to prepare dinner. During the day at her office, she handles all the administration work. Very often, she is involved in the process of designing the house's interior, matching the colors of walls and floor work, and selecting materials. She enjoys her work only if it does not conflict with her routine schedule with her children.

She enjoys her new career. She thinks she will keep it going.

Susan

Susan is 46 years old, married with two children. The daughter is sixteen and the son fourteen.

Susan was brought up in a very traditional Chinese family. Her grandfather was a scholar who was appointed as a government official in China. Her father was also a scholar who enjoyed reading classical Chinese literature, practising Chinese calligraphy and painting, and writing Chinese poems. The way he brought up his children was that discipline, hard working, patience, self respect, and self esteem were all very important for any human beings. Her mother is a typical Chinese housewife who spends her whole life serving her husband and taking care of her family.

Susan was educated in Roman Catholic schools which were run by Italian nuns. Discipline, hard work, Christian love, passion towards life were part of her training in school. She was among the few who were able to get into the most prestigious university in Hong Kong. Even though college life provided students with much freedom and a wider perspective of the world, she still led a very conservative life, a very traditional Chinese life. She did not like to compete with people, nor to be aggressive. She would be very content and be happy by appreciating small things such as looking at beautiful trees against the blue sky.

After she graduated in the Hong Kong University with a Bachelor of Arts degree, she found a job at the family planning association, and she worked for the International Social Services. She met her current husband, got married and had two children. She then made a very important decision of quitting her job because family was her priority. She became a full time mother because she knew the first three years of childhood were very important. She wanted to bring her children up with all her undivided care. When her children became older, she then started working part time, making sure she was not isolated from the real world, and she could be with her children when they needed her.

The whole family immigrated to Canada three years ago. She still put her family as her priority; therefore, she was not very keen on looking for a full time job. She was prepared to start from a low position. She ended up working a contract job for a social services organization, producing a package for parenting. Later on, she found a full time job as school/home worker at a school board. She was responsible for two high schools and ten elementary schools. She liked the office hours because she was off duty when her children came home from school. They were able to go for holidays together. Since two years ago, she has been working in that job.

Lily

Lily is 35 years old, married with no children. She and her family decided to immigrate because most of the relatives of Lily's mother have been in Canada for a long time and it was her mother's wish to be with her family. The other reason was political. They were not sure about the situation of Hong Kong especially after 1997. They thought they should try out the new life in Canada. They came to Vancouver about five years ago.

Lily had been working as a school social worker for eight years after she graduated in Hong Kong University. She was promoted to be the supervisor after working as a front line worker for five years. Other than the everyday routine, she had to do coordinating work, supervising staff, and attending many policy making meetings. Because she worked for a church operated social service center, she also represented her center to negotiate with the Hong Kong government for more funding. She headed one department and was directly answerable to the Center head. They had nine staff members in her department, three front line workers, two family life education officers, two clerks and one office assistant. Shortly before she left for Canada, the center had conducted a very large scale expansion project, and all the staff members were invited to contribute their opinions and ideas of how to fully utilize the new building. She was actively involved in the planing committee. She just received a complimentary letter from the new Center thanking her for her contribution to the project.

Lily came to Vancouver on a rainy and dark October Sunday. She did not make any plan at all to find a job because she wanted to rent a place and settle her family in first. Her husband in fact was very keen on looking for a job because he just graduated with a Master of Social Work shortly before he came to Canada. She then accompanied her husband to SUCCESS., a local Chinese social service organization, to visit some of his friends. They managed to meet several of them who were also working in the same organization. One of them told her that the English language program had a part time vacancy as teaching assistant, and he asked her whether she was interested in taking up the job. She went for an impromptu interview and was offered the job. She thought it was funny as she even did not have the resume ready. She accepted the job because she wanted to get to know more about the social service organizations in Vancouver, and her relatives told her that SUCCESS. was a well established one in the city. If She wanted to start somewhere, it was a promising one to start on.

She started her first job as a teaching assistant two weeks after she landed and it was fun. She organized teaching activities supervised by the ESL instructor who had been in

Vancouver for a long time. This teacher told her a lot of things about the city and she learned from her job and with her students. She did not stay in this job for long because there was another opening available in the employment section of the same organization. It was a full time position of an assistant in the job finding club. She decided to apply for that position because it provided direct services to immigrants and was more related to her former work experience and training. She started working with another full time staff in a barely furnished office at Fraser Street. While he was teaching job search skills in the classroom, she was working at the receptionist counter, handling problems or dealing with enquiries either on phone or in person. This was another excellent training ground for her as she plunged directly into Canadian society. She became very knowledgeable about social services and everyday events in Vancouver. She gained access to abundant information. She enjoyed the job very much.

It was the fourth of June 1989, an outbreak of crisis happened in Beijing, China. After that political event, thousands of Chinese students and scholars obtained their asylum in Canada. Lily's social services organization was invited to co-sponsor a "China Project" with the government to help this group of about four hundred Chinese to settle in Canada. Her organization was responsible for the employment and training, and they needed someone to be in charge of the program. This applicant must have experience conducting programs and must be proficient in Mandarin. Lily's work experience was very relevant to the new position, and her only concern was the language. She spoke Mandarin socially, but she had reservations if she had to teach in that language. But she was so keen on getting the job because she wanted so much to help this group of Chinese people, she committed herself to that job. Other than spending her day time to design programs, she also spent her evenings practicing her Mandarin. Her hard work paid off. The program was conducted successfully as many Chinese people received the job search and English language training through the program.

When the China Project was well established, her superior invited her to organize an employment training for newly arrived immigrant women. She thought it was a very good opportunity because she also found the need of providing retraining program to this group of women who did not have the skills to be competitive in Vancouver. She also took it as a good experience because she had to write proposals to ask for funding from the government. She had never done this before because in Hong Kong, the funding was automatically granted to social services organizations. She found the new project very challenging because she was responsible to make it feasible. She spent one month to write the proposal and submitted it. She started to recruit the first group of students when the proposal was approved. It was a seven month program. She is now running the third one.

Vivian

Vivian is 38 years old, married with one daughter. The last job she had in Hong Kong was administrator of student amenities at a higher education institute. She came to Canada about six years ago. The first job she had was the financial aid advisor of a community college. The second job, which is her current job, is the director of an international students center at a local university. It is her third year working here.

Vivian graduated in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, majored in English and minored in Chinese. She then taught in a secondary school until she won a British Commonwealth scholarship to New Zealand and did her Master of Arts. After she went back to Hong Kong, she found a job as a student counsellor at the Chinese University. She then had a better job offer which was the position of the administrator of student amenities at a newly opened polytechnic. When she started working at this new institute, she was working in a rented office building in down town. She had to utilize fully the building spaces for students' activities. Other than operating the daily routine, she was in the advisory committee of designing the student Center, a multimillion dollar project at the new campus.

She got married and emigrated to Canada. She did not plan to work when she first came. It was partly because she wanted to spend more time to get adjusted to her new life in a new country; partly she was too stressed out before she left Hong Kong and wanted to take a short time off from work. The first two months were wonderful, she did not do anything except cooking and gardening. When the third month came, she started to feel annoyed and she was bored. She felt she was living in a "vacuum". She started taking buses and touring around the city. Eventually, she wanted to find a job.

Vivian first went to the police station and court room asking for a part time interpreting and translating position. She was turned down as she was told that they did not hire any one for those positions. She was quite desperate and one day she read a newspaper ad about a language school which had simultaneous translation course offered. It even indicated that students would be hired by the courts if they graduated in that school. She signed up for the program. Even though, the course was not a useful one, she was able to make more new friends, and had some court interpreting experience. When she graduated, she knew well that she did not like the interpreting job in court.

She kept on checking newspaper ads, and one day her husband found an ad about a community college looking for a financial aid advisor. She sent out an application letter and resume. With her husband's advice, she tailored her resume according to the position offered, omitting irrelevant information. She was

offered an interview after she sent out the application letter. Her application was successful. She worked in that position for three years. She did not see any prospect of promotion and there was no hope of reclassification of her position even though she had requested one. She then decided to take a one year no pay leave. During that time, a publishing company invited her to write an English language book for immigrants, she accepted the offer and started working on the book with a co-writer.

While she was writing her book, she spotted an ad at the Vancouver Sun that the international students center of a local university was looking for a director. She applied, and was asked to an interview after a few months. It was a very formal one day interview and there were six applicants competing for the same position. She was very confident with her interview, and she got the job offered.

Her major duties are to design programs to promote international students' affairs and to liaise with related organizations both within and outside campus. She is very happy with her job.

Tina

Tina is 35 years old. Ever since she graduated from the School of Education in Hong Kong in 1973, she had been teaching in the same secondary school. She taught English and Biblical Knowledge, and was responsible for student counselling service. After she took an advanced course in education, she was able to teach higher grades in school.

She and her husband with their two children immigrated to Canada in 1988. When they decided to move to Canada, she planned not to find any job in Canada because she wanted to spend her time looking after her children. Because of this psychological preparation, she did not take up any job during the first year when they were in Canada. Her husband was very lucky to find a job one month after they had landed even though he had to do a "graveyard shift" (10 p.m. - 7 a.m.). During that time, she explored the possibility of becoming a teacher again in Canada. With all the information she gathered, both from the school board and friends, she was very discouraged to start her career as a teacher. There were two reasons: many graduates were unable to find full-time teaching positions; if English was her second language, her accent would become a disadvantage in finding a teaching job.

She would not consider jobs like waitressing, cleaning or other labour jobs, because she thought these kinds of jobs were not "constructive" at all. She wanted to go for jobs which required skills. After nine months, she started taking some courses like typing, computer, and bank telling at the community college.

By the time she was completing the courses, her mother-in-law also immigrated to Canada and she could look after the children for her. She started to look for a job at banks. She collected the application forms from all the banks in Chinatown, filled them in, and submitted them in person, requesting an interview while she was submitting it. She had many rejections, and was very upset for quite some time. She kept on doing this, until one day, she walked into a bank and got an immediate interview. After four days, she was informed by phone that there was a casual part time position available. She replied positively and got her first job as a bank teller in Canada.

After working at the counter as a teller for a few months, she was asked to take up job at the side counter (a privileged position many tellers would go for). She kept on working hard and, one day, the branch manager offered a full time position as the personal banking representative. She was shocked when she heard the offer and did not dare to take up the position. She knew very well that once she took it up, she would be responsible to bring in as much business as she could to the bank. Even

though she had provided many reasons to turn the offer down, the manager kept on convincing her to take the position. Seeing that she had no choice but to accept it, she said she would try the job out for three months. The manager then announced that she was promoted to that position immediately. Half an hour later, her husband called her, asking her to take one month no pay leave so as to take care of their children. Her mother-in-law had made a sudden plan to go back to Hong Kong for a visit. She was stunned at that moment, she did not know how to break the news to her husband that she had been offered a very demanding job.

She took up the new position and had tried her very best to do her job well. She ran campaigns, such as promoting RRSP, Visa, and GIC. Her job was to organize all staff in her branch into teams, to motivate them to promote services. Her ultimate goal was to bring in business which would meet the target set by the management. Because of her hard work, being helpful and sincere, she was able to meet targets in all areas. Her performance was recognized by her manager and she was upgraded three points in the salary scale. The recognition led to jealousy of some of her colleagues. She felt very uncomfortable and decided to ask for a transfer. Her manager tried to convince her to stay, but a chance came when another branch was posting a vacancy for personal banking representative. She had a successful interview and was asked to start work immediately. Her present manager tried to convince her to stay by saying, "They would rather lose her (her colleague) than you!" Since she did not want to work in such a competitive and unhappy work environment, she had decided to leave even though she had to work in a new environment.

She started from scratch, having no customers in the new branch. She made social contact with Chinese customers at the counter. In several cases, she dealt with customers who had decided to close the account at her bank. She invited them to her office and asked them the reasons for closing the account. She also promised them she would try her best to help them. She managed to convince several customers to keep the accounts. Other than handling the routine job well, she was able to run several successful campaigns in the new branch. After working there for eight months, she was promoted to be the personal account manager. She expects another promotion in the very near future.

Eva

Eva is 45 years old. She got married last year and has no children. She first landed in Toronto in 1982, and came to Vancouver about four years ago.

She was a senior lecturer of the Hong Kong Polytechnic. She had been teaching in that institute for six years. Her teaching duties included designing communication skills programs for engineering students, preparing materials, liaising with other departments. Very often, she conducted meetings with team members, discussing issues such as budget or copyright. Decisions had always been made by team effort. Overall, she found her job at the Polytechnic satisfying, although at times she did have frustration and anxiety.

When the 1997 issue had not yet come to the political scene in Hong Kong, Eva had decided to immigrate to Canada. Her prime reason was to further her study and she could pay much less tuition fee if she was an immigrant. Therefore she applied for immigrant status and was accepted. She chose Toronto because her brother was there.

Eva entered into the Master of Arts program offered by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She found her student life passed quite smoothly. While she was finishing her degree, she looked for jobs in the newspapers. Nothing interesting caught her attention and she was not attracted to teaching as a career either. At that time, her application to SHRRC was successful, and without any doubts, she moved on to her Phd degree program.

One year before she planned to graduate, she saw a posting at her department notice board. An university in British Columbia was looking for an assistant professor in her field of study. She sent in her application letter and was invited to go for an interview in Vancouver. She had the job offer long before she graduated.

She started her professorship at the university four years ago. Her duties included teaching undergraduate students, supervising graduate students, and conducting research. She had a full time four year contract. After she completed her first contract, she decided not to renew her contract. She is now a self-employed research scientist, doing consulting work for business and private enterprises.

Jo

Jo is 43 years old, married and has no children. She was working as a registered nurse (RN) at the Hong Kong Red Cross for nine years, and she is now a RN at a hospital for extended care. It is her eighth year working there.

Like many other female students in Hong Kong, Jo was thinking of either going into teaching or nursing after finishing her secondary school education. Knowing that she did not like teaching, she tried nursing and was accepted by a Hong Kong government hospital as a student nurse. Again, she followed what other student nurses usually did, applying to further her study in "midwifery". While she was waiting for a vacancy to the program, she was working full time in a government hospital. Distributing medicine, doing injections, carrying out doctor's instructions, and supervising student nurses were her routine duties. She then furthered her study for one year. She got married after she graduated.

She and her husband went to England for one year. while her husband was studying in England, she worked for a nursing agency as part-time state registered nurse. She was assigned to several hospitals as part-time nurse.

When they went back to Hong Kong, Jo decided not to work in the hospital because she did not like working night shifts. She then found a position as a nursing sister at the blood transfusion section of the Hong Kong Red Cross. She was in charge of a blood donating van, collecting blood from school to school. They also went to factories and offices who requested the Red Cross blood donating service. Sometimes, they just parked their van on the road and had people drop in to donate blood. Jo supervised four staff in her unit which included one RN, two donor assistants, and a driver. She was responsible for looking after the daily routine, liaising with Headquarters, and operating some "mini punctures".

After working in the Red Cross for nine years, she and her husband decided to immigrate to Canada. She started to explore the possibility of getting a nursing position in Canada when she was applying for immigrant status. She wrote to the Registered Nurse Association of British Columbia (RNABC). She was informed she would be eligible to be the registered nurse in Canada only if she took one mental health course, and passed the RN examination.

She went to Vancouver and stayed with her parents who had been there for quite some time. Her husband joined her a few months later. She started to take the ten week mental health course at the British Columbia Institute for Technology, during which she did a practicum in several hospitals. She took two

months to prepare the RN examination after she had finished her course work. The first attempt was unsuccessful. She admitted that she was not familiar with the multiple choice type of questions. She took the examination again after three months, during which she signed up a workshop organized by the RNABC which helped foreign trained nurses to prepare for the examination.

While she was preparing for her examination, she started to look for a job, submitting application forms to several hospitals. She then worked as a temporary full time graduate nurse at a private nursing home for two weeks. She was then accepted as a temporary full time graduate nurse at a hospital for extended care. Because the nurse whom she replaced had decided to quit her job, she became the permanent full time staff, on condition that she would pass the RN examination. She made it in her second attempt.

Now Jo is a team leader supervising four nursing aids and taking care of a group of twenty eight patients. Her daily routine includes designing care plans, giving instructions to nursing assistants, carrying out some bed side cares and documenting cases. It is now her eighth year in this position.

May

May is 28 years old, and single. She is an occupational therapist (OT) at a private hospital. She came to Canada five years ago and her prime reason for coming was to travel and to widen her life experience.

After graduating from the Hong Kong Polytechnic as a occupational therapist, she was offered an OT position at Caritas Hospital. The OT department had only been established three years before she joined it. She worked with two OTs who graduated in the same college two years before she did. Because Caritas was a general hospital, she had to shift from one department to another. During her four years of working there, she had been working in the out patient unit, geriatric wards and psychiatric unit. She had very extensive work experience. In a newly established department, she also made many management decision as the other two OTs respected her opinions and suggestions.

In 1987, she came to Canada to visit her friend in Edmonton. It was also her first visit to this country. While she was meeting friends both in Edmonton and Vancouver, she also made arrangements to visit some hospitals and compiled a list of hospital names. When she returned to Hong Kong, she decided to apply for immigrant status in Canada. She submitted her application in March, got accepted, and landed in Vancouver in September. During the whole application process, she was very excited as she felt that she needed a change at that time as her job became very monotonous. After all, she had a very good impression about Canada from her visit. She was looking forward to starting a new life in Canada.

Since she had taken a Canadian recognized OT examination in Hong Kong, she just went for registration once she landed, and started contacting hospitals to which she had already sent her application letters. At that stage, she was not worried about not getting any OT jobs. If worse came to worse, she could always go back to Hong Kong with her two suitcases she brought with her when she first landed. Despite the fact that there were not many OT positions available at that time, she did not attempt to apply for a part time job. She only looked for full time positions because she thought that, once she accepted a part time job, she might be tied down and her chance of finding a full time one would be slimmer.

She was hired by the Riverview Psychiatric Hospital in October. Because of some hospital structural changes, she only started work in December. She had not worked in a psychiatric hospital before, yet she found her work environment very supportive. She was given a very thorough orientation, and a

much lighter work load than that of the regular staff members. Her supervisor even showed her some test demonstrations, made sure she knew how to handle them before she was assigned to conduct them. Despite the high turn-over rate in her unit, she stayed on for two and a half years before she found a new job in Mount St Joseph Hospital (MSJ).

One distinctive feature of MSJ which attracted her was that the majority of patients were Chinese. She started work in the acute care unit of the geriatric department, and then transferred to the Short Stay Assessment and Treatment Center (SSATC), ideal place for OT. Because patients in the SSATC were recovered in the acute care unit, they just needed some medical health services to promote their health. They were referred to the Center so that they could be observed and assessed. Suggestions would be made to them or to their family about their functional abilities, needs of home care service and placement. They usually left the Center safely and soundly.

May is still working in the Center.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRE-WORKING STAGE - INFORMAL BARRIERS AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS IN THE PROCESS OF JOB SEARCH

The women interviewed encountered many barriers in the process of job transferability in Vancouver. Before various kinds of barriers are described and analyzed, the opinions of my respondents about their jobs both in Hong Kong and in Vancouver will be summarized. In the second section of this chapter and in Chapter Six, the different barriers they encountered at two stages: the pre-working stage and the working stage, will be presented. The findings described in the first stage focus on their job search experiences while those in the second stage concentrate on their experiences and problems in the workplace.

The barriers encountered by this group of Chinese women, who came to Vancouver as "independent applicants", were very complex and the factors affecting their experiences while seeking employment in Vancouver were intricate. I argue that, in order to understand their problems at the pre-working stage, we should not examine the barriers they encountered according to either one or the other of the two traditional approaches - cultural barriers or structural barriers. We should examine both of them. And I further argue that other barriers, which I term "informal barriers", should also be examined intensively as they also plays a very important role at the pre-working stage.

My Respondents' Opinions about Their Jobs in Hong Kong and in Vancouver

When talking about their work in Hong Kong, 18 respondents said that their job was their career (see Table 4). Eighteen indicated that their hard work had been highly recognized, 17 found their jobs satisfying, and 16 said that they had been happy with their jobs.

On the whole, the majority of these women had experienced a strong sense of achievement, commitment, and involvement in their work in Hong Kong. Their work had provided them with decision making power, a high degree of creativity and initiative, and promising career prospects. Sally remarked,

> My boss just looked at the performance of my whole team at the end of the fiscal year. I was given total control over budgeting, categorizing textile quota and disposing of them; and assigning junior merchandisers to run the everyday operation. I was very committed to my work because I was able to make good profits for my company, and it was the greatest source of my job satisfaction. How much I earned from my job was only of secondary importance. (15.1.A15)4

Being trusted by superiors and in a senior position, and holding a job which was meaningful and had promising prospects, were among the reasons they found their job rewarding. Vivian stated,

> My major achievement from my job was gaining trust and respect from my superiors. I was also very involved in my work because I was given excellent opportunities to run many new programs for our students to increase their sense of belonging to our institute. I found my job meaningful and I did have a strong sense of being successful in my job. (5.1.B1)

Furthermore, ten women mentioned that they had been pleased with their company because of the good benefits. However, a high salary and good work hours had not been seen as important

Table 4

Positive Responses to the Following Questions:
"What is good about your job in Vancouver?"
"What was good about your job in Hong Kong?"

Responses	Vancouver	Hong Kong
it's my career	5	18
supervisor is understanding	4	18
good work hours	6	5
good salary	3	5
good company	5	10
good position	1	12
more new things to learn	5	2
being recognized	14	18
meaningful work	9	7
happy - "I like it!"	11	16
prospects for career development	2	13
decision making power	7	13
creative and initiative	6	10
challenging	7	10
great identification with the job	5	15
personal sense of achievement	7	13
satisfaction	10	17

criteria to judge their jobs.

Among the twenty respondents, 14 did not regard their jobs in Vancouver as a career (see Table 5). Work only meant a job which provided a stable income, a daily activity with which they occupied themselves. Cindy's comment on her job summed it all up,

> I don't think I hate my job. I had picked it up real fast when I first started working. It's only routine work. As long as I don't make any mistakes, and my superiors and clients don't complain about my work, I am OK. Well, I never see my work as my career. It's only a job which guarantees income. I feel secure if I have income. (1.1.B26)

Five other respondents regarded their jobs as their careers. They still had some hope for their work life in Vancouver and were content with their jobs which they found interesting. Among these five women, Molly, a former secretary in Hong Kong and now a dietary technologist, found her current job satisfying and challenging,

> Our hospital is still expanding, and so is our department. I have the free hand to initiate several projects and to implement them. I also have a good work relationship with my superiors who have trust in me, and we are a good team. I find my job stimulating and rewarding. It's more than a job. It's my career. (10.1.B7)

Mary, the last one of the twenty women, was out of work since she arrived because she had given up her hope of finding a job after several unsuccessful attempts.

Respondents had several complaints about their jobs in Vancouver. Ten of them complained that their salary was too low; nine said that their job had no prospects; and five indicated that there was no job security at all in Canada.

On the whole, my respondents pointed out that working in Vancouver, they cared less about job rank, but more about the

Table 5

Positive Responses to the Following Questions:
"What is bad about your job in Vancouver?"
"What was bad about your job in Hong Kong?"

Responses	Vancouver	Hong Kong
it's only a job	14	2
affects family life and child rearing	4	0
unbearable work pressure	3	0
low salary (as compared to Hong Kong)	10	1
impersonal, not humane	1	0
company is not good	1	2
bad work relationship with supervisor	2	0
low self esteem	1	0
low status	2	0
different market nature	1	0
different work philosophy	3	0
no job security	5	0
I don't have any ambition	3	0
bored	2	3
no satisfaction	2	0
no prospect	9	2
it's only a job most related to my experience	11	0

nature of the job, work hours, recognition from superiors, and job satisfaction. Among them, Jenny, Pam and Kitty mentioned that they only worked for money. Sally, Gin and Cindy found their jobs "boring" because they were not stimulating. Sally and Eva resigned from their jobs eventually because of the conflict of their work philosophy with that of the management.

The opinions held by my respondents about their jobs in Vancouver and in Hong Kong were very different. Various kinds of barriers were identified from the interviews. In the following sections, the kinds of barriers which had hindered them from finding jobs at the pre-working stage will first be examined.

Informal Barriers

The term "informal" in this study was borrowed from Russell (1993a) who suggested that informal systems of organizations were barriers to women and minority administrators and educators. Russell defined informal aspects of organization as,

> (Something) related to insider knowledge and broadly based and influential networks which produce the comfort level with organizational politics and power necessary to functioning at the most senior levels of an organization. (p. 249)

Russell examined the experiences of women administrators and educators and concluded that,

> The informal system is at the heart of middle management functioning and becomes even more critical as one moves up the hierarchy....Women in this study were often naive about how organizations really operate. This was particularly true of the informal side of organizational life which they rarely got to witness. (p. 249)

Russell's definition applied to the present study in two ways: that the "soft belly" aspect (Russell, 1993) of

organizations which had always been overlooked in literature became the highlight of the research; that women who were always the victims because of their ignorance of such an informal system were the focus of the study.

In addition to incorporating the definition of "informal" aspects of organizations as suggested by Russell, I defined the connotation of "informal barriers" in a broader sense. Informal barriers in the present study are barriers which either arose from the Chinese immigrant women themselves or from their interacting with the social context they were in. These informal barriers at the pre-working stage were categorized into personal barriers and cultural barriers. Personal barriers were negative personal factors which affected these women when they searched for their first job in Vancouver. Cultural barriers came from their ignorance of some subtle cultural rules of the job application. These barriers had very distinctive features which differentiated them from structural barriers, and I term them "informal barriers".

Personal Barriers

My respondents were affected by many personal factors when they first made plans to find a job in Vancouver. These personal factors included their reasons for immigrating, preparation to look for work, personality and age, financial security, adaptation to the new living environment, domestic support, preset career path, and job preferences. For some respondents, these personal factors were an advantage when they were looking for a job; but for others, these factors became a hindrance. I

term the latter ones "informal barriers", and these were the foremost barriers which affected my respondents in the process of job transferability in Vancouver.

Reasons for immigrating.

It was clear during interviews that sixteen out of my twenty respondents left Hong Kong for political reasons. These women indicated that they were afraid of the take over of Hong Kong by communist China in 1997. Since the political situation of this British colony was uncertain, they chose Canada to be their new home. In addition to listing the political reason as their primary reason for immigrating, seven out of these 16 women indicated that changing their living environment was a secondary reason. Among them, Jenny and Tina wanted to provide their children with a better education. The remaining five wanted very much to spend more time with their children. Cathy was the most decisive one among them as she closed down her legal firm in Hong Kong and gave up her law practice in Vancouver in order to spend more time with her family. She recalled,

> My husband and I were usually so exhausted after work that we seldom talked to our children during the week. We only spent time with them in the weekends. It was not good for the family. I now appreciate more staying home for dinner with my children than going to a banquet with the wife of the Hong Kong governor. (20.1.A8)

The reasons given by the last four women were more personal, ranging from personal growth and family reunification to better educational opportunities. May loved travelling, and working in Vancouver would allow her to broaden her horizons. Eva came to pursue graduate studies, and being an immigrant she was able to

pay much lower tuition fees. Vivian came to Canada to get married, and Molly to be reunited with her parents whom she had not seen for three years. Interestingly, among all my respondents, none of them immigrated to Vancouver for economic reasons.

Because these women came to Canada for either political or personal reasons, and they were not "economic immigrants", I argue that their reasons would affect their plans for finding jobs in Vancouver. In other words, not being prompted by economic reasons may actually be an informal barrier in the process of looking for their first jobs.

When Lai (1971) examined Chinese immigrants who came to Toronto in the 1960's from Hong Kong, she pointed out that they had come to Canada to settle permanently. They chose Canada to be their new home because they had experienced great economic difficulty and encountered an unexpected communist riot in Hong Kong in 1967. Above all, Canada provided better opportunity for economic advancement and a more secure political situation (p. 125). Therefore, these Chinese immigrants were prompted by both economic and political reasons to settle quickly in Canada.

When compared to the Chinese immigrants in the 60s, my respondents who came to Canada after the 80s were among those residents in Hong Kong who had experienced much better job prospects during the economic boom in the later 70s and the whole of the 80s in the colony. According to an agreement signed by both the British government and the Republic of China in 1982, China will allow Hong Kong a fifty year transitional period after it is returned to China in 1997. During that duration of time,

the existing political, social and economic systems in Hong Kong are guaranteed to be unchanged. If the agreement is upheld, Hong Kong will still be a stable and prosperous city after its return to China. Some economists have even predicted that Hong Kong will still enjoy sound economic growth into the turn of the 21st century. If this is the case, the careers of my respondents would have been established more firmly if they had not left Hong Kong. Therefore, their move to Canada is definitely not for "economic reasons", like that of their forerunners in the 60s.

Their prime reason for immigrating was essentially the political uncertainty in Hong Kong after 1997. It is from this perceived threat and fear that they left for Canada. What then were the fears of these women? Three fears have been identified: the first fear was that a changing political situation might affect their current job; the second was that they were uncertain when they saw their friends, relatives and colleagues leaving Hong Kong en masse; and the third was that the political change might affect the future of their children (See, 1989:65-68). The first fear was directly related to their employment. They were afraid that when political powers changed hands, their work situation would be chaotic. For example, the executives or the people in upper management would be changed and so would company policies. Even if their own position or salary were to remain unchanged, they would be very confused and uncertain as to what would come of their jobs. It is this unknown and unpredictable, feared chaotic situation that they did not want to deal with, and as a consequence, they were ready to give up their long established careers in Hong Kong, and eagerly search for a new

haven which would accept their immigration application. It is certain that, if not for these kinds of fears, they would not have left Hong Kong, and it is also certain that if they had wanted to continue their economic achievement, they would have stayed in Hong Kong. Given these factors, their move to Canada was definitely not for "economic reasons".

Their reasons for immigrating may actually act as informal barriers as they might have affected their intentions of searching for a compatible job. Some of my respondents might lack what Wong (1986) used to describe in reference to the Shanghainese refugees - a "refugee mentality".[3] According to Wong, this kind of refugee mentality helped the Shanghainese refugees unleash a transformative social process when they fled to Hong Kong from China during the post war period. This group of highly motivated and stubbornly hard working refugees either made themselves more marketable by learning new skills or acquiring qualifications, or diversifying their investments for gaining maximum profit. These refugees not only became stable residents in Hong Kong, but also the driving force of industrializing Hong Kong after the post war period. As a result, they gave the colony ten or fifteen years start in industrialization over many other Asian countries.

Lacking "a clear definition of the situation", which featured the mentality of the Chinese refugees in the 40s in Hong Kong, being uncertain about their departure, relishing the potential return, and knowing well in advance the job opportunities in Canada were not compatible with those in Hong Kong, all my respondents had very low expectation of finding a

better paying and higher status job in Canada. Finding a job which was of interest to them became the priority for most of my respondents. Salary and job status were not important criteria, even though a steady income was important for a few of them as it provided a strong sense of security. Some who were unable to find the job they preferred eventually gave up looking. They either changed their life priority in Vancouver or decided to go back to Hong Kong after they obtained their Canadian citizenship. This lack of refugee mentality has also become an informal barrier for some of my respondents, who became discouraged after making several unsuccessful attempts to find a job.

Financial security.

Fourteen women indicated that they could afford to spend some time looking for a job they liked when they arrived because they had sufficient financial support. A few claimed that their husbands were responsible for providing financial support to the family; therefore, they could take their time to look for jobs which were of interest to them. Amy stated,

> I don't have to win any bread at all ever since I got married. I even had many choices for finding a job I liked when I was in Hong Kong. (6.1.A4)

However, six women said that they had to accept any position available without considering whether they liked it or not because of financial constraints. Molly said,

> I did not have any savings when I left Hong Kong. Income means much more to me when I first came to Vancouver because I find it very insecure if I don't have any income. I grabbed the first job that came by. I did not mind working part time in a fish and chip shop, washing and cutting potatoes, preparing fish batter, deep frying both fish and potatoes when orders came, and serving them to my customers.

> I had put all my secretarial skills behind. A steady income helped me a lot to settle in. (10.1.A4)

A few, such as Tina and Jo, pointed out that they worried about their financial situation of the family even though they had saved up some money to start their new life in Canada. Tina said that financial security was her major concern during the first few months after the whole family arrived in Vancouver. Even though her husband had found a job, she continued to search for one herself. She remarked,

> It was not until I found a teller's job at the bank that the whole family became relieved. My husband and I felt so financially insecure that we made job hunting our priority. I did not care about the nature of the job as long as I was hired and had income. (11.1.A4)

Jo's fear about financial insecurity had started long before she immigrated to Canada. Such uncertainty gave her tremendous pressure to seek for a nursing job as soon as she could. Eventually, she found a part-time nursing job at a private nursing home even though she preferred to work at a hospital. She recalled,

> My husband was not a professional and he planned to further his studies when he came to Vancouver. The whole financial burden was on me for at least the first two years. I was extremely worried because I had to take some courses and to pass the registered nurse examination before I could practise nursing in Canada. I was so scared long before we applied for immigrant status in Canada that I could not support the family with a stable income when we were here. (9.1.A4)

Yet, as mentioned in the previous section, if these women did not come for economic reasons, why was financial security so important to some of them? This question is easily answered if we understand the financial situation of these women in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, making money is the most valued goal of many people, and saving money is another. Saving sufficient money to

take care of one's life and one's family in fact is essential in Hong Kong, which has long been a "welfareless" society. Residents of this British colony only survive with their own income. Even though the majority of my respondents enjoyed higher incomes, whether they were financially secure was their greatest concern at all times. To most of them, leaving Hong Kong for Canada was like leaving a security blanket. No matter whether they had brought along any savings over to Canada or not, they felt extremely insecure. Their concerns could be shown by the increasing number of Chinese publications about immigration to Canada in recent years, and many of which, such as Pointers for Settling Down in Canada had become best sellers in Hong Kong.

These women, regardless of how much savings they had brought with them, felt very insecure once they were in Canada. The only way to overcome such a fear and to reassure their family was to find a job. Such pressure to secure their financial condition also became an informal barrier for some of the women.

Domestic Support.

Those who needed a full time job but had children to take care of found they were facing the dilemma of working outside the home or taking care of their children. The alternative they had was to ask for help from their parents or in-laws. Vivian applied for her parents to immigrate to Vancouver so that they could look after her child. Tina, Amy, Susan, and Cathy spent the first few months at home taking care of their children before they started to look for jobs.

A few decided on a part time job in order to spend more time with their children. For example, Amy and Cathy found that when they were in Hong Kong, they had left all the child rearing and home caring to their maids. They did not have any chance to see their children until late in the evenings or on the week ends. As Cathy remarked,

> This kind of circumstance did create a kind of "orphan" who was not brought up by parents but by strangers, our maids. (20.1.B18)

Though Amy and Cathy worked only part time, they also needed help from their mothers or in-laws. Once they were in Vancouver, they tried to make it up to their children by working part time. In their cases, they chose to change their priority from work to family.

Mary, whose experiences of searching for jobs in Vancouver were not satisfactory, decided to give up her career and stay at home with her children. She drove her daughter to school and to attend private music and dance lessons and sport activities even when she was seven months pregnant. She also took care of the household chores.

Whether they would be able to get domestic support was indeed a great concern for these immigrant women, especially those who were married and had children. In Hong Kong, children are mostly taken care of either by live-in maids, if the family could afford it, or by relatives. Many working mothers do not trust child care services in Hong Kong and there are several reasons for this. The first one is that many of the child care organizations are run by private organizations whose standards have not been monitored by any of the government departments. It

is generally believed that quite a few of them are substandard. The second reason is that it is more convenient to hire a live-in maid to take care of everything for the family, and to allow the working housewife to work full time. Sometimes, grandparents or relatives helped out if the maid had too much house work to do. The family was well taken care of. According to Hong Kong standards, the wages to the maid were not low. However, the overall income made by family was more than sufficient to pay for domestic help. Because of these two reasons, leaving children with child care services is a very uncommon practice in Hong Kong.

In Vancouver, due to financial constraints and higher wages for maids, some of my respondents had no choice but to stay at home to look after their children instead of working outside of the home. Sally made the following comment,

> If half of my take home pay would be used to hire a maid, I might as well quit my job, do the housework and take care of the baby myself. (15.1.A8)

Interestingly, none of them had mentioned that they would consider sending their children to day care in Vancouver. The reasons they did not do so are not the focus of this study. Yet the uncommon practice of sending children to day care institutions in Hong Kong might explain why they did not rely on day care services in Vancouver. Lack of domestic help, hence, became another informal barrier for those who needed a job but could not afford to hire any domestic help and had no family members to help them.

Adaptation to New Living Environment.

How adaptive respondents were in the new living environment in Vancouver also affected their plans to seek work. My respondents had much to get adjusted to. Sometimes weather, shopping, and accommodation created problems that they had to deal with.

Some of my respondents were less adaptable than others in a new living environment. Amy, who had never left Hong Kong before she immigrated to Vancouver, found she had to spend more time than others to get adapted to the daily life in her new home country. She recalled,

> I found difficulty when I first went grocery shopping at the supermarket. Even the cuts of meat were so different from those in Hong Kong that I did not know what to buy. It was only very recently that they carried chicken giblets in the stores. (6.1.A3)

Some of my respondents pointed out that the weather affected their mood to search for a job when they first arrived. Molly recalled,

> It was so cold in January that I had to put on two pairs of pants when I went downtown to look for a job. I was freezing as I walked along the road. I had been doing that for two weeks and I still could not gather enough courage to get into any of the banks or offices to ask for application forms. I felt more miserable and desperate than ever in such cold weather. (10.1.A1)

Tina narrated a similar account about how the weather affected her mood, and her feeling towards her new life in Vancouver,

> I was taking an evening secretarial course at a community college. I did not know how to drive and my husband was unable to give me a lift because he was working a "graveyard" shift. I had to walk for thirty minutes to get to the bus stop and take two buses to get to school. It was a cold winter and I was shivering while I was walking to the bus stop. I cried and asked myself what I was doing there. I had a very respectable job in Hong Kong and had a Filipino maid to take care of my children and my house. Now I have

> nothing. This thought had been haunting me every time I made the lonely trip back and forth from school in the chilling and bitter weather, with tears in my eyes and all over my face. (11.1.A2)

Lily also found the rainy season unbearable. She only began to search for a job when the weather improved.

Accommodation could also provide unbearable experiences which shattered the desire of the women to search for a job. Because of different living habits and life style, Lucy encountered many conflicts with her Caucasian room mate with whom she shared her apartment. Lucy remarked,

> I had never been so upset during that time when I was sharing an apartment with that lady that I even did not have any mood to look for job. If I could not deal with some basic things such as accommodation, how could I handle a full time job. (17.1.A3)

These newcomers had to experience an adaptation process to everyday living in Vancouver. The more problems they encountered when settling down, the longer it took them to focus on their job search. Hence, everyday adaptation problems in the new living environment could also be one of the informal barriers they encountered during the job search stage.

Personality and Age.

Personal character was found to be one of the dominant factors affecting this group of women when they searched for jobs in Vancouver. Those who are more open, receptive to change, and active were ready to search for jobs which they preferred. For example, Lily, Vivian, Susan, and Jo knew the kind of jobs they were looking for, then made plans and found good connections. They accepted temporary jobs and were ready to start with what they were offered. They were more flexible in their move which

gave them better opportunities to find a more satisfying job later. Tina was very assertive and persistent when she applied for her first job. She asked for job application forms from all the banks in Chinatown, completed them, and asked for an interview while she was submitting them in person. Though a number of banks had declined her request, she was not discouraged, despite feeling upset.

Those who were organized, knew more about their own bargaining power, and had a well thought out plan for starting their work life once they arrived were able to find their first job quickly. For example, May made a special trip touring around potential hospitals before she officially arrived in Vancouver. She then collected a list of hospital names and sent application letters while she was in Hong Kong. She was invited to go for interviews once she was in Vancouver. Gin also prepared her resumes and application letters long before coming to Vancouver. She sent them once she arrived.

Being pragmatic also helped some women accept the employment path they found themselves in more readily. Jo's mental block to starting her new life in Canada was having to retake the registered nurse examinations as she did not like taking examinations at all. When she and her husband immigrated to Vancouver and her husband decided to further his studies, the responsibility of earning money to support the family automatically fell on Jo. Jo's worry about taking the examination became her greatest pressure. When she was asked how she overcame such a hurdle, she responded,

> When practical sense comes into place, I don't have any choice but to do it. (9.1.A4)

She eventually passed her examination in her second attempt.

Among my twenty respondents, only Molly was less assertive, more timid and indecisive when she first came to Vancouver, and she had a more difficult time looking for jobs. Molly spent several months just walking in the downtown area because she did not have the courage to go in any of the companies just to pick up job application forms. Her somewhat hesitant and non-assertive style became the informal barrier which impeded her ability to find a job.

Those respondents who were over 40 years old found their age hindered their search for a career in Canada. Hence, age became an informal barrier for them. Kitty, who was 43 years old, was very definite that she would not go for any retraining courses in order to start a new career. She commented that it was too late to start all over again when one was over forty. Age had always been a concern to Jenny who was already 50 years old when she was considering a potential career or registering in a retraining program. She commented,

> If only I were twenty years younger, I could have a lot more doors open for me! (16.1.B11)

Personality and age are thus other informal barriers which affected some of my respondents in the process of job searching.

Preset Career Path.

Seven of my respondents who were sure about the kinds of job they wanted when they first came were able to find a related one in Vancouver. Lily and Susan, who were former social workers, knew very well they would look for work in social services. Jo

and May, a nurse and an occupational therapist respectively, were looking for jobs in medical care services. Gin, Cindy and Kitty, who were secretaries, looked for jobs in the business sector.

Problems arose for those who had a very hard time deciding on the kind of job they wanted when their former jobs had no market demand in Vancouver. They found their occupational choices very limited and they simply did not know what kind of career options they had in Vancouver. Tina, who decided not to continue in her field as a teacher, Alice and Mary, as personnel managers, Pam, as a marketing manager, and Amy, as a publishing manager, experienced much anxiety when they were searching for a new career in Vancouver. They did not see any other career choices except their former ones. Now they had the problem of starting anew. Tina recollected her decision of looking for a job as a bank teller after she found avenues to teaching closed to her,

> I did not know what I could do in Vancouver. I was trained to be a teacher and was a teacher all my life when I was in Hong Kong. I found it very tough when I had to plan for my career because I simply did not know what my options were. I began to take a secretarial course, a typing course, and then a bank teller course, hoping that something might pop up. (11.1.A2)

Most of my respondents indicated that one of the prime reasons why their careers had been established well when they were in Hong Kong was because their career had been preset by society long before they were in secondary school. They were streamed into either the arts or sciences when they were in Form Three (equivalent to Grade Nine). They usually did not have many career choices after they graduated from secondary school or even university. Most female arts students became teachers, social

workers, secretaries, managers in the business sector, or government administrative officers; most female science students became science teachers, government officers, nurses or other medical care professionals such as physiotherapists or occupational therapists. Against all odds, only a handful of female students became lawyers or doctors, both still male dominated professions. Cathy, who was a lawyer, recalled the time when she decided to further her studies in law after many years of teaching,

> Like many matriculants (equivalent to high school graduates), I took up teaching as my career. Within a few years' time, I had taken all the commercial teaching certificates. Seeing that there was no more advancement in my teaching career, I decided to further my study at the university. I was given a chance to enter the degree program of LLA (the first degree in law). I did not have a clue that I would become a lawyer if I pursued that degree. None of my friends or relatives were lawyers. It was my father who convinced me to get into the program because he did not want me to further my study overseas since I was the only child in the family. (20.1.A5)

Jo, who was a nurse when she was in Hong Kong, echoed the same experience,

> I went to further my studies in nursing as many female students had taken up nursing. I just went for what everybody was doing and I never insisted on choosing my own career. In fact, I don't think we had many to choose from. (9.3.B31)

Because occupational choices for women are limited in Hong Kong, women usually establish their career in one particular field. Some of my respondents found it extremely difficult to start a new career in Vancouver as they did not know what career options they would be able to develop. Hence, having followed a preset career path in Hong Kong became another informal barrier.

Job Preferences.

Job preferences also affected the kinds of job my respondents were looking for. The majority of them had a strong preference; many, such as Susan, Vivian, Amy, and Lily, indicated that they looked for a job which might be interesting, "fun", enjoyable or which they were able to "get a kick out of". Susan's comment summed up the preference of this group of immigrant women,

> I don't mind being a saleslady at a chocolate shop. It would be fun working in that kind of environment, meeting nice and happy customers everyday. (4.1.B6)

Others, such as Jo and Gin, said that they wanted to find a job which was related to their former experience and suitable for them. Some, for example, Amy, Tina, Lily, and Sally, were more philosophical; they felt that they should make the best use of their former training and work experience, that they should have a strong sense of worthiness, and that they could maintain their dignity. Because they sought meaningfulness in their job, Tina and Amy emphasized that they would not accept "labouring" jobs. Amy stated,

> A university graduate should not be a dish washer, a cleaner, a baby-sitter or a waitress. It is a waste of our former academic training. (6.1.A4)

A few such as May and Lily mentioned that they were looking for jobs in which they were able to learn more about their professional fields. Only a few, such as Kitty, Jo, and Molly, mentioned that they needed a steady income because they would feel more secure. Among the twenty respondents, only Amy said she also wanted a job with good work hours that is close to home, Bessy chose a job with better prospects and May was very definite

that she would not commit herself to a part time job, because she would have no time to look for a full time one.

Job preference, hence, affected the job search of my respondents. Those who had been holding higher position jobs with good salary and decision-making power in Hong Kong, usually identified job preference as a priority. Recognizing that they had a slim chance of finding a job with good income and high position in Vancouver, they changed their criterion to getting "intrinsic" satisfaction - finding jobs which were of interest to them, and which they were happy with. Such satisfaction, they thought, could compensate for the status, position, monetary return, job satisfaction or recognition they had in Hong Kong. Having predetermined notions of what jobs were acceptable limited their chance of access to a wider range of options. Hence, job preference became an informal barrier for those who wanted very much to find a job which they preferred but were not certain of finding one.

To conclude this section, my respondents had been affected by many personal factors when they made their plan to find their first job in Vancouver. Some personal factors helped prepare them better before they started looking. Other personal factors such as having less definite reason for immigrating, a less open personality, older in age, lack of financial security or domestic support, personal job preference or skills which did not have market demand, became informal barriers. These negative factors hindered my respondents' struggles at the pre-working stage. In many cases, many of my respondents opted for jobs which were not desirable because of these informal barriers.

Cultural Barriers

When my respondents first contacted the work world in Vancouver by launching their job search, they began to experience problems which arose because of cultural barriers, being ignorant of some subtle cultural rules of the job search process in Canada. I categorize these cultural barriers under informal barriers.

Most of my respondents found out that when they used their Hong Kong job search strategies in Vancouver, they hardly received any positive responses from potential employers. Tina, who had sent out resumes in which she listed all her former training, job position, and work experiences regardless of the kind of job she was applying for, found that she was never invited for any job interviews. Lucy sent resumes with full details of her employment history randomly to several established educational institutes, in the hope that the institutes would decide what vacancy she might be suitable for. She did not receive any positive reply from any of the institutions.

Some respondents admitted that they were not confident when they went for their interviews in Vancouver. Bessy became tongue tied when she had an interview with an English-speaking interviewer. She was more confident when the interviewer was Chinese even though they were using English as a medium. Molly revealed that she was very frightened when she went for her interview. She did not know what the expectation of her interviewer was. The interview was not as formal as the ones she had in Hong Kong and she did not know how to handle such a change of interview style. She found herself panicking and was glad

when the interview finished, caring less whether she was able to get the job or not than about ending the interview.

Failing to know the job application culture in Canada, hence, became a cultural barrier to my respondents when they started the process of applying for a job in Vancouver. The procedure of applying for a job in Hong Kong is very similar to that of Canada. There are, however, some implicit cultural rules which are very different and are usually overlooked by non North American immigrants. In Hong Kong, job seekers usually follow a traditional way of applying for a job: looking for jobs in newspaper advertisements, government posting, or even obtaining information from friends or relatives, sending in application letters, going for interviews, accepting or rejecting the offer, or being rejected. What makes the two job search cultures different is that applicants usually play a very "passive" role during the whole application process in Hong Kong. They just show the best they can in both the resumé and at the interview. A "let the prospective employer decide whether he will hire me or not" attitude diminishes the role of the applicant, and the decision-making power is in the hands of the potential employer. "It is I who is not good enough, that's why I am not hired" is a very common response among those whose applications have been rejected.

In Canada, on the contrary, applicants usually actively "sell" themselves to potential employers. All the information is tailored in such a way so as to convince interviewers that they are the only eligible candidate for the job. During the interview, the applicants are usually assertive and persuasive.

A "let me sell you my skills" attitude pervades the whole process of job application. Applicants take a more active role in convincing the prospective employer in deciding who is the most suitable one for the job.

Conflicts arose when my respondents applied for a job in Canada using their Hong Kong "passive" approach. Failing to use a more "assertive" approach both in preparing their application letter and presenting themselves at interviews, they were seen as not outstanding from the view of the employers. Ignorance about the job search culture in Canada, which is also a cultural barrier, explained why many of my respondents did not receive a positive response when they looked for their first job in Canada.

To conclude, both personal barriers and cultural barriers were identified as informal barriers at the pre-working stage. They were either negative personal factors facing the Chinese immigrant women when they were planning to look for their first jobs in Vancouver, or their lack of information about the differences in the job application cultures in Hong Kong and in Canada. These informal barriers were significant because they trapped these women at the threshold of the job market.

Structural Barriers

My respondents encountered many structural barriers when they started to seek their first job in Vancouver. They were turned down either because they lacked local experience or relevant local training and qualification or because they were overqualified for the job. Another structural barrier was the

mismatch of their former work experience and the local market demand.

Local Experience, Local Training, and Relevant Qualification

All my respondents found it most difficult to find their first job because they failed to meet some job application requirement, such as acquiring local work experience and training. Being newly arrived, such a requirement was impossible to meet.

Being anxious about their lack of local experience, Molly and Jenny were too intimidated to send application letters to those newspaper advertisements which required several years of experience, even though they had been in a similar field for quite some time. Gin, who went to employment agencies for their services, was advised that she might have difficulty getting job interviews. Kitty, who had an opportunity to go for interviews, was told that her lack of local experience could be to her disadvantage.

Cindy had a very unhappy encounter with a government employment consultant. She was looking for jobs at the government employment center and asked the consultant to arrange for a job interview for her. According to the standard procedure before 1990, appointments for all the jobs posted at the government employment agencies were arranged by consultants. However, when Cindy showed the consultant that she was interested in a particular position and indicated she was a new immigrant, the consultant said she was not qualified for the job because she did not have any Canadian experience. Cindy was very upset but

she insisted that she would contact the company herself if the consultant did not want to arrange a job interview for her. The consultant rejected her request and Cindy was very angry at this point and asked,

> How come my Hong Kong work experience doesn't count? Do you know what Hong Kong is? It is an international finance and trading city! If I was able to do an excellent job in Hong Kong, I can do as good here in Canada. (1.1.A2)

The consultant gave in, reluctantly handed her the telephone number and let her arrange the interview herself.

Neither prospective employers nor employment agencies had any standard for deciding how much local experience was sufficient. Kitty was given the same "reason" even when she was looking for her second job. She was discouraged by the consultant of the employment agency who told her that she would have difficulty finding a satisfying job even though she had been working in Canada for two years. The reason he gave was that Kitty did not have enough Canadian experience. Kitty responded by asking,

> May I know what you mean by Canadian experience? I had been working as a secretary for eighteen years in Hong Kong, and my secretarial skills had been highly recognized. I am sure in Canada, I can do as good as I did before. If you are saying that I am not familiar with the environment, I can pick it up really fast. My former colleagues in Vancouver who have been working in the same company for more than ten or even twenty years still don't know everything. They still have to check the phone directory or call around to ask for information. I also did the same thing and managed to do the job well. I can't see that I am not doing the job as well as they are. (2.1.A1)

Kitty made the following comment later,

> I was very furious and felt rejected when they told me that I did not have enough Canadian experience, despite the fact that I had been working for two years in Canada. What do they mean by sufficient? They don't have any standards. (2.1.A2)

Prospective employers were hesitant to hire some of my respondents because they did not have confidence in their former work experience. Susan, who had been working in the field of social services for over twenty years, was turned down for a part time clerk position at a local crisis prevention organization. The interviewer had reservations about hiring Susan because she was doubtful whether she could handle incoming emergency telephone calls. If Susan was hired, volunteers might be needed to answer incoming calls for her. Susan commented,

> I found the situation very ironic. My over twenty odd years of working experience in social services never convinced her that my skills would be applicable to situations like these. On the contrary, she trusted those volunteers who had just been trained for a few weeks. (4.1.B3)

Being overqualified for the job was another reason my respondents received when they were turned down. For example, Mary, who was once a personnel manager, applied for a secretarial position in a bank. After going through her resume, the manager remarked, "Do you think you can bear with the idea of starting from the lowest level?" The answer was positive, the interview went well and Mary's secretarial skills proved to be superb, but she did not get the job.

Pam had an interview in a tiles import and export company. This was a secretarial position and the job also required computer skills. Pam was very experienced in importing and exporting, and had upgraded her computer knowledge by taking a computer program at one of the local community colleges. She was very confident that she would get the job because she knew she could handle the job well. She was turned down because she had

no experience in the tiles industry and was overqualified for the job because she was once a marketing manager.

Seeing that their former work experience was more of a barrier than a help to their job application, some of my respondents deliberately withheld some of their former positions and work experiences. Sally and Mary had a hard time tailoring the information about their job title and work experience when they prepared their resume. They did not want to show the prospective employer that they had been working at a senior position, nor did they want to fabricate information. Without informing the employment agency that she was a lawyer, Cathy was able to get an interview for a secretarial position at a law firm.

Lack of local training or qualifications was the reason Tina's job application got turned down when she applied for a cashier position at a well established drug mart. The supervisor asked her which model of cashier machine she had used before and whether she had taken any cashier courses. Being fresh from Hong Kong and a teacher for her whole career, she did not have any chance to handle any cashier machines. She was rejected in the interview. Tina was very frustrated and commented,

> If only she could put me in that position for half an hour, teaching me the basic functions of the cashier machine, I am sure I will do an excellent job. I don't think I need to take any cashier course in order to do that job well. (11.1.A5)

Receiving no response and being turned down so frequently, these women concluded that they were not given any chance. Fear, anxiety, anger, depression and frustration, awkwardness and embarrassment, loss of confidence, low self esteem, self doubt,

and low morale were the common feelings they had. Kitty's comment summed them up,

> They don't give us chances and rule us out from the very beginning. How come it's so difficult to start a new life in Canada? They should have hired us first according to our skills and experiences, and given us a probation period. If they are not happy with our performance, fire us. I would be more convinced if they tried us out first. (2.1.A4)

It was these kinds of feelings which made some of these women lower their expectations, decide on a much lower job, and try to be content with the positions they were able to find.

Lack of local experience, local training and qualification, and being overqualified, which were made as variable criteria used as a gate keeper by potential employers depending on market needs, were structural barriers my respondents encountered. These kinds of barriers were identified in the studies done by Ujimoto (1981), Henry and Ginsberg (1985), and Merlet (1989). The findings of the present study not only support the findings of those studies, but also provide some insights about issues such as how immigrant women perceived these kinds of imposed criteria, and what the effects were on them.

After working in Vancouver for several years, some women commented that lack of Canadian experience did not affect their performance at all, and the experience they had brought from Hong Kong was resourceful and useful. Requiring new immigrants to meet the criterion of acquiring local experience, they felt, was unfair. Surprisingly, when they were asked to give advice to new immigrants, they all suggested that newcomers should gain local work experience once they landed in Canada. When pointed out by me that they were contradicting themselves, they responded that

even though they thought the policy was unfair, new immigrants had to accept it because it was a fact of life they had to face.

These women were made to believe by "people" that they were not good enough for the job they applied for because they lacked local experience. These "people" included their friends and relatives in Hong Kong who had long been advising them that "Canadian experience" was of tremendous importance for their first job application in Canada. All respondents revealed that they were psychologically prepared long before they landed in Vancouver to accept jobs at a lower level. Their purpose was to gain local work experience first. Despite their psychological preparation, they were surprised to learn from classified advertisements, or from "people" who were directly related to their employment, such as employment agents, government employment agents, and potential employers, that local experience was expected. "Everybody said the same thing, that local experience is very essential," many remarked.

This kind of imposed criteria is set by employers who either have the power to select those whom they think are eligible for the job, or are ignorant about the work experience of these new immigrants. Such criteria made these skillful and experienced Chinese women believe that they had failed to find a job because they lacked local experience. Because of such a belief, they were ready to lower many of their expectations. Very often, because of frustration, and lacking confidence and self esteem, they thought they were less competent than local workers and they deserved only to get a lower ranking job. Even though the intention of the potential employers was unknown, these women

were made to believe that they were kept out of the job market because they were not good enough. Time proved that they performed as well as their counterparts even though they did not have local experience to begin with.

Several respondents pointed out that "lack of local experience or training" might be served as a "habitual reason" for turning down immigrants. Traditionally, the agencies, government employment agency consultants or employers in Vancouver handled mostly "economic immigrants" who came to Vancouver for economic reasons. In the early 90s, many immigrants from Hong Kong who were as qualified and experienced as the local trained workers were "political immigrants." They came because they wanted to leave Hong Kong before Communist China takes over Hong Kong. If they felt that Hong Kong would remain politically stable, they would not have left their career or their business and come to Vancouver to start all over again.

Now that employers or employment consultants had to deal with this group of well trained, skillful and experienced new immigrants, they did not know how to place them. They might have placed them where they usually place immigrants, at the lowest echelon of the social ladder using a very convenient reason - "You lack Canadian experience." The women perceived that this claim only served as an "excuse" for keeping them either out of the workforce or in lower status jobs.

Other than ignorance about a whole new genre of immigrants, lack of trust on the part of the management was also the culprit. The management, especially those who did not have any Asian business connections, were always suspicious of the skills and

language proficiency of these foreign trained professionals, and were afraid that they would not be able to do the job well. The immediate reaction was to stop them at the gate regardless of their skills and experience.

Another rationale for exercising the "reason" is that the management would be able to offer the applicants less salary. "In one agency, I was offered $2,200 per month instead of the $2,500 because I was told that I didn't have enough Canadian experience," Kitty revealed.

If these women were given the chance to be hired, evidence showed that they would be able to succeed. Cathy's comment reflected the feeling of several respondents. She said, " I have never heard of an employee being fired because she does not have any local experience. Employee is fired only because her performance is not satisfactory." Many women who wanted so much to get into the job market, however, were stopped at the first hurdle.

Language Barriers

Language proficiency was usually used as one of the hiring criteria of many employers. It became a barrier if language proficiency became the sole hiring standard as many non-English native speaking applicants would be blocked at the threshold of the job market.

Both Cathy and Vivian, who were in the position of hiring new employees in Vancouver, agreed that it was an undeniable fact that employers chose the candidate who would be of maximum help to the company immediately after the person was hired. Employers

usually did not see any reason for hiring a less desirable candidate if they had the power to select. However, in the case of hiring non-native English speaking immigrants, language proficiency was usually taken as the prime, if not the sole, criterion for assessing their ability to work, while overlooking other qualities, such as former training or work experience.

Employers would overlook this criterion only if other qualities were in demand. Vivian pointed out that if the employer wanted to project a multicultural image of her/his company, she/he would accept the applicant's racial background and lower the criterion of English language proficiency or accent. Vivian further explained that she had an edge when she applied for both of her jobs even though she was a non-English native speaking immigrant. The interview panel for her first job valued her management skills more, and overlooked her being new to the country and an English speaker with an accent, while the panel for her second job found Vivian's ethnic background suited well the director of an international center at the university. Vivian's case was a very good example showing that, if employers valued more the qualities of the applicant and experience she brought with her, they would be able to hire good employees.

Language proficiency has always been taken as a criterion for hiring and for job performance assessment of non-English native speakers. Evaluating their potential job performance by using language proficiency as the criterion became a structural barrier.

Racial Discrimination

None of my respondents thought that reasons such as "lack of local experience or training" or "being overqualified" were a form of racial discrimination. They even accepted these "reasons" as one of the criteria for acquiring the job because it was set by the authority, such as employers, employment agents or government officials alike.

Only a few sensed a mild racist sentiment, but they said they would not use the term "racial discrimination" because it was too strong. They thought racial discrimination was more a feeling than an actual fact in Vancouver. For example, when Molly went for an interview, she sensed that the manager had dropped his interest in interviewing her once he saw her oriental complexion. She recalled,

> We stood at the reception counter which was right outside his office. He did not bother to invite me into his office. He asked me a few questions and got to know that I was just "fresh off the boat". He then asked one or two more questions and our interview ended. When I called in for the reply, I was told the position had been filled. (10.1.A3)

Alice, another personnel manager, also looked for a hotel secretarial job through an employment agency. The agent commented quite jokingly, "I don't think you will be able to find a job in a hotel, unless your father owns one." Alice responded by saying that she was willing to start from the junior position, but she still did not have any job offers.

When Vivian went for her interview at the community college for the position of financial aid advisor she also experienced an unwelcoming attitude, not from the interview panel, but from the

clerical staff who conducted her to the meeting room. Vivian stated,

> This young lady talked to me in a very strange tone without any smile, "You ARE very lucky! We have over two hundred applicants competing for the position." (5.1.B6)

Vivian said that the statement made by this lady was neither friendly nor flattering. She admitted she was not sensitive about racial discrimination at that time, but upon recollection, the statement this woman made could be a judgmental one.

A few admitted that they did not blame anybody for anything when their job application was turned down, but pointed out that "overprotection" of the employers could waste a lot of skillful foreign trained professionals because their training and experiences should be an advantage to the companies. Cathy commented that giving locals the priority in fact would create a bad effect on local business. This kind of "inverted effect" was not good for Vancouver in the long run.

Some respondents, on the contrary, said that they had not experienced any discrimination at all during the process of job finding, and they even thought that the criteria set by potential employers were fair. Among them, Jo could not have agreed more. She said,

> It was necessary for Hong Kong trained nurses to take the mental health study because we had not taken this course before. While we were taking this course, we had to go for ten weeks of practicum at a local hospital. I learned more about medical care services in Vancouver. After I graduated, I looked for a nursing position even though I had not passed the registered nurse examination. I did get the job, on condition that I would pass the examination, even though I did not have any local experience. I think the whole process was very fair. (9.1.B7)

Sally, who had extensive experience of recruiting new staff for her company in Hong Kong, pointed out that employers should

not be blamed if they did not hire new immigrants. Hiring, according to Sally, was a matter of supply and demand. In a stagnant market, like Canada, where there is a surplus of unemployed, employers have more choices to select those who most meet their expectations, or those most suited for the job. She did not think turning down the application of new immigrants was a racist act at all.

In the process of job search, my respondents did not regard imposing criteria such as "lack of local experience", "lack of local training" or "being overqualified" on immigrants as a form of discrimination, even though some of them thought these kinds of criteria were unfair. They felt that potential employers had the right to set criteria of selecting the right applicants. Since they had chosen local experience, local training, and relevant qualification as their selection priority, these women were ready to go by these criteria. Some women even thought these criteria were fair. They did not think racial discrimination was a reason for their not being hired for a job. It was just they themselves who were not qualified because they did not meet the required criteria.

This is another piece of evidence which shows how these women's perception had been molded by the social context which is unfavorable to immigrants. These women just accepted the situation as what it was without realizing that imposing criteria on applicants such as local experience might be another way of saying "We simply don't want you here because you are not one of us," and that blocking one from entering the workforce because of one's ethnic origin was a form of racial discrimination. Another

speculation was that coming from a society where they were the majority, they hardly discussed the notions of discrimination and racism. These explained why they did not blame racism as a reason for hindering them from getting a better job.

Former Work Experience and Local Market Demand

Despite the fact that my respondents came to Canada with skills and work experience, not many of them were able to find work in their areas of expertise or to find jobs with a similar status in Vancouver due to a mismatch of their former work experience and local market demand. Only those whose skills and experience had market needs were able to find jobs with equity status.

Jo and Mary had no problem finding a job in medical care services such as nursing, or occupational therapy. Jobs were open to them even though they did not have any local experience. May described occupational therapy as "a good travelling occupation." She pointed out not many occupational therapists in Vancouver had local experience. In the hospital at which she was working, occupational therapists were either employed from other provinces or from overseas. The first hospital she worked for had occupational therapy staff recruited from countries like England or India. A shortage of locally trained occupational therapists had put hospitals in a position where they had to hire staff for their skills, not for local experience. Jo, a registered nurse, revealed that she was also hired before she passed the nurse registration examination.

Ten respondents were able to find jobs in business sectors or social services which served a large Chinese clientele. Banks (e.g. Cindy, Kitty, and Tina), law firms (e.g. Bessy, Lucy, and Cathy), Chinese media services (e.g. Alice and Amy), or social services organizations (e.g. Susan, and Lily) had opened up more jobs for Chinese speaking women. Those women who had university or graduate degrees had an edge over others. For example, Lucy, who was a newspaper subeditor, was offered a legal secretary position even though she had no formal secretarial training at all. She recalled,

> I was hired because of my university degree and my mother language, even though I did not have any secretarial skills, let alone Canadian experience. I did not even know how to fax a document the first day I started work. (17.1.A5)

Respondents whose work experience had less demand in the job market in Vancouver had more difficulty finding a job. Those who were in human resources, sales and merchandising, journalism and teaching found the greatest difficulty finding a job.

Pam and Sally were hardest hit in the field of sales and merchandizing. Pam pointed out that, as a sales manager in Hong Kong, she was responsible for managing the everyday routine of her office, and making overseas business trips every year. Sales is divided into inside sales and outside sales in Canada, and their job duties and responsibilities are very different. Pam knew that she would be at a disadvantage if she applied for an outside sales job because she did not have a driver's license and was not familiar with the geographical location of the malls and shops. Therefore, she concentrated on finding the job in inside sales, which was the same as a store sales representative. She was still turned down because she lacked relevant experience.

Sally found her chance of getting a merchandizing job very slim. Merchandizing, especially in the clothing industry, which is a booming industry in Hong Kong, is not very common in Vancouver. Sally, who was a merchandizing manager, was responsible for matching overseas buyers with manufacturers in Hong Kong, and her company gained the marked up price. Among her clients, both the United States and Europe were the most active importers from Hong Kong; while Canada was the least active customer with only a very small business tie with Hong Kong. Now Sally was trying to find a job in Canada. One factory owner showed interest in her experience and the interview looked very promising. Eventually, they chose somebody who was much more junior and had less experience. Sally had no choice but to accept the position of assistant manager at a fast food chain restaurant, working in a field where she had never had any experience before.

Alice and Mary, who were both personnel managers in Hong Kong, found job openings in human resources were simply inaccessible. According to Mary, the job nature of personnel management and labour laws were very different in Canada. The major duty of the personnel staff was to deal with unions, which practically do not exist in Hong Kong. Mary said that, even if she was retrained in the same field in Vancouver, she still had reservations about reentering the field because she did not want to start from the lower ranking position again.

Journalism was not a promising field for Lucy who was once a newspaper subeditor. She was advised by the employment agent that she would have no chance to find a position in the field

because competition in Vancouver was very keen as there was a surplus of journalists. Being a non native speaker of English was also a disadvantage in an English speaking business. Furthermore, she was a new immigrant who was not familiar with the lifestyles of Canadians and the local environment. All these created more hurdles for Lucy to jump over. After that interview, Lucy decided to change her career. However, being in a more remote geographical location far away from Vancouver such as Fort St. James, Amy, a former magazine editor, had no problem finding a permanent part time reporter position. She said,

> It took me one stamp to get the job. The editor of this community newspaper who lived in a town close by did not interview me but asked me to start work immediately. (6.1.A6)

Tina, who had been teaching for most of her life, found it difficult to be a teacher again in Vancouver for two reasons. The first reason was that the job market was already saturated; even freshly graduated teachers had difficulty finding jobs in Vancouver. The second one was that being a new immigrant with an accent was a disadvantage. Tina's friend who had completed the required one year diploma of education was told that she was not suitable to teach local students because of her accent. Another friend of hers, who also received a teaching diploma, was not able to find a full time job and became an on-call ESL teacher. She had to be prepared at 7 every morning and waited for calls from the school board, otherwise she would have no time to get ready if the call came. She then spent the whole day waiting for telephone calls until after 5 p.m., knowing that she was no longer needed for that day. After hearing all these

discouraging stories, Tina decided not to be a teacher again. She confessed,

> I can only be discouraged to an extent. It is not good for a person to face too many failures as our dignity will be hurt and our morale will be shattered. (11.1.A1)

Whether my respondents could reenter their fields or even find jobs with a similar status depends on market demand. They were more likely to find jobs in medical care services, social services, or in the business sector with a large Chinese clientele. Stromback (1986) suggested two favorable market conditions which provide new immigrants a better chance of finding compatible jobs. The first condition is being in one's own ethnic community which provides a self contained labour market; and the second one is being in certain occupations which have a high reliance on immigration as a supply source. The long established Chinese community, as well as the self sufficient Chinatown in Vancouver, both provide favorable market conditions as described by Stromback. Hence, it is not surprising to find out that ten out of my twenty respondents ended up working either in the Chinese community, or serving in companies which had large Chinese clientele.

Those who were in the fields such as human resources, sales and merchandizing, journalism and teaching found jobs inaccessible in Vancouver. In fact, it was due to a mismatch of government immigration policy and the actual market demand. As mentioned in Chapter one, these independent applicants had to earn 10 points for designated occupation out of the 100 points in the immigration point system (refer to Endnote 2). A list of most needed occupations is published by provincial governments

annually to attract independent applicants with designated occupations. The objective of such a policy is to select immigrants with marketable skills and relevant work experience most needed by the province. If such a policy is applied according to its objective, the selected immigrants should be of demand in the market in the province. However, when these immigrants arrived, they found out that the job market was not as promising as they had expected. Such a mismatch became the structural barrier for many of my respondents who had been twice victimized: first by Canada Employment and Immigration, and later by prospective employers. When their application to Canada as "independent applicants" status had been approved, it indicated that their occupations were in demand in Canada. But the reality failed them as they were unable to find a job in their own field when they were in Vancouver.

They were then marginalized by prospective employers who did not see the applicability of their skills and experience to other fields. For example, Pam, who had been a sales manager in the gift and watch industry for more than ten years, had very good sales skills and customer services skills. She evaluated her own skills very highly by saying,

> I have a very long history of dealing with English speaking customers and I know how to make the business tick when we are discussing deals. (7.2.A19)

She could have easily applied these skills to other business sectors, if she had been hired.

Stromback (1986) had argued that immigrants, like all movers from other provinces, lost some of the specific skills they had in the country of origin. Because immigrants' human capital is

not perfectly transferable, Stromback concluded that this lack of transferability of specific human capital led recent immigrants into accepting entry level jobs. I counterargue that some universal skills, such as management skills, are transferable and should remain as human capital. Vivian was a very good example. Even though she did not have any local experience and had no experience handling student loans, her management skills, highly proficient communication skills, and personal interaction skills were highly regarded by the interview panel. She successfully beat two hundred potential applicants and was offered the job. Only those employers who had the foresight to judge not the applicant's former job position and experience but their transferable skills would benefit from hiring good employees.

Most of my respondents had been failed by the mismatch of the government immigration policy and actual market demand. On the one hand, they were welcomed into Canada because of their skills, but on the other their skills and work experience could not meet market needs in Vancouver. They fell through the crack between the mismatch. It was a kind of structural barrier which barred some respondents from getting a job of equivalent status.

The findings of structural barriers, such as lack of local experience or training, as well as being overqualified, supported the findings in current literature. This study further revealed how these immigrant women were affected by these barriers. On the one hand, they accepted these criteria as required, and they were ready to accept lower ranking jobs since they had not met such criteria; on the other hand, they thought such criteria were unfair as their experiences were proved later to be compatible

with those of their Canadian counterparts. However, no one had ever mentioned that imposing such criteria was an act of racial discrimination. The greatest disappointment was being doubly marginalized, both by the government and the potential employer. Even though the majority of them did not come for economic reasons, they were discouraged by the fact that they were not able to use their skills in Vancouver.

Conclusion

The core of the problems experienced by this group of Chinese immigrant women at the pre-working stage arose from two kinds of barriers: informal and structural barriers.

Personal barriers, the first kind of identified informal barriers, played a dominant role in affecting the job search experience of my respondents when they prepared to look for jobs. Their reasons for immigrating to Canada, how prepared they were to find a new job, their age and personality, how adaptive they were to the new living environment, domestic support, their preset career path, and their career preference all had an impact on these Chinese immigrant women before they made their first move to find a job.

Personal barriers were of paramount importance when we examined the adaptation of this group of highly skilled and experienced Chinese immigrant women in Vancouver. These barriers, however, have not featured strongly in the literature. The findings of the present research serve to fill this void of information in studies of Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada as "independent applicants".

When these women were searching for jobs, cultural barriers, the second kind of informal barriers, became dominant. Cultural barriers such as being ignorant about the job search culture in Canada held them back. Structural barriers, which were mostly created by the institutional structuring of the receiving host society, hindered them from finding a better job. I concluded that when studying the job transferability of this group of Chinese immigrant women at the pre-working stage, both informal barriers and structural barriers should be examined closely. Overlooking any one of these barriers could only provide part of the picture of what they had gone through at this stage.

CHAPTER SIX

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS AND INFORMAL BARRIERS AT THE WORKING STAGE

Even though 19 of my 20 respondents were able to enter the job market in Vancouver, all of them started with jobs at the entry position. It was only after four to eight years that seven women managed to obtain jobs with equity status, while 12 indicated that their jobs were still of a position well below the ones they had in Hong Kong. Despite these women's different experiences in the process of job transferability, problems they encountered in the workplace could be categorized into two major barriers: structural and informal barriers. In other words, their problems might have stemmed from the social structure, and I group all these problems under "structural barriers". There were other problems which were also of serious concern among my group of Chinese immigrant women. Problems arose due to different workplace cultures, personal conflicts either with oneself or with others, and other people's assumption of their English language inadequacy. I term these cultural barriers, interpersonal barriers, personal barriers and language barriers "informal barriers" which critically affected the job mobility of these immigrant women in Vancouver. Again, I argue that we should not examine only either structural barriers or informal barriers; both of them deserve equal attention.

In this chapter, both structural and informal barriers will be identified and categorized. Factors which led to these barriers will also be analyzed.

Structural Barriers

While I define structural barriers at the pre-working stage as hidden criteria set by prospective employers to screen undesirable applicants from entering the job market, I give structural barriers at the working stage a different definition. These are barriers which arose from different office hierarchical structures in Hong Kong and Vancouver. Having worked in an office in Hong Kong with more support staff than in Vancouver, and with promotion determined more by performance rather than by seniority, all my respondents found working in Vancouver fraught with difficulties. Their job performances were affected and their promotion opportunities were restricted. Table 6 shows the differences in office hierarchical structure between Hong Kong and Vancouver.

Substantial- versus Limited- Supportive Staff Systems

Ten respondents, who had been working in a workplace with a strong support staff in Hong Kong, were confused about their job duties in Vancouver. Indeed, four women felt that they were losing face when they were assigned to do some work which was usually handled by manual workers in Hong Kong.

Much lower salaries in Hong Kong enabled employers to hire more employees and this contributed to a very strong support

Table 6

Comparison of the Office Hierarchical Structures in Hong Kong and Vancouver

	Hong Kong Orientations	Vancouver Orientations
1.	Substantial support staff system	Limited support staff system
	a large pool of support staff handles all clerical jobs and manual work in the office with specified job description	fewer support staff, and job description were not very well specified
2.	Performance determines promotion	Seniority determines promotion
	outstanding performance is an important criterion for promotion	length of time served in a company is the pertinent criterion

staff system which handled all the clerical jobs and manual work in offices. For example, Cathy's legal firm in Hong Kong had six full time staff which included two legal assistants, one secretary, one clerk, one receptionist, and one messenger to operate the everyday routine for her. Vivian had one administrative assistant and one administrative officer under her, and four clerical staff shared with other departments in the amenities office of a university in Hong Kong. Lily supervised a social worker team which had three social workers, two family life education officers, one office assistant and one clerk. Senior secretaries, like Kitty and Cindy, had several junior

secretaries, clerks, messengers and cleaning women at their dispatch. Because of this strong support staff team, senior or management staff only dealt with their own job duties. Cathy appreciated this kind of support, as she indicated by her comment:

> One can work more efficiently in an office in Hong Kong. (13.3.B42)

Problems arose when some of my respondents left their workplace with strong support staff to work in an office in Vancouver which had comparatively fewer support staff. Some of them found that their duties were not well specified and were confusing. Some felt very frustrated as their work could not be done as efficiently as in Hong Kong. For example, Cindy had to perform many duties such as handling customer's enquiries, making appointments for the personal banking representative, answering switch-board calls, typing, filing, mailing, and checking the balance for customers, even though she was a casual part-time receptionist. She also had to join a "buddy" team to launch many on-going business promotion campaigns. Recently, the branch laid off a janitor, and all the staff had to take turns to clean the staff lounge. Cindy was on the list. She commented,

> In Canada, you only get one pay for handling many tasks. (1.1.A6)

Kitty echoed the same complaint. She found the workload unbearable when she first started her job at a bank. Because of budget cutback, she had to take up a job which combined the workload of a full-time switchboard operator and a full-time branch secretary. Other than regular secretarial duties, she had

to handle about 50 incoming calls every day. It was impossible for her to deal with the workload. She remarked,

> If I ask the customer to hold more than ten times, I am sure he won't be happy about it. If I don't answer the calls at all, the customers will not be happy either, and they will complain that I am not doing my job well. In either case, people will point their finger at me, saying that I am not a good employee. (2.1.B10)

Work assignments in a Canadian office made some of my respondents feel that they were losing face. Ting-Toomey (1990) defines "face" as the projected image of one's self and it is also a claimed sense of self-respect in a relational situation. According to Ting-Toomey, losing face means personal failure, loss of self-esteem, or loss of self-pride on an individual attribution basis (p. 79). "Face saving" is a very important Chinese value. Keeping one's face implies keeping one's self esteem, pride and dignity, and even maintaining one's family's name. Losing face means losing everything, regardless of how high one's social status is and how much money one has. For example, when Cindy was assigned extra janitorial duties, such as cleaning the staff lounge, she felt she had lost face because she had to do a job which was once handled by cleaning women in Hong Kong. It took her some time to come to terms with what she considered "status inconsistency", to accept her janitorial duties and to overcome her uneasy and awkward feeling.

A higher salary scale and strong union support in Canada might be accountable for having fewer support staff in Vancouver than that in Hong Kong. Only big companies could afford to hire more support staff; companies in general could not. For example, Cathy's current house-developing company in Vancouver had only one secretary. Other than serving both the developer and the

contractor, the secretary had to operate the everyday routine work of the office all by herself. Cathy said she was shocked to find out that in Vancouver there were many "one-man" law firms - one lawyer with one secretary running the whole office. In Hong Kong, only barristers might be able to run their offices with such an arrangement. Solicitors could not possibly handle all their cases with the help of only one clerical staff because of the nature of the job.

Cathy also pointed out that since some companies preferred to hire temporary staff so as to reduce expenses, many highly skilled professionals at the management level had to do extra jobs. Some also handled tedious office jobs such as xeroxing, billing, or even typing or sharing some janitorial duties. Since more demands were made on staff members, more stress was created as they were trying to cope with both their own job and the extra duties. In Cathy's view, the company operation became less efficient and effective. A lot of effort, expertise and skills had been wasted.

Having worked in companies with many support staff member in Hong Kong, respondents felt that they worked less efficiently in the workplace in Vancouver. Being confused by unclearly specified job descriptions, and at times losing face when asked to do some tasks which they considered "down-grading", they found their new environment less desirable.

Performance Determines Promotion versus Seniority Determines Promotion

Seven respondents, who in Hong Kong had been promoted to senior positions because of their outstanding performance in the distinctive hierarchical structure there, were discontented about their pay and job position after working for some time at the entry position in Vancouver. Despite their request for better pay or a promotion, after proving to the management that they were capable and skillful, they were not rewarded accordingly. Their job performance did not guarantee a better job prospect in Vancouver.

Vivian's employment experience at the community college could illustrate this point. Vivian was hired as a student financial aid advisor at a local community college. Her job was originally done by clerical staff, but the college realized that they needed someone to develop a more efficient system so as to cope with the tremendous increase in student loan applications. After Vivian was hired, her performance was highly appreciated by her immediate superior who granted her a permanent position after a three months' probation. After working in that position for more than a year, Vivian had revamped the whole computer system to facilitate the application process, developed a management procedure to counter check whether staff had overexercised their power, and above all, raised public funding for students' welfare from the original $30,000 to $400,000 annually. She proposed a reclassification of her position since she had been working at a clerical position and doing administrative and management work. She remarked,

> I felt exploited when I received $2,000 a month for an "ought to be" management position. I did not mind when I started working in that position because I had no grounds to support my case. The longer I worked in that position, the more I realized that definitely there was an inequality. After I had made several major improvements to the system, I stood a much stronger case to request for a reclassification. (5.1.B7)

Vivian submitted her proposal with very strong support from her immediate superior. Her proposal was turned down and it was not because of her incapability but mainly because of politics. She lost her battle because the union wanted to keep the position as it was and the union's intention was substantiated by her senior superior, who was not on good terms with her immediate superior. When the ordeal was over, Vivian gained one increment, but failed to have her position reclassified. Vivian was very disappointed because she did not see any reason for not reclassifying the position. She had checked with other community colleges in the lower mainland; all the job positions equivalent to that of hers were at the management level because they were concerned with system design and administration. She did not see why hers was still a clerical position. Seeing that she could not win against the system, she decided to find another job.

Being caught at a much lower salary scale with no chance of promotion to a higher scale was another problem some of my respondents had after they had been working in their companies for quite a while. Cindy, Kitty, Gin, and Bessy found that seniority, not performance, determined their promotion in Canada. Kitty was able to find her current secretarial job at a bank because the former secretary had just retired after thirty years of working in the same position. Kitty committed herself to that job because she wanted so much to get into the job market even

though she knew her salary was low. What she did not know was that once she was put at a certain grade of the salary scale, she had no chance of jumping grades, even with strong recommendations from her superior. In all the well established institutes, like banks in Canada, promotion was determined by one's seniority. It was not what Kitty had expected because in Hong Kong her outstanding performance always led to a promotion and higher salary. She was able to be promoted to a higher position when her superior was promoted. Kitty, who came from a hierarchical, status conscious system which rewards individual initiative, had different work experience in Canada. She assumed that in Canada her salary would be raised if her performance was good. Even though her superior made very strong recommendations for a revision of salary for Kitty, his effort proved to be in vain. Kitty found herself an underpaid, but capable and efficient secretary, with no opportunity to jump to a grade with better pay. Kitty commented,

> Once you are in a certain position, you will find it difficult to move upward. Because promotion goes by seniority and salary goes by promotion. You practically get stuck in your job and have nowhere to go. (2.1.A7)

Like Kitty, both Lucy and Bessy stated that their salaries were very low to start with. Once they started low, they had little opportunity to receive a higher pay scale even though the job natures had become more complex and their responsibilities increased. Without realizing seniority was a prime criterion for promotion, many of my respondents found they got stuck in their low paying entry job and were dissatisfied and frustrated about such a hierarchical structural system, and yet they could do nothing about it.

Similar to the office hierarchical structure in Canada, a typical office in Hong Kong is marked by three distinctive levels of staff. They are the top and middle management levels, and the bottom level or the clerical staff. In Hong Kong, this third level also contained a group of support staff which included messengers and cleaning maids. Unlike Canada, positions at each level in an office in Hong Kong are marked by clear job descriptions, salary, and also promotion prospects, and each position has a distinctive role to play. The concept of "class" is closely observed and "power distance" is high (Hofstede, 1980). In other words, senior staff not only enjoy higher salary, and better status, but also more decision-making power and greater managerial responsibilities.

Because an office is usually operated with a strict top down hierarchical structure in Hong Kong, and staff at each level have to observe their role, to do the work prescribed, and to follow instructions, the management find it easier to supervise their subordinates. Junior staff are highly motivated to be promoted to senior positions as they hope to obtain all the benefits which come with the position. Great promotion opportunities are easily accessible as long as they work hard because promotion is determined by their job performance.

Under the hierarchical structure of an office in Vancouver, staff members are more respected as individuals than for their position. One's individual rights rather than one's role are closely observed. The rights of some employees in established companies and institutes are protected by unions. "Power distance" is low as the power distribution between higher and

lower ranking staff tends to be more equal. Therefore, senior staff enjoy a much lower degree of delegation of authority in Vancouver than in Hong Kong.

My respondents, who once worked in a workplace in Hong Kong with strong support staff, and promotion being determined by performance, found many difficulties in the workplace in Vancouver. They found working with fewer support staff less efficient and most of their skills not utilized. Those who were at the management level found their workplace less productive as the staff overexercised their rights while ignoring crucial situations which arose. Some found their work less attractive and satisfying as they could not see prospects for promotion. Therefore, they found working in the existing office structure in Vancouver exhausting and discouraging. These became structural barriers they had to deal with.

Informal Barriers

Many serious problems experienced by my respondents could not be categorized as structural barriers. These problems mainly stemmed from conflicting workplace cultures; from "people" including my respondents themselves; from those whom they were dealing with in the workplace; or from those who assumed that the English language of my respondents was inadequate. I term these four kinds of cultural, interpersonal, personal and language barriers "informal barriers".

Cultural Barriers: Conflicting Workplace Cultures

Because of the uniqueness of the social, cultural and economic development, and differences of office hierarchical structures, the approaches to completing tasks are different in Hong Kong and Vancouver. Problems occurred when my respondents applied their work habits developed in Hong Kong to the workplace in Vancouver without realizing the differences between the two cultural contexts. I define these kinds of work habits as work culture which are learned habits in a workplace of a particular social context. Table 7 compares Hong Kong and Vancouver in terms of work culture.

Task- versus time- oriented.

Twelve respondents noticed that their Canadian colleagues observed their entitled daily breaks very closely, feeling that the breaks took precedence over completing the task at hand. Colleagues commented on respondents' work attitudes if they did not take any breaks. For example, Gin, who skipped her coffee breaks and cut short her lunch hour in order to finish the job she was doing, was teased by her colleagues that she was too serious at work. They even advised her to relax a little by taking her breaks. However, Gin preferred to finish her job first, otherwise she would have felt very uncomfortable if she still had some work undone. Sometimes, she wondered how her colleagues could put their work aside and go on their breaks.

Gin explained that when she was in Hong Kong, like all her colleagues in the office, she hardly took any breaks. She

Table 7

Comparison Between the Hong Kong and Vancouver Orientations to Work Culture

	Hong Kong Orientations	Vancouver Orientations
1.	Task orientation	Time orientation
	priority is given to completing a task;	priority is given to number of hours work in a week set by government labour policies;
	no overtime pay is expected of by employees	overtime pay is abided by law
2.	Fast working pace	Relaxed working pace
	priorities are given to speed and efficiency in order to survive in a highly competitive society	less emphasis on speed in a less competitive society
3.	Result orientation	Procedure orientation
	result is the goal achieved in everyday operation;	each step is accountable to the objective of the project or company policy;
	"flexibility", such as bending rules or skipping regulations, is legitimated	less flexible as rules and regulations are closely observed
4.	Role	Individual Rights
	one's position in the office is closely observed	employees' rights are observed
5.	Explicit job description	Implicit job description
	each position is marked by very distinct job responsibilities	job responsibilities are not specifically stated; other job related tasks are expected to be handle
6.	Benevolent paternalism	Easy-to-layoff/easy-to-quit
	welfare benefits are provided as favour; employer take a personal interest in their subordinates' behaviour	employee is individual being responsible for one's action; employer takes company's benefit as priority

usually skipped her breaks, cut short her lunch time, and even worked during her lunch hour. Completing a task was more important than anything else. This, in fact, was a pattern in most of the offices in Hong Kong. Cathy echoed the same experience,

> We usually did not take any coffee breaks. We just refilled our coffee and kept on working. (20.3.A33)

Furthermore, if they had not completed their job, they were expected to work overtime either staying after work or working on weekends or Sundays. They did not have any overtime pay even though working overtime was a common practice. They worked until they completed the task.

My respondents found their Canadian counterparts were more time conscious at work. Bessy was very surprised when she saw her colleague turning off the electric typewriter when she was half way through typing a letter. It was already five o'clock and her colleague called it a day and left the unfinished letter for another day.

Even though they received overtime pay in Vancouver, Lucy pointed out that her colleagues would work overtime and then only if they were appealed to for "humanity" purposes, but not for "economic" well being. In other words, they were more likely to work overtime if the superior said, "You will do me a great favour" or "This is very important to me" rather than "You will earn how many dollars more." My respondents gave several explanations when they were asked why they wanted so much to get their tasks done. Most agreed that it was a survival skill in Hong Kong to cope with a workplace overloaded with work.

Some respondents admitted that it might be partly work culture and partly their personality that they wanted to complete their task. Lucy made this point clear by saying,

> I'm always hard working, and I don't know whether it is cultural or my personality. The practice of working overtime might have been brought over from Hong Kong. (17.2.A21)

A few confessed that they worked hard because they were expected to by their employers. Sally said,

> In Hong Kong, it was expected of me to work hard or work overtime. I was not a good employee if I didn't. (15.3.B29)

Gin gave an interesting analysis of why her Canadian counterparts observed time more at work. She said that employees in Canada were protected by government labour policies; some of them were even protected by unions which ensured that workers would not be exploited. Hence, employees exercised their rights by observing the office hours scheduled. Besides, Gin also found out that her Canadian counterparts preferred spending time to improve their quality of life than earning more money. They would still commit themselves to work overtime if "humanity" were an issue.

Seven respondents found that they had to change their perspective on leave-taking. Many of my respondents were reluctant to take either their annual or sick leaves in Hong Kong, even though they were entitled to it. They were usually so loaded with work that they preferred getting the holiday pay to taking their annual leave. When they had the chance to take a leave, they usually prepared their unfinished work very thoroughly and intensively, making sure their job would be covered by their colleagues when they were gone on holiday.

These women found the situation was very different in Vancouver, that people took their entitled leave very seriously, despite how busy they were or how much work they had. Alice had the following observation.

> When I was getting ready to take my annual leave in Hong Kong, I usually wrote down all the necessary jobs which needed to be done, and I made sure somebody would do them for me while I was gone. Whereas in Vancouver, people seem not to care about asking colleagues to take up the job for them while they are taking a leave. No one seems to care about taking up the unfinished job either. "Taking leave is more important than anything else" - I still cannot get over working here. (3.1.B14)

Some of the women learned to be patient when the business parties they dealt with were on leave. For example, Lily had submitted a proposal to a government department for funding. She was very anxious to know the result. She found out that the consultant she had dealt with was on leave when she called, and nobody in his office could help her out. Lily commented,

> I have to adjust myself to their way of handling cases. It was no use for me to worry about the result if they did not. (14.2.A22)

Four respondents were surprised to know some of their colleagues in Vancouver had "abused" the policy of taking leave. For example, Lucy had to move house by herself because her mover had failed to show up. She was very exhausted the next day as she just had a few hours of sleep. Her colleague commented, "Why don't you call in sick, silly? You should adapt to the way of living here." Lucy was shocked because she did not understand how she could call in sick when she was not. She remarked,

> They just called in sick. That's it. And no one will ask why. Whereas in Hong Kong, I had to think twice before I took leave because other staff members might think that I was lazy. If I took sick leave on Monday, everybody might say that I was too sociable on the weekend, that I cared less about my job. (17.2.A21)

Different workplace culture, such as emphasis of "task" and "time", confused some of my respondents. To some extent, ignorance about such a difference affected their work relationship with their colleagues, who mistakenly thought that their Chinese counterparts were working far too hard and trying to out perform them.

Fast- versus relaxed- working pace.

All my respondents pointed out that the working pace in Vancouver was too slow. Living in a highly competitive society like Hong Kong, they had to work very fast but efficiently in order to survive. Amy's remark reflected the situation,

> We had to work very efficiently in order to get things done quickly. We had to accomplish so many things in a day that many of us started work well before dawn, and did not finish until the moon was high up in the sky. (6.2.B31)

Having worked in such a fast-paced city, my respondents experienced a mixed response from their co-workers in the comparatively more relaxed work environment in Vancouver. Cindy and Kitty, keeping their fast work pace, found that they displeased many of their colleagues and even superiors because of their fast pace. Cindy recalled,

> I am a very fast typist as I can type 90 WPM. Instead of two appraisal reports each day, I am able to type five. One day, my supervisor asked me to slow my typing speed down because the managers could not catch up with the flow. They justified their "all-along" pace by stopping me from typing fast. (1.1.A8)

Kitty also found that her improving the efficiency of the existing filing system jeopardized her work relations with her colleagues. She said,

> When I tried to improve the filing system, my colleagues were offended and said I had no right to boss them around. They insisted that the existing one worked OK, why bother to change it? I responded by saying that OK was not enough, we should better it! (2.1.A6)

Two respondents, however, experienced positive feedback when they introduced the Hong Kong work pace to their workplace. Tina's hard work and efficiency gained appreciation from both her superior and colleagues. Those who admired her energy started to work as efficiently as she was. Tina pointed this out proudly by saying,

> Not all my colleagues accept my pace of doing things. Those who go for efficiency appreciate me more. We work much better together and launch many campaigns very successfully. Our branch was the top in sales in the region for selling RRSPs to our customers last season. (11.2.A17)

Jo's efficiency, sense of responsibility and hard work also gained great respect from nurses and her junior staff at the hospital. They liked to work with her because she was a very reliable nurse who always followed things through. Because her junior staff respected Jo, the whole team performed very efficiently when they carried out patient care.

Those whose work pace was not appreciated by their superiors and colleagues eventually slowed down in order to work in line with their colleagues. Some, whose work pace was taken as efficiency and was accepted and appreciated, had a positive influence on the work performance of their colleagues in the new workplace.

Result- versus procedure- oriented.

"Result" is the goal achieved in the everyday operation in the workplace in Hong Kong. In order to produce results, people

outdo themselves to get things done. Offices usually condone more "flexibility" as employees are allowed to bend rules or skip regulations in order to solve problems. Even though they may not be able to find the best solution for the time being, they will keep on trying until they come up with a compatible one.

All my respondents agreed that rules and regulations were more rigidly observed in the workplace in Vancouver. Each step was accountable to the objective of the project or to company policies, and work proceeded in a less flexible manner. Some women pointed out that the progress of some projects was so slow at times that they were not able to meet the dead line. Eventually time and money were wasted.

Susan's experience of conducting a project with her supervisor illustrated this point. Susan was contracted to conduct a project for a social services organization. She had experienced tremendous difficulty working with her superior because their approaches of handling the project were very different. Her superior was very particular about every single step in the process, making sure that the project was done in a proper and right way. Susan's focus was to oversee the whole project, making sure that the project was completed on time and the budget followed, but without sacrificing the quality.

Conflict occurred at times when Susan wanted to push things through while her superior would say, "Let it lie if we can't complete it on time" or "We'll apply for more funding if we are running out of budget." He even named Susan jokingly as "Miss Time". Susan grumbled,

> Our working styles were so different that I found the whole project a drag. My boss only looked at one step at a time.

> He never discussed with me Step 2 when we were still in Step 1. He would be confused if I did. But I was already thinking about Step 3 or Step 4. It is just like preparing a Chinese meal: I won't stand in my kitchen for 30 minutes just to wait for my rice to cook. I also wash vegetables, stir fry the beef, or steam the fish. The whole meal will be ready when the rice is cooked. (4.1.B11)

Susan emphasized that she did not rush things through without planning them carefully. In fact, she had done a lot of ground work on her own time. She commented,

> I have done a lot of "practical" things for the project when my boss was still discussing the objectives of doing it. I found it a waste of time and money when we were not able to meet the deadline and our budget was running out. No one was sure whether the funding would be renewed or not. Nor did any one know when it would come. (4.2.A13)

Vivian, being at the management level, held a very different view from Susan. In Hong Kong, achieving results had always been the target in the office. In order to produce results, she had the authority to make decisions without consulting her staff. She was able to push things through very quickly by finding short cuts, which was a legitimate way of doing things. However, Vivian found that she had to change this approach in Canada. For example, every time she needed to carry out a project, she had to involve all her staff, asking them to give opinions. Decision was made by majority rule. In the whole process, every step was observed very closely and rules and regulations were followed. Even though the whole process was progressing slowly, the decision made by the management would not backfire since it was made by the whole team. Vivian pointed out that following procedure might be safer as no one would challenge the legitimacy of the decision, yet it could mean taking more time and the end product might not be as good as the one done in her own way. But Vivian remarked,

> Maybe it is what North Americans treasure most - a democratic process during which everyone must be involved. (5.3.A25)

Only those respondents who realized the differences in the everyday workplace operation and did not press for results while ignoring procedure were able to perform better in Vancouver.

Role versus individual rights.

Struggling between the former work culture which emphasized performance of one's "role" and that in Canada that observed individual rights, six respondents encountered some problems in their workplace in Vancouver. Vivian, who was at the management level at an educational institute in Vancouver, found she had great difficulty managing her staff members. Fewer projects than she would have liked to see carried out were conducted. Even though she had worked in several higher educational institutes both in Hong Kong and in Vancouver before and was able to learn the every day operation very quickly, she found managing her staff was her greatest challenge in Vancouver. She pointed out that being a top management staff in Hong Kong, she had the power and authority to manage junior staff, who also expected to be managed. Her subordinates worked very hard because Vivian showed appreciation for the effort they made. Work load shared among staff was bearable and reasonable because there was always a ready supply of help whenever she requested it from the management.

Vivian had problems with the union in Vancouver. Even though her staff agreed to work overtime, especially during the critical time of the school year such as preparing for the

orientation of freshmen students, Vivian had to cut short the preparation time in order to avoid confrontation with the union. Despite the fact that the student intake had increased tremendously, no extra help was provided from the administration. It was always a constant battle between Vivian and the union and the administration. As a result, some activities and events had to be eliminated or postponed. Her difficulties had very much to do with the union's constraint and insufficient management support. For these reasons, she found her ability to perform her job in Vancouver constrained and less efficient than in Hong Kong.

Vivian also had problems with some of her staff members whom she thought had over-exercised their rights without considering the situation. For example, one of Vivian's staff always took his annual leave one week before the school year began. It was the busiest time of the year as the students' center usually launched a full orientation program for all the new international students. This staff member's request aggravated the situation as the center was already understaffed. Even though Vivian had spoken with him and promised to let him take his leave once the orientation was over, the staff member turned her suggestion down. He then filed his case with his union and let them negotiate with Vivian. Vivian remarked,

> I also observe the individual rights of my staff and do not allow any one of them to be exploited in any sense. But sometimes I feel that the employees in Vancouver have exercised their right to an extent that they don't consider the situation at all. (5.2.B16)

Cathy echoed the same comment by pointing out that the company would eventually suffer if employees only observed their

rights without considering the work situation. One backlash was that the company would have more difficulty carrying things out. She used the following analogy,

> If the deckhands in a ship only do their own things and neglect the order of the captain, the ship will sink eventually. (20.1.B12)

Overlooking the importance of individual rights might also affect one's job performance. May's relationship with her patients at the hospital well illustrates this point. Even though May was trained in Hong Kong by American trained professionals who emphasized patient care by putting patients first, the practice of the medical staff in the hospital was very different. May pointed out that the medical care in Hong Kong is "problem" oriented; curing people's sickness is the medical care priority. In North America, medical care is more "people" oriented, treating patients as a whole person whose rights must be observed. May elaborated this point by saying,

> In Hong Kong, we called our patients as "the old man of number 8 bed"; in Vancouver, we address them by their first names. (18.2.A24)

In Hong Kong, patients usually follow the instructions of the medical professionals and accept the doctor's advice without considering their own preference. They do not expect to have any options given. The right of the patient is highly observed in Vancouver. May quoted the following example to show the difference in patient care in these two places.

> In Vancouver, the doctor has to ask the patient whether he/she should apply CPR (resuscitation) if the patient has stopped breathing. Patients can exercise their right by giving the doctor their choice. In Hong Kong, doctors never consult their patients, while patients did not expect the doctor to ask them. Both parties assumed that CPR should be applied. (18.2.A23)

In Vancouver, patients exercise their individual right and challenge medical professionals. Whereas in Hong Kong, professionals decide what is supposed to be good for patients, who accept what is suggested.

May confessed that she had never thought of observing patient rights in Hong Kong even though the issue had been mentioned in textbooks. May tended to impose her own judgement on her patients when she first worked in Vancouver. She usually asked them to do what she thought was good for them and did not give them any choice. Tension occurred between her and her patients when they asked her to justify her suggestions. May realized that she could have jeopardized her relationship with her patients if she overlooked such a difference. It took her some time to determine if she was able to adapt herself. Eventually she changed her attitude from "I do this because it is best for you" to "I do this if YOU think it is best for you."

My respondents, especially those who had been working at the management level in Vancouver, found that they were less efficient, and fewer projects were completed as some of their subordinates had observed their own rights without giving any consideration to the situation. Those respondents who overlooked the importance of individual rights in Vancouver also found their own work performance affected.

Explicit- versus implicit- job descriptions.

Because offices in Vancouver have fewer support staff and job description are not well specified, five respondents pointed out that they had to do extra job-related duties which they were

not accustomed to. May's situation at the hospital summed up the experiences of others. May pointed out that in Hong Kong, she just concentrated on her job duties, and there were no extra duties. It is the obligation of all employees to participate in committee work in Canada. May confessed that she did not enjoy doing these kinds of extra duties because they were not only time-consuming, but also impractical.

May cited an example when her colleagues were discussing a safety issue. At the meeting, some members agreed that the condition of the floor in the hospital was very safe and was not slippery at all. But some were not convinced and said that the commissioner might think otherwise. They then started the long discussion again, arguing about to what extent the commissioner might accept the standard of the existing floor condition. When the commissioner eventually came, he just gave the committee a list of suggestions, expecting things would be improved in two or three years before a new round of accreditation started. In order to prepare for the whole process, many hours had been spent discussing procedure, breaking it down into smaller steps, and inviting comments and suggestions. According to May, this work cycle never stopped and was repeated every two or three years.

The changing of department head was another situation for which new committees were set up. May recalled that patient assessment forms had been changed several times because the new head did not like the old one. May summed up by saying,

> I don't like to do what they like doing here in Vancouver. For example, my Canadian counterparts preferred handling paper work to treating patients. If they had five patients for the day, they usually prioritized them and gave treatment to only three of them. I would treat all of them instead. I am not keen on participating in committee work.

> After all, I found much of it impractical. The things we talked about were only good on paper and I seldom saw any action taken. I admit that some cases were crucial and changes should be brought about to improve the situation. But if it was for the sake of pleasing the top management or simply made to appear good on paper, I found it a waste of my time and energy. I would have given more treatment to my patients if I did not have to go to all those committee meetings. (18.1.B18)

My respondents found working in an office with unspecified job duties exhausting. Some duties, which they thought impractical, were even unwelcome. On the whole, they preferred to spend more time on their prescribed job duties than on extra job-related work.

Benevolent paternalism versus easy-to-layoff/easy-to-quit.

Ten respondents confessed that they felt very unsettled working in Vancouver because the work environment was not "empathetic". For example, Tina was quite upset that, when she was working temporarily at a bank, her supervisor would ask her to leave any time during the day when they were running out of work. It was more than once that Tina was asked to leave fifteen minutes before five o'clock. In this way, the bank did not have to pay her for her breaks as she had worked less than eight hours a day.

Lay offs were another practice that my respondents could not get used to in Vancouver. Sally commented angrily that laying off was so common in Vancouver that she found no job security at all. She quoted one incident in her company in which business was still expanding. Her colleague, who had been working there for quite some time, went to work in the morning and the boss told him in the afternoon, "You may go now!" Her colleague just

packed his belongings and left. It took Sally a while to let the event sink in. She commented,

> The one who had been laid off never asked for a reason; and the boss was not expected to give any. The whole matter was treated as a matter of fact. The workplace was much "colder" here, with no empathy. I feel very unsettled working in Vancouver. (15.3.A27)

Sally pointed out that lay offs are not common in Hong Kong, especially after the 70s. Usually she gave considerable advance notice to her subordinate whose job performance was not satisfying, and she even gave a salary until the end of the month. She felt sorry sometimes to lay someone off as she felt it might be her mistake for hiring this person in the first place. She concluded her discontentment about the work environment in Vancouver by saying,

> Those things which I felt very uncomfortable doing in Hong Kong, such as laying off employees so casually, are very common in the workplace in Vancouver. (15.3.A26)

Amy noticed that her company in Vancouver usually laid off those with less seniority, not the laziest ones. The drawback was that those who joined the company the latest might have no incentive to work as they thought their turn for being laid off would come any time. Jenny agreed and said she had no sense of belonging to the company as she knew she might lose her job any time.

Paternalistic management has not yet been systematically studied in Hong Kong. Among the few studies discussing such a managerial approach, Wong (1986), in his research on cotton-spinners, pointed out that personalized ties with the subordinates were usually forged by employers. This meant that patriarchal employers conferred welfare benefits on their

employees as favours, took a personal interest in their subordinates' behavior not directly related to work, and disapproved of trade union activities (p. 313). Benevolent paternalism was a means to retain workers in Hong Kong. Wong argued that this did not necessarily mean the absence of friction in Chinese firms. Conflicts tended to be manifested more often in individual actions such as absenteeism and resignations instead of in collective actions such as bargaining that arose from a confrontation of interests between management and labour. Coming from a workplace which emphasized paternalistic care, all my respondents felt that they were still very unsettled in the "less empathetic" work environment in Vancouver.

The fundamental differences between the work cultures of Hong Kong and Vancouver are rooted in the different concepts between "collectivism" and "individualism" (Hofstede, 1980). Such a dimension in understanding organizational management practices was suggested by Hofstede, who compared fifty countries, including Hong Kong and Canada, which represented eastern and western cultures respectively. Hofstede pointed out that "individualism" and "collectivism" are connected with the concept of identity, i.e. how do we see our sense of self? Individualistic cultures emphasize the "I" identity, and collectivistic cultures emphasize the "we" identity (p. 235). Eastern work cultures, hence, enhance communitarian values which encourage team work and firm loyalty, whereas western cultures foster individualistic values which promote successful entrepreneurship, easy-to-layoff/easy-to-quit practices, or active mergers and takeovers (Lee, 1992).

Such a fundamental difference between the work cultures of the east and west affect management practices. Having worked in the workplace in Hong Kong where result, completion of task, and efficiency were placed as priorities, many of my respondents found difficulty adjusting themselves to the workplace in Vancouver, which advocated proper procedure, time consciousness and less emphasis on speed. Other aspects of work culture, such as observing individual rights and participating in extra job-related duties, were also unfamiliar. Perspectives on taking leave and job security were very different. Those women who overlooked the differences of work cultures between the two cities found more problems working in Vancouver.

Interpersonal Barriers

In other cases, problems arose because of undesirable work relationship with colleagues, superiors, or one's own ethnic Chinese co-workers. I term all these "people" oriented problems "interpersonal barriers".

Difficulty of building a supportive collegial relationship.

A sound and supportive collegial relationship is one of the informal job requirements as it helps build a harmonious and productive work environment. However, 12 respondents had difficulty developing such a relationship with their colleagues. Many reasons were identified for creating such a barrier. Different preferences in social and cultural activities were one of the prime reasons. Different work standards, one's

personality, being ignorant about the expectations of their Caucasian counterparts, and different linguistic connotations also formed personal barriers.

Among my 20 respondents, only Vivian was able to make good friends with a few of her colleagues at the institute. Different preferences in their social and cultural activities was one of the major factors. Not knowing the expectations of their Canadian counterparts was another reason. But none of my respondents agreed that it was their English language inadequacy that led to distant social collegial relationships. The latter will be discussed in detail in the section about language barriers in the workplace.

Many respondents said that they had their own preferences for social and cultural activities which were very different from those of their Canadian counterparts in the workplace. Susan, Tina, Lucy, and May said that they did not understand most of the jokes cracked by their colleagues. Sally and Mary said that they were "sport blind", and knew nothing about hockey, baseball, skiing and skating. Some culture-bound expressions, such as those used to describe "St. Patrick's Day", were completely foreign to Cindy and many others. Bessy described their differences very nicely by saying,

> We (Chinese friends) like to talk about where to go for good dim sum lunch, what the latest karioke songs are, or the most popular Hong Kong produced Chinese TV serials or films are; some like to gossip about Hong Kong rich and famous personalities. Those who are still concerned about the political situation in Hong Kong like to talk about the past, now and future of this city which they once called home. My colleagues like to talk about their children, pets, or boy friends. They also talked about English TV serials, films, and concerts. We just don't have any common social topics for conversation. (12.1.A8)

Even their lunch preferences could illustrate their differences. Cathy remarked,

> My colleagues usually had an apple or a sandwich in the office but I liked to go out for rice dishes. We seldom went for lunch together, and a good social relationship was difficult to develop. (20.3.A32)

Whether it was because of different preferences towards social activities or because of personal character, my respondents confessed that they did not find their social conversation with their English-speaking colleagues interesting. Many dropped their conversation very quickly, and no further friendship could be developed.

A very interesting phenomenon occurred because of different preferences in social and cultural activities. My respondents revealed that they participated in few social activities with their Canadian colleagues, and their contacts were strictly business. Once my respondents left their office after work, all their friends were Chinese-speaking and their lifestyles and cultural activities were very Chinese-oriented. Bessy observed that her social circle was completely different form her work group. All her social activities were what she termed "Chinese" oriented. She remarked,

> I live in two worlds: my Chinese-speaking social world and my English-speaking work world. There can be no interaction between these two worlds of mine. I can get all the Chinese stuff here in Vancouver and just can't associate my social life with my work life. I work in the English-speaking world for eight hours during the day, and totally immerse myself in my Chinese world right after work. This is life in Vancouver. (12.1.A7)

Cathy viewed the language issue from a wider perspective. She pointed out that Canada was a "person to person communication" country, and talking and socializing was part of

their "work tradition". One's work performance would not be very outstanding if one was only good in writing skills. No matter how well she wrote, she was not as good as her local counterpart. Recognizing the local work tradition, improving her communication skills, and socializing in the workplace were of tremendous importance to her. She remarked,

> I believe professional skills of the immigrants are as good as those of the locally trained. If these immigrants could improve their language and social skills, their adaptability would be much easier. Good English likes "embellishment" or "gloss" as it helps make you fit in better. (20.2.A23)

A few were prepared to adapt by participating in the social and cultural activities of their colleagues. They still found some problems building good social relationships. Not knowing the expectations of the Canadian counterparts was the prime reason. For example, Amy pointed out that she found it more difficult to settle in her new work environment because she did not understand the way her colleagues thought and their ways of doing things. Most important of all, she did not know how they thought about her and what they expected of her. Because of all these unknowns, she found it very difficult to adjust her behaviour in order to get acceptance from the people she was working with. Amy commented,

> Canada is still new to me and I have to keep on reminding myself that I must get involved and try to understand my local counterparts. If only I understood them better, I could work much better in Canada. (6.1.B15)

My respondents realized the importance of developing a good social relationship with their colleagues. They pointed out that everyone in a workplace had different ways of handling business matters and had different perspectives and expectation of dealing with things. Only a good social relationship could help

coworkers accept each other's working styles, otherwise a less tolerant and uncooperative work environment could develop.

Kitty was caught in a dilemma of not knowing what to do to improve her situation because she did not like her colleagues' social activities, but she also knew a good social relationship among colleagues helped build a cooperative work environment.

> Our upbringings are so different and I find it so difficult to adapt to their social activities. Maybe I don't want to. For example, I don't like to go to a bar after work. We don't have common topics to talk about and I usually stop the conversation very quickly. It does affect our work relation. I find it quite difficult to get help if I do not have a good social relationship with them. I do need their cooperation and help sometimes. (2.2.B27)

Because of a lack of good social relationships, many respondents found that their colleagues were more suspicious about their skills and performances. Their suggestions or recommendations were less likely to be accepted by their colleagues. For example, Bessy, who was working in a secretarial pool, found out that all colleagues had different preferences for project file description prepared by other secretaries. Some required a report with detailed information; while others preferred a brief but concise one. Only if she had a good social relationship with her colleagues, would they be more tolerant of her ways of handling the project files. Molly also pointed out that she and her colleagues had very different ways of seeing things. When she identified a problem, she wanted to solve it immediately. But her colleagues did not think the matter was serious enough and they even queried why she reacted so hastily. When Kitty wanted to improve the filing system which she thought was inefficient, her colleagues reacted negatively. If they had

been on better social terms, Kitty believed her colleagues would have been more accepting of the change.

Assessing the job performance of their Canadian counterparts according to their own work standard, or demeaning the work habits of their colleagues, was another factor which jeopardized work relations. For example, Gin did not understand why her colleagues were so afraid of handling computer programs that whenever a problem arose she was asked to solve it for them. She was very annoyed when she knew that her colleagues were not keen on learning computer programs even if they had the chance to do so. They just kept on asking her for help.

Jenny could not help but complain to the manager that the cutter was irresponsible as he ignored the "color shades" of the fabrics when he cut them. When she discussed the matter with the manager, telling him to look after the matter, the manager asked her not to apply her "Hong Kong" standard to their factory. To her utmost surprise, the manager even said that customers would not notice the difference. It was only later that Jenny found out the cutter was the relative of the manager, who gave more allowance to mistakes made by the cutter.

Cindy was annoyed that some of her colleagues, who knew how to "please" their superior, were promoted very quickly even though their job performance was average, while some others who only concentrated on their work and did not socialize with their superiors were the first to be laid off. She remarked,

> John was just an OK employee but he knew how to make himself stand out from the rest of us. He did many extra favours for his superior. For example, when his superior was thinking of buying a new car, John put his office work aside and called up various car dealers for information. When a promotion was open, he was the favorite one among the rest,

> not because of his job performance, but because of the extra personal help he gave to his superior. Stanley was very different from John and he was less lucky. He was responsible, helpful, and never late for work even though he lived in North Vancouver. But he was not sociable. When the bank decided to lay off some staff, he was the first one to go. I really don't know how things work in Canada. (1.1.A7)

Cindy indicated very definitely that she would not "shine her superior's shoes" (equivalent to "please her superior") in order to get a promotion. She would be very embarrassed if she did. She concluded.

> I wouldn't dare do it. I would "lose face" (lose one's dignity) if I do. (1.1.A8)

Failing to build a supportive collegial relationship became a barrier as a cooperative work environment might be disrupted.

Different work ethics and life philosophies also created conflicts among colleagues. For all my respondents, "work is everything". Work provided them with security and stability. For a few, work also gave them high social status, money, and power. They looked for one common goal from their work: establishment and achievement.

Living in a 300 square mile British colony with no natural resources, water, and little government social services support, my respondents, together with six million other Hong Kong residents, had to work hard in order to survive. Being brought up in a "work" oriented society, my respondents regarded their job as a necessity. "Work" was an anchor for all as it provided them with security. Without work, they would have felt lonely or felt they were living in a vacuum.

Work meant a reliable income for a few, such as Molly, Bessy and Jenny, and it stood for stability and a sense of self-worth. Work also helped set one's everyday routine, especially in a new

environment. Both Lucy and Sally pointed out that they wanted to know for sure that they had a job to go to the first thing in the morning, and they could do whatever they liked after work. One needed to be psychologically dependent on one's job. Lucy's comment summed it up,

> I am a very regular person. Going to work helps me adapt to and settle down in a new place sooner. Otherwise I would have thought nonsense and did not know how to pass my day. I would have felt very upset if I woke up in the morning and could not go to work. What a scary feeling if I spent my day with my pyjamas on and did nothing. (17.1.A4)

All my respondents found out that their Canadian counterparts in Vancouver had a very different perspective of "work". They pointed out that, for many of their colleagues, the importance of work was diffused by other things in life such as family commitments, personal growth, recreation and hobbies. Work was only one of many of their life preferences. Improving their quality of life was their goal in life. Government policies also helped reinforce such a perspective towards work and life style. My respondents pointed out that Canada was a welfare state and individual rights were of paramount importance. Local workers were protected by law to work eight hours a day and forty hours a week and to earn at least a minimum wage. Union members were doubly protected. Many local employees observed their rights very closely in the workplace and their attitude towards work was very different from their Hong Kong counterparts.

Because of different social contexts and philosophy towards work ethics and life style, my respondents and their Canadian counterparts had very different perspectives regarding work. Such differences very often led to conflicts in the workplace.

Those who were not aware of the differences and imposed their own work ethics onto their local counterparts found it more difficult to accept the job performance of their colleagues. "The job performance of my colleagues is substandard" attitude made a supportive collegial relationship harder to develop.

Failing to develop a good social work relationship with colleagues and demeaning colleagues' work performance resulted in "isolation", as described by Russell (1993a). According to Russell, the ethnic minority administrators she studied were being isolated by their white counterparts. However, my respondents' experiences were, to some extent, different from those described by Russell. In addition to being excluded from the mainstream social group because of different preferences for social and cultural activities, my respondents distanced themselves from their colleagues. They also played a part in the process of isolating themselves from their Canadian counterparts. Both behaviours made building a supportive collegial relationship more difficult.

Discontent with superiors.

The help and support of superiors or mentors were very important, especially for immigrants who started their job in a new country. However, this kind of support was not always available from the superiors six of my respondents were working for. More problems occurred because of the lack of help. It even cost two respondents their jobs.

Uncertainty about the new work environment and unfamiliarity with procedures became the most prominent problem faced by five

respondents who worked in a field which was different from the one they worked in before. The job became more difficult if the superiors did not provide assistance. Lucy, who was a former newspaper subeditor, found her legal secretarial job almost unbearable. The first few months of working were the most difficult time for her. She had to figure out by herself how a law firm operated because her superior did not give her much instruction. For example, she was asked to draft a very important document and her reference was only a thick manual with precedents. Hardly knowing anything about buying and selling estate, she was asked to handle conveyancing such as filling in purchasing statement adjustments or vendor statement adjustments, or to calculate mortgage rates for customers. Since she was not familiar with the procedure, she found it difficult to obtain relevant information to process documents. She recalled,

> My boss took for granted that I knew how to handle everything. I made many mistakes and my first few months were miserable. I was very upset when one of the partners of the company hinted that I should be fired. I discussed with my superior and told him that I would try extra harder. I then stayed back after work and voluntarily worked on weekends. I was able to keep my job because I showed my boss that I was not a quitter. I don't know how I survived in this "swim or sink" period, but I did. (17.1.A7)

Being new in the field was already a hurdle my respondents had to jump; receiving no help or guidance from their superiors made the hurdle even higher for them.

Superiors who set double standards for staff with different racial backgrounds were also very discouraging. Tina, who experienced unequal treatment because of her racial background, was a good example. Her branch manager did not treat her and her Caucasian counterpart equally. His expectation of Tina was far

too demanding and Tina found it difficult to handle. She was given an $800,000 target, 60% over last year's, the highest volume of investment deposit in the bank in one fiscal year. Her colleague who had the same title as hers was given a much lower target. When she spoke with her branch manager, she was told that she should not have much difficulty meeting the target because she had a much larger Chinese clientele.

Tina told me that she disagreed with what the manager had said and pointed out that he did not understand her situation and the Chinese customers. She explained that most of her customers, who were not yet Canadian citizens, were not eligible to buy government investment funds. Those who were eligible had only been working for a short time and they could not afford to buy more of her bank products. She kept on pointing out that it had become more competitive among the banking institutes in Vancouver. New immigrants had more choices these days. They usually opened accounts in banks recommended by friends and relatives. Some even had opened several accounts in different banks. She found it more and more difficult to attract new customers. Tina remarked,

> My manager just took things for granted that I would not have any problems because of my Chinese clientele. I don't think my situation was any better than my Caucasian counterparts. (11.2.B24)

Discontent with their superiors' work performance was a reason for two respondents quitting their job. Kitty pointed out that she was trained in Hong Kong to be a very committed, efficient and organized secretary, and she found it very difficult to work with her first superior who had bad work ethics. He liked to gossip about his customers and to flirt with

female employees. He was "messy" in handling all his paper work. Kitty improved the filing system, yet her superior kept on misplacing important documents. She tried to suggest some changes several times, but her suggestions were always dismissed. He later on planned to replace Kitty with a more junior and a much lower paid staff. He began to exploit Kitty by asking her to work overtime without giving her extra pay, by turning her request down when she asked for holiday leave. Eventually, Kitty knew that she could not do anything but resign.

Jenny also complained about her superior who did not know how to operate a garment factory. He did not know how to negotiate orders. Even if he received orders, he did not know how to distribute work among workers, nor did he have the necessary sewing attachments to make the ordered garments. Jenny remarked,

> I was working in the same ship with him, and I did not want to see it sink myself. What should I do if he did not care and let the ship sink? (16.1.A5)

Jenny resigned. The factory closed down a few months after she left.

Russell and Wright (1990) pointed out that, despite the fact that mentors were seen as a factor contributing to the success of women and minorities, these two groups of people had more difficulty in obtaining mentors than white males. None of my respondents mentioned that they were guided by any mentors. What became worse was that some of them even lost confidence in the job performance of their superiors. A trusting and respectful work relationship between superior and subordinates was difficult to develop.

Intra-group tensions.

Many of the examples of employer-employee relationship described thus far involve women of Chinese origin working for mainstream white employers, and there are aspects of conflict which may assume a race relations dimension. Intercolleagial relations with other Chinese employees also create tensions in the workplace.

Sixteen respondents preferred to work in a workplace with Caucasian employers or superiors because they did not want to be exploited by ethnic Chinese employers. They pointed out that Chinese employers usually paid a much lower salary but expected more from their employees. When the average monthly salary for a clerk in Vancouver was about $2,000 in a company managed by a Caucasian Canadian, Some Chinese employers only paid $1,500 with longer working hours and no overtime pay. Their employees were expected to do more work. For example, Alice, who was hired as a personal secretary to the president of a local Chinese TV company, had to do work for the vice president as well. In addition to her secretarial duties, she was assigned to be the community coordinator of the station, researching information and producing a program.

Even though Jenny was the supervisor in a garment factory, she had to negotiate business for the company. When they were short of workers, she also did cutting and sewing, and dispatched orders. She commented,

> Working for a Chinese boss, we were expected to do extra work, work overtime, but without any extra pay. We were expected to be very hard working and have no complaints. These practices have long been exercised in Hong Kong. (16.1.B10)

Another common complaint made by my respondents was that their ethnic Chinese colleagues were not sympathetic about the problems faced by their Chinese colleagues who were new immigrants. Some of the staff members, who were immigrants from Hong Kong themselves ten years ago and had gone through all the hardships the new ones were going through, were not supportive at all. They did not provide detailed information voluntarily, and barely gave the new staff members recognition for doing their duty. Cindy cited many incidents to show how unsupportive her Chinese colleagues were. She said,

> Sometimes they even used their shoulders to block my view of the computer so that I could not get the computer access codes. Or they said, "I've already written it down here. You just follow it." What was written down was just a few brief guidelines. One could hardly understood it if one did not have the background for the whole procedure. (1.1.B10)

Their attitudes were irritating as they commented on and even criticized everything that Cindy did. Cindy recalled,

> I almost burst into tears when my colleague shouted at me when I was sticking a registration slip on the mailing bag. It was such a simple task but he thought that I did not follow his usual steps. He didn't have to scream at me. (1.1.B11)

She narrated another incident in which another colleague yelled at her,

> It was my first day working at the receptionist counter. I was very confused with various forms in the slot. While I was looking for the right form for my customer, my colleague simply shouted at me, "Are you sure you know what the government bonds application forms are? Not this one. The one is with R on it and the other one with C. I don't understand how come you can't find them!" All the things that I do are wrong. (1.1.B10)

Cindy gave a long sigh when she told these stories and added,

> They forgot all the hardships they had gone through and were not supportive at all to help the new ones pull through quickly. Some might have the "revenge" attitude that the new ones should go through all those hardships which they

had experienced. I don't know why I have to take all this crap at my age. (1.1.B12)

Being envied by Chinese colleagues was also a common problem at work. It became worse if the Caucasian superior did not handle the situation promptly and fairly. Sometime the superior played up the differences, with the hope that the competition among colleagues might help bring more business into the company.

Tina's experience working in the bank illustrated how her Caucasian superior used the "divide and rule" strategy to aggravate competitive relationship between his two Chinese subordinates. Tina had been working hard in the bank and her immediate superior who was also an Chinese showed her discontent by being non-cooperative and unhelpful. The problem was rooted in the fear that her junior staff might outperform her. Their relationship became worse when the branch manager promoted Tina to the position similar to that of hers, only three grades lower. This did not improve the work relationship. Tina was left to launch a very important campaign on her own as her now co-worker took leave during that period of time, keeping all the essential files with her. The branch manager knew about their "soured" work relationship, and he promoted Tina to the same grade as her co-worker. His rationale was that Tina would not be penalized if these two staff members were on equal footing.

The plan of the branch manager failed as it provoked more ill-feelings and worsened the relationship. Tina's co-worker felt that she was losing face and teamed up some of the colleagues against Tina. They spied on her work progress, took over her customers, and slowed the work process down by being non-cooperative. With too much pressure to bear in such a

hostile work environment, Tina had to ask for a transfer to another branch. She lost her customer base which she had built up for two years and started to work in a completely new environment.

Studies about Chinese immigrant intra-group conflicts are scanty, especially those about Chinese immigrant women. The motive of the Chinese employers who exploited their employees was obvious. One employer commented, "Hiring is a matter of supply and demand. There are so many highly qualified Chinese looking for jobs in Vancouver, I can easily pay a lot less for a much higher qualified employees" (personal communication, 3 June, 1992). Keen competition in a job market with very limited opportunities intensified the exploitation by Chinese employers.

Reasons for failing to obtain support from ethnic Chinese colleagues and being resented by them were widely speculated on by different groups of Chinese immigrant women in various social occasions. The most popular and convincing explanation was that those who immigrated to Canada in the 70s came mainly for economic reason. This group of early Chinese immigrant women had struggled extremely hard in order to achieve their present status in their workplace. Seeing this new group of highly qualified Chinese immigrant women, who came to Canada not only with extensive work experience, but also with sound financial background, and who were able to find jobs which were not much lower than theirs, jealousy was inevitable. Envy and jealousy became the prime factor for creating intra group conflicts (personal communication, informal interviews with three Chinese women between 1991 and 1992). Competition for scarce resources

such as employer's attention or increased financial rewards often leads to greater conflict between minority group members. This is contrary to common assumptions that ethnic group members join together and form cliques. On the contrary, status insecurity creates greater competition than is acknowledged. All these reasons are more speculation than fact. More empirical studies would be necessary to examine the intra-group tension, especially among Chinese immigrant women in the workplace.

Interpersonal barriers were problems mainly dealing with "people". Difficulty in building a supportive collegial relationship, discontent with superiors, and tensions among ethnic Chinese co-workers, as well as exploitation by Chinese employers can all be contributed to the creation of interpersonal barriers.

Personal Barriers

There were also problems which stemmed from women themselves because of the backlash of their professionalism, or role conflicts between being a housewife and a working women. I term these "personal barriers".

Backlash of professionalism.

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1978), "professionalism" is the behaviour, skills, or qualifications shown by a person whose work requires special training. All my respondents, who were either professionals or skilled workers, were established in their own fields before

coming to Vancouver. They all had high expectations towards work, autonomy to choose the kind of work they liked, and ability to accomplish it. Conflicts occurred when they thought their expectations had not been met and their professionalism was being threatened by the new work context in Vancouver.

Conflict of work philosophy led to the job resignation of two respondents. When Sally was working as an assistant manager at a fast food chain restaurant, she found that other assistant store managers had different points of view about management, such as staff disciplining. Even though she had explained to them her approach of handling staff, she found that her colleagues did not even consider accepting her idea because they had a set approach very different from hers. She then decided to use her approach in her own shift. Seeing that they could not arrive at any compromise in the long run, Sally felt that she had no commitment to the company. She eventually quit her job.

Eva, who was an assistant professor at a local university, also found that her philosophy of education was very different from that of her students and some of her colleagues. Eva thought that students should be self-disciplined, and they should spend more time doing their school work. If the students had too many other personal commitments, they should set their priorities. Eva commented that many of her students (especially undergraduate students) had far too many commitments and were not willing to spare more time to study. The consequence was predictable that the submitted assignments were mostly substandard. However, to Eva's surprise, some students still expected to obtain good grades from her. Eva did not endorse

this kind of attitude. She commented that she had wasted far too much time and energy explaining to her students why she gave them an undesirable grade. They should know that it was their own fault that they did not spend enough time on their assignments.

Other than having different attitude towards school work, Eva thought that education as a whole was learning oriented, as well as explorative and creative in nature; but most of her students thought that education was a path to obtain a degree and a good job, and they did not have time to acquire the basics. The conflict had become more serious when Eva found out that some of the faculty members also gave allowance to students by accepting their substandard work. Eva eventually thought she was fighting a losing battle; therefore, she quit her teaching job.

Even though these women were capable of doing their job, they still decided to resign as their own work philosophy clashed with the one in their new workplace in Vancouver. Upholding their own philosophy was of paramount importance, so much so that they were ready to give up their job for it.

Having a strong preference for their current jobs, five respondents turned down a promotion offer. The prime reason for rejecting the offer was that they liked the nature of their current jobs. Jo was very satisfied with her position as a team leader, supervising a group of nursing aides at the geriatric unit. She did not want to be promoted to be a unit coordinator because she did not like to handle the problems a coordinator had to handle. May, who was also working in a hospital, revealed that she once turned down a promotion offer because she did not like supervisory duties, such as dealing with documents,

attending committee meetings, and doing coordinating work. She was more content giving her patients treatment.

Gin also had a chance to be promoted to executive secretary. She did not take it because she did not like the job description which she found piecemeal and less attractive. In addition, the salary was not much higher than her current one. Preferring to keep their current position was a reason for these women to turn down job promotion offers.

All respondents admitted that the major source of work pressure was from themselves. They pointed out that, because they were responsible and hard working individuals, their expectation towards their work performance was high. Sometimes this kind of self-imposed standard made them feel frustrated.

For example, Lily wanted so much to help her immigrant students to settle well in Canada that she counselled them on her own time. She found conflict occurred when she spent too much time with her students and ignored her family. Her family life was interrupted as her students called her very frequently at home. She found it a great dilemma to choose between helping her students and spending more time with her family.

Jo likewise found her nursing job stressful because of her commitment to it. Kitty was always worn out by her self-imposed standards. She was fortunate that her current superior understood her situation and relieved her from her agony. She said,

> The only work pressure comes only from myself. I want so much to do the best, but because of an excessive workload and time constraint, I cannot do many things that I plan to do. For example, I want so much to clear all the documents, and file them everyday. That was my usual practice. Now I realize that I am not able to catch up with the inflow of

> documents. Even my superior said, "It's all right if you can't handle all that, because I can't either." Well, now I adjust my pace to fit the flow. Call it a day if it is my time off. I feel much better. (2.1.B11)

In this study, my respondents all had high expectations of themselves and their job performance. They were ready to resign when their jobs did not meet their expectation. Such findings countered what Ogbu (1978) found when he studied the black minority in the US. According to Ogbu, these blacks were stymied as they had internalized barriers so that they were unable to reach a higher position job. The "hitting a glass ceiling" syndrome was prevalent among the black minority group Ogbu studied. As for my respondents, it was obvious that it was their own choice either to keep their current job which they liked or to turn down the promotion offer if they found they did not like the job being offered. They preferred to keep their current lower level position job which allowed them to maintain their sense of professionalism.

Conflicting roles: housewife versus working woman.

Being constrained by family commitments, eight respondents found that their role in the family conflicted with their work. Tina was the most affected one among them. Tina, a mother of two and a personal banking account manager, faced tremendous pressure both from home and from the bank. Because of her position, she was responsible for bringing in an enormous amount of business to the bank annually. She had to work overtime year round. She usually started work at 7 a.m. as her customers called her up before the bank opened. She did not finish work until 7 p.m. During the campaign period, she stayed until 9 p.m. Even though

officially she worked a five day week schedule, she always worked on weekends. Her situation worsened whenever she needed to take some banking qualifying examinations. As a result, she hardly spared any time for her children and husband.

Tina said that her husband was supportive, taking up all the family chores. All the time she had a strong sense of guilt as she thought she was not a good wife or a good mother. Her sense of guilt increased when her husband sometimes commented, "No one in Canada brings their work home." Or, her in-laws made some indirect comments like, "No one is going to do the dishwashing tonight!" or "Someone should fold the clean laundry," hinting that Tina was not fulfilling her duties at home. She was very strong and determined when she discussed her pressures at work. But she cried when she talked about her unsatisfactory role at home. She said,

> I don't know how to play the double role of being an employee striving for excellence, and a mother fulfilling my duties. I am very exhausted now but I will inch on. I give myself five more years. By that time we will pay our mortgage off. I will then go for a temporary job, hopefully spend more time with my family. (11.2.A16)

Others, such as Cathy, Amy, Susan had more choices as they chose to work part-time when they looked for their first job in Vancouver. By making such a job arrangement, they were able to handle the dual role of being a mother and a working woman. Sally and Pam worked full-time until they gave birth to their first child. Since the jobs they had before their babies were born were not attractive in terms of salary, job nature and career prospect, they quit their job and stayed at home to take care of their children.

The conflicting roles of being a housewife and a working woman had been a continuous battle for these women at the pre-working stage. Choosing between family and work was their major concern and it was a difficult decision to make when they set their life priority in Vancouver. Why did these women not have such a dilemma when they were in Hong Kong? They identified two main factors. The first factor was that these working women were attracted by "good jobs" - in terms of position, money, and excellent career prospect. They had every intention of keeping them. The existence of a supportive domestic network that they fully relied on, which enabled them to achieve their career goal, was the second factor. Since their jobs were satisfying and rewarding and their families were taken care of, they did not see any role conflict between being a housewife and a working woman. Circumstances changed tremendously when they arrived in Vancouver. Their job was not as attractive as the one they had in Hong Kong, and the domestic support system that they once relied on was difficult to maintain. Changing their life priority from work to family seemed to be a wise choice for some of these women. Those who insisted on playing a dual role full time had to bear the extra pressure of handling both their family and their work.

Russell and Wright (1990) pointed out that extended family was especially important for women who left their country of origin because they benefitted from the emotional and economic support of an extended family in the new home country. My respondents, in contrast, enjoyed the support of their extended family when they were in Hong Kong and therefore were able to

spend more time establishing their career. Those who were new immigrants and did not have their extended family in Vancouver were left on their own when they were setting their new life priority. Struggling between the two roles of being a housewife and a working woman became a barrier.

My respondents themselves were also contributing factors to the problems. Their conflicting work philosophy, refusal to be promoted, and self-imposing work pressure either trapped them at the lower ranking job, or in a few cases provided them with a reason for resigning from their jobs. The on-going conflicting roles of being a housewife or a working woman still existed at this working stage. All these personal barriers became significant factors in hindering the upward job mobility of these Chinese immigrant women in Vancouver.

Language Barriers: Assumption of English Language Inadequacy

English language proficiency was one of the most frequently discussed topics during my interviews with the respondents. Language inadequacy was seen as the cause of many problems in the workplace. However, it was found that language inadequacy had often only been used as an excuse for explaining some problems. Since this was the case, I term these language barriers, even though in reality language was not always the real problem.

All my respondents indicated that they did not have serious problems in English language in the workplace in Vancouver. On the whole, Susan commented,

> My least needed adjustment in Vancouver is my English. (4.2.A20)

Lily echoed the same comment,

> My major concern now is not my language proficiency. (14.2.A22)

Eva was very confident in her language proficiency, saying,

> I am confident of my ability to express, if not more clearly, at least as clearly as my English-speaking colleagues do. In terms of a requirement in a job situation, I am as good as they are. (13.2.A23)

Despite the fact that they had no major communication problems at work, the respondents were able to identify some of the minor language difficulties they had in the workplace in Vancouver.

Workplace jargon or vocabulary, especially those terms used in procedures or services which they were not familiar with, were difficult. Cindy had never heard of terms like "launching a campaign", or "government bonds", acronyms such as "RRSP" or "AC". She recalled,

> Very often, we have morning meetings at the Banker's Hall. When they talked about launching a campaign to promote RRSPs, I simply didn't understand what they were talking about. It was kind of scary when I was assigned to a buddy team and did not know what they were up to. (1.2.A2)

Even a simple mailing procedure caught Cindy off guard. When her colleague asked her to send a packet of mail by AC, she did not know how to send it. Seeing that her colleague did not bother to give further explanation, she dashed to the post office and asked for AC service. Her mail had been sent out as "double registered mail."

Six women found difficulty understanding certain vocabulary when they were on the telephone, dictaphone, or when the speaker was mumbling. Sally left the term "in escrow" (meaning "in trust") blank many times when she listened to the dictaphone. Lily found catching numeral figures over the phone the hardest. Others pointed out that terms they used to describe a product

were different. Jenny was not sure about the difference between a "teddy" and "lingerie"; "leggings" from "tights"; and "shorts" from "capri". Only when she was shown the product did she know the term which she usually used in Hong Kong.

Amy was quite concerned about her fluency. She said she was not able to express herself as freely as she could. She described her spoken English as her "false limbs", functioning but not as natural as the real ones. Lily also said that she was not able to express herself spontaneously when she was at a meeting. Gin said she could not praise others as comfortably and descriptively as her native English-speaking colleagues could. Molly agreed by saying that her colleague could describe how lively her cat was, as if it was a human being. She admitted that she could not describe hers as vividly.

Being trained in a British educational system, my respondents were uncomfortable using British English in the North American context. Different pronunciation of certain terms, as well as the accent, bothered some of them. Lucy did not become aware of the differences between /grænt/ and /grant/ (grant); /klɜrk/ and /klak/ (clerk) until quite some time later. Tina was concerned about her accent because some colleagues commented that her English sounded "weird". Lily said she was more aware of her Hong Kong accent when she started working in Vancouver. She got used to it now as she found out many people also spoke with an accent.

Some also pointed out that their spoken English was too formal in many work situations as they tended to use written English structures in their spoken English most of the time. For

example, instead of "Pardon me", they would use "I beg your pardon". Some admitted that they also used formal expressions in their writing. Expressions such as "Please contact the undersigned" also frequently appeared in the business correspondence. Sometimes, their mother tongue also interfered with their English. Susan cited the following example:

> In Chinese, the modal "should" is equivalent to "must", with a sense of advisory. In English, "should" carries a notion of "command" or "order". Another Chinese expression "I want you to do this" is an acceptable polite request. In English, this expression can be very rude if one makes a request. Misunderstanding always occurs when a Chinese speaker is not aware of such a difference. (4.2.A20)

On the whole, my respondents were troubled by being unfamiliar with some vocabulary and terms, differences in accent and pronunciation, inability to express themselves as competently in English as in their native language, and by the interference of British English and their mother language. Despite all these problems, they felt that they were able to communicate at work proficiently.

Language inadequacy or undesirable work performance?

Language inadequacy has been used as a convenient explanation for unacceptable job performance. The drawback is that the real reason was overlooked and the problem never solved. Molly and the chef's story illustrates this point. Molly was giving instruction to her junior staff in the kitchen and she had been interrupted by the rattling sound of pots and pans made by the chef. Molly was very disturbed and she shouted at the chef, "Be quiet!" The chef was very annoyed and reported the event to the Human Resource Department. Molly was summoned to a give an

explanation. Before she stated her case, her superior had already suggested that she might have problems communicating. But Molly pointed out that she and the chef had long had a bad working relationship. The chef tried to provoke her when she was instructing her staff. Molly knew very well the expression she had used was rude, but she was sure she meant it when she said it. Molly remarked,

> I wouldn't regret what I had done and wouldn't be sorry for what I had said because he was interrupting my conversation. He did not respect me in the first place and I did not see any reason to respect him! (10.2.A19)

If Molly had not explained that the problem arose because of a bad work relationship, her superior would still have thought that it was because of her language inadequacy. While language inadequacy was taken to be an acceptable explanation for problems occurring in a workplace, the real reason, in this case the existence of a bad work relationship, had been ignored. Nothing was done to improve the work relationship.

Acting on one's assumption that language proficiency might be the problem of the non-English native speaker also misled people to overlook the real objective of doing something. The story of Eva and her graduate student illustrates this statement.

Eva and her teaching assistant, who was a graduate student, attended a conference. Eva asked her assistant to jot down notes. This assistant, who was also a hard working and bright student, replied eagerly and as a matter-of-factly, "Sure, I'll do it. It is easier for me to do it." What she said had implied that she might do a better job than Eva might because Eva's mother language was not English. Eva did not say anything at that time but pointed it out during the interview that having

been a professor for some time and an expert in her field, she did not have any problem at all dealing with matters related to her own field. Yet her assistant, prompted by her own ignorance and acting on her own assumption, had forgotten her duties at the conference, while thinking that language inadequacy would be a problem for her professor.

A few of Eva's undergraduate students commented on their course evaluation that Eva had communication problems. Eva disagreed with their comment and said that it was more to do with conflict of philosophy in education between her and her students. For example, she always wanted her students to think clearly about the rationale of choosing a particular teaching method. But she sensed that her students never took such questions seriously. Their easy way out was to attribute the problems to the communication breakdown of the non-English native speaking professor. Again, language inadequacy was presented as the problem.

Language inadequacy mistaken as undesirable work performance led to two extreme consequences. Vivian and Molly had a negative response, especially when they first started working in Vancouver. Vivian said she had doubts about her own language proficiency and thought it was her mistake for not being able to communicate well in public. It was only after she found out that it was her cultural baggage, not her language proficiency, that she became more assertive and outspoken in meetings. Molly's language problem at one point had become her psychological problem. She stopped expressing her opinions and ideas in meetings as she thought she was not able to express herself

accurately and fluently. When she realized that it was not only language proficiency, but also cultural background, work habits and former experience which might lead to misunderstandings, she allowed herself to be more expressive at work. However, Eva took a positive attitude by not being intimidated by comments, and instead turned them into a source of motivation. She became careful and spent more time preparing her lecture notes and her conference papers. She was also cautious about her writing when she submitted articles for publication.

Language proficiency, which was used as one of the criteria for assessing the job performance of staff members whose native language was not English, could become a hindrance for these women. When my respondents were asked what their response was when they read written comments in their staff appraisal report such as "She has a good command of English", only a few said that they took them as complimentary because they were confident that their English was good and should be officially recognized. The majority indicated that these comments were condescending as they stemmed from prejudice and stereotyping. Among them, May, Tina and Eva reacted strongly to this kind of comment. May said,

> Definitely it is a negative statement. The underlying notion is that since your English is not your native language, your English must be poorer than mine. (18.2.A30)

Tina echoed the same feeling and added,

> They expect that all the black haired people do not know English and are surprised when we do. What they do not know was that most of us learned English when we were very young in Hong Kong, and English is also our working language. (11.3.A34)

Eva pointed out that this kind of statement was frequently made by her undergraduate students who had never travelled

abroad. In her words, these students usually had the "smallest mentality" which obstructed their ability to accept people who were different from themselves. Eva commented,

> If that's a negative assumption and reaction on their part, I don't feel bad because it reflects how much less they know than I do. It's not just that they are ignorant of my background, the background of people like myself, and ignorant of the kind of overtones certain expressions like that convey. I think that's why it's more commonly found in students and less so among colleagues. At least, for colleagues, they are more sophisticated, or they are more careful of not showing it. (13.2.A23)

To summarize, then, another barrier these women encountered was the assumption other people made about their ignorance or their lack of proficiency with the English language. By doing so and ignoring other qualities that these women possessed, people were creating a barrier for these women.

Communication problems or social and cultural differences?

Communication problems in the workplace were usually taken as language inadequacy. And yet, it was found that lack of information about the Canadian society was the root of the problems. May, an occupational therapist, pointed out that being ignorant about her patients' living style and lack of a social background of Canada were the major causes which affected her job performance. She failed to socialize with her patients because she was not able to carry out a social conversation with them. It took her a much longer time to build a good relationship with them. She recalled,

> My patient told me that his niece lived in Prince George, and he just lived two kilometers from her home. I did not know where Prince George was at that time. It was very impolite if I kept on asking him questions. I was totally lost because I could not visualize what he was talking

> about. Our conversation just died out because he thought that I was not interested in talking with him. (18.2.A28)

Another problem was rooted from different values of life styles, as May put it,

> They value a lot of things that I don't value. (18.1.B15)

May cited several examples of her observation of her patients. Caucasian Canadians prefer a very relaxed life style. Privacy is essential and must be respected. Elderly people value their own independence even when they were infirm. People always live in a fast-paced life in Hong Kong. One's privacy is hardly observed as the city is extremely overpopulated. Elderly people are usually the dependents of their children. Because different values on different things were placed according to cultural differences, May had some difficulties communicating with her patients as she hardly understood her patients.

Lack of cultural information also affected May's job performance. For example, she found it difficult to design an effective support program for her out patients. She remarked,

> I didn't even know what their typical dinner was when I started working in the hospital. When they said they had shepherd pie with corn and sweet peas for supper, I just could not figure out how much functional skill was required of them to prepare such a meal at home. (18.1.B15)

Some undesirable work performances were caused by cultural differences, not language inadequacy. Jo always thought that she had given very accurate and concise instruction to her nursing aides, but she found many times that they failed to carry out her instructions. She thought it was because of language barriers. She realized only after some time that it was more a different work habit than a language problem. What she considered to be important or should be done quickly, her nursing aides did not

think was the case. For example, Jo and her South American nursing aides had different concepts of "efficiency". Jo equated efficiency with speed. The faster she completed a certain task, the more efficient she was. However, her nursing aides tended to fill up their time with task. In other words, they considered themselves efficient as long as they completed a task within a designated period of time. As a result, they took some time to carry out Jo's instruction. When Jo reminded them, they thought Jo was too pushy and picky. Jo found out that the working pace of her nursing aides was very different from hers. Different work habits were the core of the problem, not language inadequacy.

Misuse of English language due to cultural differences also led to communication breakdown between colleagues. Different connotation of English expressions might lead to communication breakdown even when some of my respondents tried to socialize with their colleagues. Cindy's colleague had postponed her lunch hour and was still working when Cindy came back from her lunch. Cindy asked politely, "How come you are still here?" Her colleague took it very seriously and responded, "Why shouldn't I be here? What do you mean by that?" Cindy had to explain that what she actually said was just a very Chinese way of saying "Hello". Her colleague was relieved as she thought that Cindy was checking on her. Cindy commented,

> I found it very exhausting that I have to explain what I mean every time, even though it is only a nice gesture of greeting. I don't know why they take it so seriously. (1.2.A2)

Susan gave a very interesting example about different connotations of expressions which might lead to a communication

problem. Calling a person "fat man" in Chinese was an intimate way of addressing people, whereas in a health conscious western society, calling a person fat is definitely taboo. Ignoring this kind of culture-bound expression might lead to social distancing among colleagues in the work place.

Silence at a meeting was also taken as language inadequacy, and yet, it was mainly because of cultural baggage. Vivian pointed out that her Chinese cultural upbringing did affect her performance in meetings. All along, she thought that "being giving and patient" were virtues. As a good person, she should give the opportunity to others and she could wait for another chance. With this cultural baggage with her, Vivian was very quiet and seldom took any opportunity to talk as she had given all the chances to others in the meeting. She did not think it was good to fight with others for a chance to speak up. It was only much later that she found out that if she did not assert her rights, no one would give her any. Because of her silence, others might have thought that she had no opinion, did not understand what was going on, or worse still, she might be day dreaming. The Chinese culture of "being giving and patient" had made Vivian atypical in a western setting. Vivian pointed out that it was nothing to do with her language proficiency.

A few respondents pointed out that the way they talked did not reflect their characters. Both Jo and Molly said that they did not like to gossip. Their colleagues thought that they were too serious and were not approachable. May said that she was a very sociable person when she was with her Chinese friends. She became a very quiet person when she was among her English-

speaking colleagues. Lack of social and cultural information, and different values of life styles, but not language inadequacy, were the root of the problem. Identifying the problem as language inadequacy without looking at the cultural aspect of the issue only created another barrier.

Failure of current English language programs meeting language needs.

The failing of current English language programs meeting the language needs of my respondents became another barrier. My respondents indicated what English language programs they would want when they were asked specifically the kind of language program they would take. Gin and Sally would like to improve their accent. Gin thought that speaking without an accent would make people she spoke to feel better. Sally saw the necessity of speaking like a local Canadian in the long run as she said,

> Now people don't catch on my accent because I am still a newcomer. They give me allowance. They won't, if I stay longer. (15.2.A19)

Lily had a different view on improving her accent. She was very keen on improving her pronunciation when she arrived in Vancouver because she was aware of how heavy her Hong Kong accent was. She accepted hers now because she found that many people in Vancouver spoke with different accents. She wanted to improve her fluency at the present stage because expressing herself freely and appropriately in different contexts was more important than improving her accent. Jenny and Amy shared a similar view. Tina and Jo wanted to learn English for their jobs. Tina said she wanted to write a more presentable loan appraisal report

while Jo wanted her English to be good enough to allow her to take management courses with no language difficulties.

When they were asked whether they would like to improve their English proficiency, the majority said that they preferred to learn more about the western culture. Only if they had the cultural information, could they carry out more interesting and productive conversations with their counterparts. Quite a few had their own ways of learning. Molly learned from her elderly neighbors by visiting them very often. May, Lily and Jo made special efforts to make friends with native English speakers, while Cathy learned from reading cartoon scripts. She remarked jokingly,

> If I laugh one day when I read a cartoon story, I know I will be more Canadianized. (20.2.A23)

My respondents were very disappointed about existing English language programs because they were not able to find relevant courses. Only four respondents took English language courses or ESL courses from different institutes. All of them said that they were not satisfied with the courses taken. They said the class duration was either too short, the proficiency levels of the students in the class were too different, or the teacher's approach was not effective. It was a waste of their time and money.

These women's responses supported Burnaby's findings (1989). In her national survey of language programs run by both the government and semi-subsidized institutes, Burnaby pointed out that,

> Among the programs offered that link language training to employment, the range is biased considerably in favour of the lower end of the occupational scale and focuses more on

> entrance to lower levels of employment than job advancement. (p. 39)

In Vancouver, the English language programs for adult immigrants are usually citizenship courses or basic social English courses. There are a few English courses for occupational needs, such as "English for Small Business" or, the most recent one "English for Immigrant Women in the Workplace" run by a community college. According to Wong, the course coordinator of the college, these kinds of higher level adult immigrant courses could not run on a permanent basis since government financial support was always inconsistent. Besides, owing to budget constraints, the college could only offer a very limited number of courses, which were always filled up very quickly. Many applicants had to be turned away (personal communication, 23 October 1992).

Language inadequacy has always been identified as the problem immigrants experienced in the workplace. However, this study showed that undesirable work relationships, or lack of cultural information, were the core of the problems. Not identifying the real cause of the problem but blaming a supposed language inadequacy caused my respondents many problems in the workplace. Therefore, such a misunderstanding became a barrier.

To conclude this section, cultural barriers, personal barriers, and language barriers were categorized under the rubric of informal barriers. These barriers were subtle barriers as they were coming both from this group of Chinese immigrant women themselves and from their interactions with the social context. These barriers also suggested a new form of discrimination that immigrant women were penalized because they were "too quick, too

smart, and too good!" Examining informal barriers, hence, was another dimension of the barriers faced by Chinese immigrant women who were professionals or skilled workers.

Conclusion

Similar to the barriers my respondents encountered in the pre-working stage, they experienced structural barriers and informal barriers in the working stage. Structural barriers involved differences in office hierarchical structure, while informal barriers included cultural barriers, interpersonal barriers, personal barriers and language barriers.

Working in a new workplace in Vancouver which had fewer support staff and promotion prospects according to seniority, most of my respondents found their work tedious, workloads tremendous, productivity less efficient, and career advancement opportunities discouraging. Thus, working in offices with different structures but failing to accept the differences and adjusting oneself to the new office structure became structural barriers.

Bringing work habits developed in Hong Kong, while ignoring differences between workplace cultures created conflicts in the new workplace in Vancouver. Some respondents found that they had more difficulty adjusting themselves to the new work context. Many even felt that their work performance was below their former standard as their work was not appreciated and accepted. Cultural barriers were one of the informal barriers these Chinese women encountered.

Interpersonal barriers, another kind of informal barriers, included problems arising from "people" in the workplace. Difficulty building a co-operative work relationship with colleagues and lack of support from superiors were the major reasons my respondents found their work environment less welcoming and empathetic. Envy and jealousy on the part of ethnic Chinese colleagues or exploitation by Chinese employers also led to job discontent.

Backlash of professionalism was another major reason for finding their workplace disappointing. Some women did not compromise their standards but resigned from their jobs, when their work philosophy conflicted with that in the new workplace. The difficulty of maintaining a balance between their work life and family life was another serious problem my respondents had to contend with. These were personal barriers arising from the women themselves which made their career development in Vancouver more difficult.

Last but not least, language barriers, one of the informal barriers, also created conflicts in the workplace. Shortage of relevant English language programs also became a problem when my respondents wanted to improve their proficiency.

Very different from the traditional immigrant women, who came from deprived social backgrounds and were always termed as "victims" in literature, this new genre of Chinese immigrant women were active and empowered individuals who formed part of the mainstream society in Hong Kong. They had held high social status jobs, acquired good academic qualifications, and possessed extensive work experience, strong financial support and good

English language proficiency. Even when they were working in a new work environment such as that in Vancouver, they were autonomous beings who held high expectation of work, and asserted their choice in selecting a job. Barriers occurred because of these women themselves and their interactions with the context they were in. Hence, examining various barriers these Chinese women encountered in the workplace only from the traditional structural perspective is inadequate. Informal barriers, from the four aspects of cultural, interpersonal, personal and language barriers, must also be examined. Only the study of both structural and informal perspectives can produce a complete picture of the struggles these Chinese women have gone through in the process of job transferability.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated in Chapter One, the objectives of the present study were (1) to examine the work experiences of 20 Hong Kong Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada as "independent applicants" in the job market in Vancouver and to seek out issues, themes and patterns which emerged; and (2) to identify barriers related to social structure and cultural aspects which, in these women's perspective, affected their job transferability. The findings, discussed in Chapters Five and Six, were based on in-depth interviews.

The purpose of this chapter is to draw some general conclusions, and to suggest three levels of approaches to eliminating barriers to the full participation of Chinese immigrant women in the workplace in Vancouver.

Continuities and Differences Among Barriers Encountered by Chinese Immigrant Women in Canada Before 1960's and by Respondents at the Present Time

As discussed in Chapter Two, cultural baggage, racial antagonism and institutional discrimination were major factors affecting early Chinese women settlers in Canada from the mid-nineteenth century up to the 1960s. The barriers my respondents encountered in their employment path in the 1990s were structural

barriers and informal barriers. The features of their barriers were different from, and to some extent similar to, those faced by their predecessors.

No Chinese women came to Canada independently before the 1880s because of traditional Chinese culture and financial difficulties. Those few who settled in the Canada were either merchant wives, or women who were poor girls sold by their parents as prostitutes or maidservants. From the 1880s until 1950, the antagonism towards Chinese women became institutional discrimination, which was rooted in the anti-Chinese sentiment in British Columbia. Because of economic difficulties, white Canadians were afraid that the Chinese not only competed with them in the job market, but also would "intentionally" reproduce in order to outnumber whites and eventually overpower them (Roy, 1980). Hence, Chinese women during that period of time were discriminated against mainly because of their reproductive capacities. Because of this firm racist belief shared among the general white public and government officials, Chinese women became the subject of exclusion for more than seven decades.

Chinese women, who were able to work in Canada before the 1960s, had long been exploited by the Chinese community and discriminated against by the mainstream white society because of cultural norms and racial antagonism. Until the 1920s, most Chinese women's work was unpaid work in the form of domestic duties, while the work of prostitutes and maidservants was all "owned" unpaid labour. Only a few worked as paid home sewers. They all worked in the Chinese community and were exploited by the Chinese themselves. The first generation of Canadian-born

Chinese women were not better off even though their participation in the labour force increased marginally. Most of them still worked in Chinese-operated businesses as they had no chance to work in the white mainstream work world. Racial discrimination played a dominant role in restricting their job opportunities. It was not until the 1950s that Chinese women were allowed to take up professional jobs.

From the treatment accorded Chinese women in British Columbia from the 1880s until 1960, it is obvious that their experiences were propelled by the anti-Chinese movement which was mainly related to the economic and political development of British Columbia. Cultural mores, racial antagonism and institutional discrimination which kept them from living on an equal basis with local whites were dominant factors accounting for their discrimination in Canada in this period of history.

Since the 1960s, potential immigrants, irrespective of their race, ethnic background and geographical location, have been selected on an equal basis under the "point system". This was the first time that Chinese women were selected based on qualifications and suitability for living in Canada as they became able to earn their entry to Canada as "independent applicants" in areas such as education, work experience, language, work availability in Canada, and family connection. The economic growth of Hong Kong since the early 1960s enabled more eligible, financially secure and professionally trained Chinese women to immigrate to Canada.

The federal government of Canada also formalized the policy of multiculturalism in 1971 and later on introduced several

initiatives, such as its affirmative action policy and employment equity initiatives, to promote equal employment opportunity and combat racism. However, according to the literature, the overall representation of visible minorities in different employment sectors is discouraging (Jane, 1988). Employment equity programs only benefit the upper and middle class minority groups and fail to provide the lower class, especially minority women, a path to move upward in the job market (Stasiulis, 1989; Winn, 1985).

These studies indicate that "class" plays a central role in determining the suitability of minority women for jobs in different strata of a labour market. Class differences, in terms of "material circumstances" (Stasiulis, 1991, p. 286), affect employment opportunities of immigrant women in the new home country. Hence, these scholars suggest that class is an important issue when analyzing minority women in Canada, where immigrant women with significant class differences are allowed to enter Canada as the result of a selective post-war immigration policy.

It is not the objective of the present study to examine whether my group of respondents were able to secure job opportunity equal with mainstream Canadians under the programs initiated by the policy of multiculturalism and employment equity initiatives. Nevertheless, their employment experience in Vancouver suggests that the initiatives are in fact not effective for helping this group of Chinese professional and highly skilled women cross the threshold of the job market, not to mention helping them move upward in the competitive labour market. These findings do not support studies done by Stasiulis (1989) and Winn

(1985) that upper and middle class minority immigrant women are the beneficiaries of the government sponsored employment equity programs. Judging from the experiences of these women, higher social class does not guarantee good employment opportunities.

Most of the 20 respondents underwent the highly selective immigration policy and were accepted to Canada because of their relevant qualifications and marketable work experience. Having worked in Hong Kong in good positions, many of them were financially secure when they came to Canada. These professional and skilled workers chose to immigrate to Canada for various reasons, political and personal. They were not obstructed from coming because of the cultural baggage or financial difficulties which early Chinese women settlers had experienced. And yet only six of them were able to acquire equity status jobs after a period of four to eight years, the rest either struggled at the entry level, changing life priorities, or left Canada permanently. Despite the fact that these Chinese immigrant women's social and economic backgrounds were very different from those of the early Chinese women settlers, they also experienced difficulties in the work world. Suffering from downward job mobility, and loss of social status in terms of salary and job position, they all had to bear the "subjective trauma of the elite-turned-stranger experience" (Mak, 1991, p. 153) in the new work world. Stasiulis (1991) suggests that it is important to distinguish between the "forms and effects of racism" (p. 292) experienced by upper and lower class immigrants. This study shows that professional and highly skilled Chinese immigrant

women encounter barriers in their workplace different from those experienced by their precursors.

The principle features of the barriers these women encountered can be categorized as structural barriers and informal barriers. These two types of barriers were salient both at the pre-working stage and the working stage. A summary of all the identified barriers at the two stages is in Table 8.

Even though structural barriers were no longer in the form of systematic exclusion, my respondents were still discriminated against from getting equity status jobs as they lacked local experience, training or qualifications, or, in some cases, were overqualified. These kinds of structural barriers have long been identified in the studies done by Ujimoto (1981), Basran (1983), Henry and Ginsberg (1985), Fernando and Prasad (1986), Li (1988a, 1988b), McDade (1988) and Merlet (1989). The findings of the present study further show how these structural barriers were set in place by government employment officers, private employment agents, and potential employers in Vancouver. As these people continued to provide the women with the information that they were not qualified for the job because of their being new to the country, these Chinese women gained a negative sense of who they were and what they could do in Canadian society. Because of this perception, they were ready to lower their expectation when they were looking for their first job, and accepted a much lower entry position. Hence, structural barriers not only obstructed them from getting jobs with equity position but also trapped them at the entry level.

Table 8

Barriers at Different Stages of the Employment Path

	Informal Barriers	**Structural Barriers**
Pre-Working Stage	Personal barriers: • having no real reason for immigrating • a less open personality and older in age • lack of domestic support • lack of financial security • difficulties of adapting to new living environment • limitation of ready-made career path • personal job preferences limits job choice Cultural barriers: • being ignorant about the job application culture in Canada	• lack of Canadian experience, being overqualified, lack of relevant local training & qualification • mismatch of former work experience and local market demand
Working Stage	Cultural barriers: • task versus time • result versus procedure • role versus individual rights • explicit versus implicit job description Interpersonal barriers: • difficulty of building a supportive collegial relationships • discontent with superiors • intra-group tensions Personal barriers: • backlash of professionalism • conflicting roles: housewife versus working woman Language barriers: • assumption of English language inadequacy • failure of current English language programs meeting needs	Different office hierarchical structures: • strong versus few support staff systems • performance determines promotion versus seniority determines promotion • evaluation of job performance

In the current literature, structural barriers usually refer to those which obstruct immigrants at the job search stage. Structural barriers which exist in the workplace have rarely been examined, and yet they are very significant when examining the problems of these Chinese women. Their ignorance about the differences in the office structures between Hong Kong and Vancouver created structural barriers which made working in Vancouver fraught with difficulties. Having worked in an office in Hong Kong with more support staff than in Vancouver, and with promotion more determined by performance than by seniority, most of the respondents found their work experiences in the offices in Vancouver distressing and less desirable. Some felt that they were trapped at their lower ranking jobs and they did not see any promotion prospects.

Recent literature also concentrates on the structural approach to examining the adaptation of immigrants in their new home country. However, many problems of immigrants can not be categorized under such an approach. These problems mainly stemmed from "people" - either from the women themselves, or from their interacting with the social context they were in. These were termed informal barriers. Examining informal barriers was suggested as a new dimension to identify barriers encountered by this group of Chinese immigrant women.

Informal barriers were categorized into personal and cultural barriers at the pre-working stage; and cultural, interpersonal, personal and language barriers at the working stage.

In addition to barriers imposed from the outside, there were constraints from within the women themselves. Personal barriers at the pre-working stage were negative personal traits which influenced respondents before they started looking for their first job in Vancouver. These barriers arose from these women having no real reason for immigrating, having a less open personality, being older, lacking financial security or domestic support, as well as personal job preference or skills which did not have immediate market demand. Because of these personal factors which affected the women negatively, some of my respondents were ready to opt for a less desirable entry job when they were searching for their first job in Vancouver. At the working stage, personal barriers arose because of backlash of professionalism. These women, who once worked in a work context where they held a superior position, exercised high autonomy, and made important decisions, insisted on maintaining their sense of professionalism. They were faced with the decision to keep a lower level position job or to resign from their work. Conflicting roles of being a housewife and a working woman was another barrier which these women had to deal with. All these personal barriers became significant factors obstructing these women from moving upward in the process of job transferability.

Cultural baggage was a major factor hindering Chinese women from working before the 1960s. Respondents in the present time also encountered cultural barriers which have not been identified in the literature. Cultural barriers, the second kind of informal barriers, occurred both at the pre-working stage and the working stage. These barriers arose from conflicts between the

workplace culture in Hong Kong and that in Canada. Workplace culture, as defined in this study, is more specific than culture as it is traditionally defined. This is the kind of culture which is not ascribed as given at birth as Weber (1968) described, nor is it a reflection of childhood socialization as Adler (1975) stated. It is a habit or behavior learned in the workplace of a particular society. Respondents carried with them these workplace habits developed in Hong Kong, without realizing the differences that existed between the two societies. They therefore encountered many problems in the workplace in Canada. During the pre-working stage, many respondents did not receive positive responses when they applied for jobs in Vancouver because they were ignorant of the more assertive job application culture in Canada. At the working stage, respondents, being familiar with the workplace in Hong Kong which emphasized results and efficiency, had many problems working in Vancouver, where proper procedure and time consciousness were emphasized. Their ability to perform well was also impeded by their ignorance of the differences in other aspects of culture, such as observing individual rights, and participating in extra job-related duties. Cultural barriers, in terms of conflicts between workplace culture, hence, constituted one of the major problems my respondents encountered in the workplace in Vancouver as these barriers led to difficulties at the job search stage and dissatisfying performance in the workplace.

Interpersonal barriers, the third kind of informal barriers, occurred mainly at the working stage. These were barriers that arose between my respondents and the people they worked with.

Failing to build a supportive work relationship with co-workers made the work environment difficult. Some of my respondents shared similar experiences with the early Chinese women settlers in that both were exploited by ethnic Chinese employers.

Language barriers were the fourth kind of informal barriers. These barriers occurred due to other people's inaccurate assumptions about these Chinese women's English language inadequacy in the workplace. Because of such a misunderstanding, the real causes of many problems, such as dissatisfying work relationships or lack of cultural information, were usually overlooked.

Different from the early Chinese women settlers, most respondents had choices if they were not happy with their current employment situation. These choices, such as changing their life priority or leaving Canada permanently, however, were limited. My respondents survived as they worked within the limits, or within what Nancy Li, a training counselor termed "the invisible boundary" (personal communication, 10 November, 1993). All the barriers they encountered, whether structural or informal, operated to shape for them the ways in which they made their space within society, in light of the limited options and constraints which were real to them.

Lai (1971) concluded that Chinese immigrant women in the 1970's appeared to be more "at home" in Canadian society than their 19th century predecessors. My findings, however, show a less optimistic picture about this group of Chinese immigrant women in the 1990s. They were comparatively less settled. Some of them made their limited choices, either changing their life

priority, or leaving Canada for Hong Kong once they obtained their Canadian citizenship status.

The virulent racist experiences of the earlier Chinese women settlers and the barriers my respondents encountered at the present time are different, and yet to some extent similar. For early Chinese women settlers, their problems arose from cultural norms, racial antagonism and institutional discrimination. Discrimination was blatant as the fear among white Canadians that the reproductive capacities of Chinese women would increase the Chinese population and eventually drive the whites out of the job market was prevalent. Such a fear became a major reason for discriminating against Chinese women in the past century.

Today, there is no statutory discrimination against Chinese women as all my respondents were "welcomed" by the government to settle in Canada because of their qualifications, skills, relevant work experience, and official language proficiency. However, they are still subjected to substantial obstacles caused by structural discrimination and informal barriers. The discrimination they experienced was more subtle than that of their forerunners as discriminatory practices were woven discreetly into the structure of social and economic systems. Only a handful of the Chinese immigrant women were able to obtain a job with equity status while most of them were not on equal footing with equally qualified local white Canadians. Despite the fact that the nature of discrimination was different, the outcome was similar since both the earlier Chinese women settlers and my respondents were being "ghettoized" into certain job sectors. The former were all working in the Chinese community as

maidservants, prostitutes, or seamstresses, the kinds of occupations the mainstream society tolerated. Most of my respondents were ghettoized into "ethnic enclave" businesses or services (Nee and Sanders, 1985). There was little to do with employment equality in the society at large. Such findings support Li's study (1988a) about the pay equity and job mobility experience of Chinese immigrants in Canada.

To conclude this section, both the earlier Chinese women settlers and most of my respondents shared similar fates in the employment path: they became a part of the cheap and dispensable work force. They were both easily manipulated as the former had to work for their masters until they paid off all the money they had owed them; while the latter were easy to hire and easy to fire at their employers' wish. Despite the time difference between these two groups of women, they were also exploited by ethnic Chinese employers. Even though discriminating institutional policies no longer exist, as immigration policy permits these qualified Chinese women to come to Canada and employment equity initiatives are set in place, the 20 respondents had encountered many problems in the job market in Vancouver.

Recommendations for Increasing opportunities for Full Participation of Immigrant women: A Three Level Approach

Even though the barriers were identified and categorized from the information solicited from only a small group of 20 Chinese immigrant women and this information was not generalizable, some suggestions do emerge for eliminating

barriers. I suggest three levels of doing so: conducting awareness training programs, initiating programs to deal with employment issues by resettlement agencies and companies in the business sector, and legislating government policies.

First level: "Awareness" training program design.

The findings of the present study provide some practical implications for designing "awareness" training programs or cross-cultural programs, particularly for Chinese immigrant women who share a comparable background with my respondents, as well as for mainstream Canadians who work with immigrant women around employment issues.

The first objective of such a program design is to help Chinese immigrant women deal with informal and structural barriers which they might experience at the pre-working stage and the working stage (see Table 9). At the right column of Table 9 is the content that needs to be presented. Three sets of content are suggested: for immigrant women, for mainstream Canadians, and for both parties. For example, program content for immigrant women at the pre-working stage includes information about career choices in Vancouver and setting life priorities. A review of the "assertive" Canadian job application culture is useful. Understanding different office structures is the main core content at the working stage.

There was evidence in the findings that English language inadequacy was mistaken for the failure to build a supportive work relationship. Unfamiliarity with cultural information, in fact, was the real cause. By receiving relevant information

Table 9

Suggested Design for "Awareness" Training Programs

Stages	Types of Barriers	Content	
		For Immigrants	For Mainstream
Pre-Working Stage	Informal: personal	• adaptation to new living environment • career choice/job preference • family and other life priorities	
	cultural	• job application culture	
	Structural		• corporate sensitivity: information about immigrants in the 90s
		• employment equity issues • transferrable skills versus former occupation • Canada as a nation: - past, present & future - national & global perspectives	
Working Stage	Informal: cultural interpersonal personal language	• cross-cultural understanding in the workplace - differences in workplace habits - life and work philosophy • socializing - work relationships with colleagues and superiors - intra-group relationships	
	Structural	• understanding different office hierarchical structures	

about socializing and cultural awareness, it is hoped that Chinese immigrant women may participate better socially, and ultimately perform with more ease in the workplace.

The second objective of the program design is to "educate" people working with immigrant women dealing with employment issues. These people include employers and colleagues, employment services personnel such as government employment counsellors or employment agents. Providing them with information about cross-cultural understanding and updated information about immigrants in the 1990s, might change ignorant or casually acquired concepts about immigrant women. It is also hoped that, with an increase in corporate sensitivity, immigrant women would find their workplace a more welcoming place to work.

Promoting cross-cultural awareness is only one aspect of building a better understanding between immigrant women and mainstream Canadians. The historical and political circumstances in Canadian society which present discriminatory barriers to immigrants is another aspect suggested for both parties. Canada as a nation and her people - be they people of the mainstream, of the first nations, of disability, or of minorities - can be discussed. Canada and her international relationships is another important aspect to be considered. By discussing questions such as "What is Canada globally in the '90s?", "Are we ready for the '90s?", "Is our system competitive internationally?", and "Are we fully ultilizing our human capital?", it is hoped that a broader perspective of understanding Canada and the role of long time citizens and new immigrants alike in this country could be developed.

The format of the program can be very versatile. It can be in the form of workshops, seminars, or even guided support groups. Employment counselling services might also find this guideline useful as they could streamline the content of services provided.

The significance of this program design is twofold. It provides Chinese immigrant women with intercultural training without negating their work or life preferences, similar to the rationale of the role-based social competencies model described by Mak et al (1994). The design also incorporates the idea of reciprocal learning focussing on mutual adjustment of both immigrants and the host society (Furnham and Bochner, 1986). It suggests a new way of communicating by not only sensitizing immigrant women, but also bringing in the dominant group. This practice helps create a new level of participation by both parties.

According to the study done by Carriere (1992), out of 18 kinds of current settlement programs offered by resettlement agencies in Vancouver, only two are related to employment and professional immigrants. Employment programs for immigrant women focus only on the basic skill training required for entry jobs. The other programs for professional immigrants are more relevant as they offer cross-cultural understanding. Settlement programs for professional immigrant women are still scanty.

There are also some "cultural diversity training" programs initiated by some crown corporations, such as B.C. Hydro, B.C. Building Corporation, and B.C. Transit for senior government bureaucrats. The shortcomings of this kind of program are

twofold: they are run on a temporary basis because of budget constraints; and they are operated on such a small scale that middle management, who have more direct contact with immigrants or other minority groups, are not eligible for the programs (Nancy Li, personal communication, 8 November, 1993).

Even though settlement programs for professional immigrants or cultural awareness training programs are still scarce, the objectives of such programs are appropriate and relevant to the needs of immigrants and the mainstream. The program design suggested helps people understand "differences" and helps those who are misinformed provide substantial guidelines.

Level 2: Programs initiated by settlement agents and business sector.

Several employment programs which are run by a handful of settlement agencies also provide job search service for immigrants. However, the service provided so far only seeks entry jobs for participants. For example, the Employment Training program for Chinese immigrant women conducted by the SUCCESS includes a job search component. The program only retrains and places immigrant women at entry level jobs such as clerical or customer service. Job search services are also very essential for professional and highly skilled immigrant women. Employment services which provide them with information about the local job market, position vacancies or career analysis, and arranges interviews for them will be useful. Such a service will help immigrant women to shorten the time it takes to re-establish their career in Vancouver. Commercial employment agencies also

run similar programs. In addition to providing one more option to immigrant women, job search programs run by resettlement agencies could be tailored for Chinese immigrant women, in terms of cultural understanding, and job needs.

Corporations or private business companies should take an active role to develop a "mentorship" program, where an individual staff member takes a new immigrant woman under his/her guidance, and encourages her to advance in her job. This mentorship arrangement is of particular importance for dealing with potential intra-group tensions. Having an ethnic Chinese to be the middle person might help ease undesirable work relationships between Chinese co-workers. In order to avoid personal biases of the mentor which might affect job performances of the new staff member, this person is eligible to choose her mentor after working for a designated period of time.

The development of accessible guidelines to delineate job performance evaluation criteria and the development of a set of procedural rights are essential. These guidelines will prove meaningful to new immigrant staff members who are in the process of changing their work behavior in a new work setting.

Level 3: Government legislation.

Training and government legislation must go together if the goal of all the programs suggested in levels 1 and 2 is to change organizational behavior and, above all, to eliminate barriers. The federal and provincial governments must implement legislation which initiates programs that include non-biased, non-discriminatory accreditation procedures and involvement of

visible minorities in the hiring, training, and promotion processes. Increased funding to support resettlement agencies to conduct the awareness training programs described in level 1 is a positive gesture from a committed and responsible government.

The three levels of approaches to erasing barriers basically focus on training, program initiatives, and government legislation. Some scholars also suggest the necessity of having structural systemic change. Carriere (1992) and Lee (1991) call for structural changes to the current system to ensure equal opportunity for all members of society. The intent is to remove entrenched inequities that keep immigrant workers as a marginalized labour force. Coombs (1986) advocates social institutes based on a concern for social justice. He favours a system of institutions based on values of equal opportunity, equal liberty, democratic institutions, and fairness and respect for persons. These suggestions provide a good goal to be reached in the long run. More short-term objectives must be achieved before this goal is reached.

Suggestions for Further Research

One dominant feature of these respondents who were able to get an equity job status equivalent to those held in Hong Kong was that their potential employers had recognized some of their skills which would be transferable to the new job. Instead of looking at the former occupations of the immigrants, these employers chose to focus on the applicability of their skills. Such selection criteria became a feasible approach for searching for the right candidate. For example, instead of concentrating

on the position of merchandising manager, employers can examine transferable skills, such as management skills, negotiation skills, customer service skills or skills to develop a business, that a candidate might bring into the company. By focussing on transferable skills, employers would be able to tap the resources offered by these immigrant women. This has been suggested as one of the potential content areas in the "awareness" training program design; however, the research done in this particular area is still very scanty. Studying various kinds of transferable skills and the way they can be reapplied to a new workplace is a significant and immediate research area for future study.

Examining the perspective of contemporary white Canadians is another important area for understanding the problems of immigrants in Canada. From examining the historical context of British Columbia, it is clear that this province has a long record of discrimination. In the case of the earlier Chinese women settlers, the psychological aspect of white Canadians - white supremacy on the one hand, their fear of the Chinese establishment on the other - plays a crucial role in discriminating against the Chinese in the past century. Do these two extreme psychological aspects still exist among contemporary white Canadians, especially in the workplace? The perspectives of mainstream Canadians also need to be examined. Furthermore, recognizing different work habits from the perspective of Chinese immigrant women is only part of the effort to work out a new work pattern in the workplace in Vancouver. To build a healthy and efficient workplace also requires the commitment of the

mainstream management and involvement of local Canadian colleagues. How do they perceive the job performance of their Chinese women counterparts? How do they perceive their own job performance as compared to theirs? Do they fear or do they appreciate their Chinese women counterparts' job performance? These questions need to be answered.

The present study has presented a detailed description of a specific group of Chinese immigrant women, and an investigation of the types of barriers they experienced in the process of job transferability. There are at least two aspects of the work which need further investigation. The first aspect is to find out how generalizable the problems are to other Chinese immigrant women who are either highly skilled workers or professionals. The findings of this qualitative study provide a good basis for conducting future research which yields generalizable results.

The second aspect which requires further investigation is whether skilled women workers and professionals of other ethnic groups would have similar experiences in the process of job transferability. The necessity of analyzing women's class situation and particular references of different groups of women suggested both by Stasiulis (1991) and Bottomley (1984) provides a useful yardstick. The ethnic background of the respondents was Chinese. Their employment problems might be different from those of other ethnic groups. The problems identified by other ethnic groups would contribute to building a better picture of the experiences of minority professional or skilled women in the workplace in Vancouver.

Conclusion

When the employment experiences of this group of 20 Chinese immigrant women are examined, the interplay of ethnicity and class does play a part in the process of job transferability. Ethnicity is no longer an obstacle which prevents them from coming to Canada as they are allowed to apply for immigrant status on the strength of their skills and relevant work experiences. Ethnicity, however, affects their experiences in the job market. These Chinese women have more job opportunities in the business sector which serves large Chinese clientele. The disadvantage is that their chances of being exploited by Chinese ethnic employers are high. Ethnicity also becomes a divisive force in a workplace where competition for scarce resources is keen. Intra-group tensions become a barrier blocking some Chinese employees from moving upward. Higher social and economic class does not guarantee better job opportunities even though some studies (e.g. Stasiulis, 1989; Winn, 1985) show that upper and middle class minority groups are able to achieve better in Canada. A few of these women are able to acquire jobs with equity status; hard work and abilities are accountable for their success. In spite of sound social and economic background, the majority of them are still trapped at lower status jobs.

The problems experienced by Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada as "independent applicants" are very complex. On the one hand, they were welcomed to Canada because their skills were in demand in this country; on the other hand, they were kept at the entry level when they started their first job in Vancouver. It was only after four to eight years that a few of them were

able to make their way up to an equity status position. However, these women had gone through a constant struggle to prove to their employers that they were as good as their white Canadian counterparts.

The identified barriers all my twenty respondents encountered in the study showed that the two traditional approaches to examining the employment issues of immigrant women from either the structural or cultural perspectives are not sufficient. In addition to structural barriers, there were informal barriers which barred these women from moving upward in the job market. These were subtle barriers mainly arising from the women themselves and from their interactions with the social context. These barriers, structural and informal alike, do not occur in polarity but simultaneously at both the pre-working stage and the working stage, forming a continuum.

The possibility of developing a new work pattern in the workplace in multicultural Canada is a significant area which needs more attention. As one of my respondents commented, "It's easy to 'break' an office; but it's more difficult to 'make' a good one." Merely examining the problems this group of twenty Chinese immigrant women encountered in their employment path is not sufficient. A productive and efficient workplace must be examined in a multicultural context. Local Canadians, whether potential employers, employees or employment services officers, must also change their conception of these immigrants. At the personal level, it is only through understanding and trust, recognizing the differences of work habits and approaches to handling work, and accepting each other, that there can be hope

for making a more desirable and prosperous workplace. At the management level, companies must accept that "equity" is everybody's wish. If they commit themselves to providing equal employment opportunities regardless of race and ethnicity, more immigrants will have a fair chance to re-establish and to develop their career in a much shorter period of time in Vancouver.

Early Chinese women settlers were discriminated against because of cultural mores, racial antagonism and institutional exclusion. Chinese women respondents in the present time also had to struggle. A few were able to make their way upward; some still remain at the entry level. What makes my respondents different from their predecessors is that my respondents have "choices" - their choice of staying and struggling their way up; their choice of giving up their valuable work experience, strong qualifications and sound training in Canada; their choice of changing their life priority; their choice of leaving Canada for good once they have their citizenship status established; and their choice of going back to Hong Kong where the pasture is much greener and which is predicted to be flourishing towards the turn of the 21st century. These choices, however, are made within constraints. If nothing is done to help these Chinese immigrant women deal with their employment problems, to eliminate barriers they encounter, and to help them settle down faster and better, multicultural Canada fails to live up to its reputation, denying herself the rich experience and abilities these women bring with them.

Endnotes

1. Top 10 sources of immigrants in British Columbia in 1993

Source	Number	%
Hong Kong	9,614	27.1
Taiwan	3,961	11.2
India	3,176	9.0
China-Mainland	2,139	6.0
Philippines	2,369	6.7
U.S.A.	1,407	4.0
Fiji	1,100	3.1
England	1,064	3.0
Vietnam	908	2.6
Iran	780	2.2
Other	8,940	25.2
Total	35,458	100.0

Sources: Immigration Statistics Division, Employment and Immigration Canada, Government of Canada. March 1993.

2. The present Canadian immigration program is based on the 1976 Immigration Act and the regulations promulgated in April 1978. It provides for three classes of permanent residents: Family Class; Convention Refugees and Designated Classes; and Independent Class. The Independent Class includes principal applicants and their dependants and is heavily weighted toward satisfying economic needs, particularly Canada's labour market needs. The class includes: Business Immigrants (Entrepreneurs, Investors, and the Self-Employed), Retirees, Assisted Relatives, and Other Independent Immigrants.

   Principal applicants are admitted on the basis of accumulating a minimum number of points from a range of factors including education, skills, experience, occupation, arranged employment, age, and knowledge of an official language. Over time the factors and weight attached to each of these factors have varied. Current regulations stipulate that successful applicants must achieve 70 points out of a possible 100 (see Chart 1).

CHART 1 Selection Criteria for Assisted Relatives and Other Independent Immigrants

Factor	Units of Assessment	Note
Education	12 maximum	
Specific Vocational preparation	15 maximum	Minimum of 1 unit required
Experience	8 maximum	
Occupation	10 maximum	0 units is an automatic processing bar, unless applicant has arranged employment
Arranged Employment	10	
Age	10 maximum	10 units if 21 to 44 Two units subtracted per year if under 21 or over 44
Knowledge of Official Languages(s)	15 maximum	
Personal Suitability	10 maximum	
Levels Control	10 maximum	Set at 5 units effective January 1, 1986
Total	100	
Pass Mark	70	
Bonus for Assisted Relatives	10	If application is accompanied by an undertaking of assistance

Source: Canada. Employment and Immigration Canada. Your Rights and Canada's Immigration Law (Ottawa: 1986), p. 16.

3. Wong's research was about a group of Shanghainese refugees and their redevelopment of their textile industry during the Chinese civil war between 1945 and 1949 in Hong Kong. These refugees fled from China and brought with them a refugee mentality suffused with a deep anxiety. They were troubled by the proximity of Chinese communism from which they recoiled, the uncertain political future of China, and lack of natural resources of the British colony. Being cut off from home by political events and struggling for survival, according to Wong, these men seemed to have unleashed a transformative social process. As employees, they were eager to learn new skills and acquire qualifications so that their labour might have a wider market worth. As entrepreneurs, they were keen to diversify their investments and maintain maximum liquidity. These stable workers became an industrial asset in Hong Kong's post war economic development. As a result, the British colony was given ten to fifteen years' start in industrialization over many other Asian countries. (Wong, 1986:321).

4. (15.1.A15) - this parenthetical notation stands for Case 15, No. 1 tape, Side A, Page 15 of the transcript.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Appendix A

Department of Social and Educational Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-6647
(604) 822-5374
Fax: (604) 822-4244

Letter of Initial Contact

Dear _____

I am writing to ask if you could spare about three hours to be interviewed for a research project, "Job Transferability of Chinese Immigrant Women in Vancouver: Their Voices". The project is one of the requirements for my fulfillment of the Doctor of Philosophy program at the University of British Columbia. Dr K Adam Moodley is my thesis supervisor and can be contacted at (604) 822-4315.

The purpose of the interview is to collect information to find out immigrant women's perspectives of their own work experiences, and to address policies that achieve goals of assisting immigrant women to acquire jobs which are similar to the ones they had before they came to Canada.

Your name was suggested to me by _____ as a Chinese immigrant woman who came to Canada from Hong Kong as an "independent applicant". The interview topics will include your work experiences in Vancouver; the meaning of "work" to you; your coping strategies in the workplace; as well as factors which affect you in the process of moving upward in the job market. The interview will be taped.

You are not under any obligation to be interviewed. If you do or do not decide to volunteer, this will not affect your work or immigration status. If you are able to participate, your identity will be completely confidential. Your name will only be identified with a code number which will not be available to anyone outside the project. You may stop the interview at any time, for any reason. You may refuse to answer any question, if you so wish.

If you are willing to participate, could you please complete the consent form below and mail it to me at the address above. Please keep this letter for your records. I will contact you by telephone soon and arrange to talk with you at a time and location that is convenient for you.

I would be happy to provide further information about the study. Please contact me at (604) 263-9032.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Siu Miu Chiu
Phd candidate
Social and Educational Studies
University of British Columbia

Subject Consent Form

Dear Ms Chiu

I have read your letter of _____ describing the research project, "Job Transferability of Chinese Immigrant Women in Vancouver: Their Voices", and kept a copy of it for future reference.

I would/would not (circle one) like to be interviewed.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B

Job Transferability of Chinese Immigrant Women In Vancouver: Their Voices

Interview Prologue

1. The purpose of this research is to collect information about Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada as "independent applicants" and to address policies that are intended to assist immigrant women to acquire jobs which are comparable to the ones they had before they came to Canada.

2. Your identity will be completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used and the interview data will not be available to anyone outside the project. You may stop the interview at any time, for any reason. You may refuse to answer any question, if you so wish.

3. This interview may take at least three hours to complete. There are two parts in the interview. Part One, which involves filling in blanks, covers your personal and educational background. Part Two, an audio-taped section, covers topics such as employment history in Hong Kong, employment in Canada, proficiency in official language(s), cultural barriers, workplace habits, coping strategies, "meaning" of work, comparison of employment experiences between Vancouver and Hong Kong, as well as additional comments or views not covered by previous areas. The interview schedule serves as a basis for the interview. Your active participation is appreciated.

Thank you.

Chiu Siu Miu

Siu Miu Chiu
May, 1992

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

Part One (Filling in Blanks)

Personal and Educational Background

1. How old are you?

   _____

2. Are you married?

   Yes _____
   No _____
   Other _____

3. How many children do you have? _____ child/children

4. Their ages are:

   5 years old or under _____ child/children
   6 - 12 years old _____
   13 - 18 years old _____
   Above 18 years old _____

5. Reasons for immigration: (you may choose more than one answer)

   Family reunion _____
   A better future for my children _____
   Uncertainty of Hong Kong political situation _____
   Better employment prospect in Vancouver _____
   Changing to a new living environment _____
   Being affected by many people who were leaving Hong Kong _____
   Others (please specify) _____

6. How long have you been in Canada? _____ years

7. How long have you been in British Columbia? _____ years

8. Your formal educational background is:

Primary school _____
Secondary school _____
Skills/trade training college _____
College or university _____
Graduate school (please specify) _____

9. What professional/skill qualifications do you possess?

_____
_____

10. Where did you obtain your professional/skill training?

_____

11. List your current and previous occupations and number of years worked.
(start from the most current one)

Hong Kong or other countries	Canada
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

12.

	Hong Kong monthly salary (in Can $) (only tick the highest one)	Canada monthly salary (in Can $)
$ 4,000 or above	_____	_____
$ 3,001 - 4,000	_____	_____
$ 2,001 - 3,000	_____	_____
$ 1,001 - 2,000	_____	_____
below $ 1,000	_____	_____

13. Self-rating of English language skills upon arrival to Canada and at the present time

Four language skills	First landed in Canada			Present time		
	Good	Average	Poor	Good	Average	Poor
Listening	____	____	____	____	____	____
Speaking	____	____	____	____	____	____
Reading	____	____	____	____	____	____
Writing	____	____	____	____	____	____

Appendix D

Interview Schedule

Part Two (Audio-taped Interview)

1. Employment in Hong Kong

   . Give a description of your job prior to emigration. (probe for: job title, responsibilities, required training, supervisory or administrative work, mechanical or technical skills, tasks coordinated with or independent of others)

2. Employment in Canada

   a. Job Hunting

   . Did you begin job hunting immediately after your arrival?
   . What was your reason for finding a job upon your arrival?
   . How did you find your first job in Canada? (probe for: through friends, Canada Employment Centre, newspapers, employment agencies, or other sources)
   . Was your job arranged before you came to Canada?
     - If yes, who made the arrangements?
     - Was this job offered because you had the same occupation before? Or, because you had the required skills?
   . What were your criteria when you looked for your first job?
   . Did you choose to look for a job in the Chinese community or in the mainstream society? Why?
   . How did you feel when you found your first job? Why?
   . Describe your job hunting process in detail.
   . Did you have difficulty when you were seeking your first job in Canada? If so, what were the difficulties?
   . Narrate an interview experience.
   . Did any company give you reasons when they turned down OR accepted your job application? What were the reasons.
   . Were you happy with your first job? Why? If no, why not?
   . Have you ever been unemployed? Why? How did you feel?
   . How many jobs have you had so far? Why did you change jobs?

   b. Working Experience

   . Have you had any problems at work since you came to Canada?
     - How did they occur?
     - How did you solve them?
     - Do these problems still exist? If yes, explain.

. Have you ever been promoted?
  - If yes, why?
  - If no, why not?

. How is your work relationship with your superiors?
  - How is your social relationship with them?

. How is your work relationship with your colleagues?
  - Do you participate in any social activities with your colleagues?
  - Do you go for social gatherings with them on the weekends?
  - Do you have social conversations with them?
  - Whom do you often go for lunch with?
  - Whom do you socialize more with, your ethnic Chinese colleagues, or your Caucasian colleagues?

. Do you ever have work pressure?
  - If yes, where does it come from?
  - How do you handle it?

. Is there any job security in Vancouver?
  - Have you ever been fired? Narrate the event.
  - How did you handle the situation.
  - Have you ever resigned from your work? Why?

. Have you encountered any problems at work? Describe in detail.
  - If you have, is your problem related to "people"?
  - Is it related to differences in office structure?
  - Is it related to cultural differences?
  - Is it related to differences in work habits?
  - Is it because of language problems?

. How long did you take to find your current job?

. Describe your current job.
  (probe for: job title, job responsibilities, required training, supervisory or administrative work, mechanical or technical skills, tasks coordinated with or independent of others)

. Describe one day at work.

. Do you work independently or with a team?

. What are your company's criteria for a promotion or for a salary raise?

. Is there any "Employee Job Performance Evaluation" in your company? If yes, describe the process.
  - How frequent does it take place?
  - Do you think the evaluation process is fair?

- Do you like/dislike your current job? Why?

- Did you like/dislike those jobs you had before your current job in Vancouver? Why?

- If you were to assess your own work performance, which grade would you give?

  A = Excellent
  B = Good
  C = Average
  D = Fail

  - Why would you give yourself this grade?
  - What do you think about your work capacity/what you are good at in your work/qualities that make you a good employee?

3. Proficiency in Official Language

- Do you have any communication problems at work?
  - If yes, which of the following areas do you have problem with? Give examples.

    * vocabulary
    * sentence structure
    * communicative competence
    * cultural-bound topics

- Has your English language proficiency (refer to Part One) improved? Why?

- Situation 1: In your "Employee Work Performance Evaluation Form", your superior commented, "Ms X's English is excellent."
  Situation 2: Your superior or your colleagues commented on your English in a social conversation, "I am surprised your English is so good!"

  How would you respond to these comments?

- Have your superiors ever advised you to take any English language courses?
  - If yes, did your company provide you with financial help?
  - What kind of English language course did your company suggest?

- Did you make any initiative to take English language courses? Why?
  - What courses did you take?
  - Did you pay for your own tuition fee?

4. Cultural Differences

- Do you think your "Chineseness" affects your job performance in Canada?
- Do you find any cultural differences in handling a task in the workplace? If so, give examples.
- Do you prefer to work in the Chinese community? Why?
- Do you prefer to work in the mainstream society? Why?

5. Workplace Habits

- Define "Hong Kong ways of doing things" in a workplace.
- Is your work performance in Vancouver affected by your Hong Kong workplace habits? Give examples.

6. Coping Strategies

- What were your strategies when you were hunting for your first job in Vancouver?
- How do you handle problems which deal with "people"?
- How do you handle problems which arise because of "cultural differences"?
- How do you handle problems which arise because of "office structural differences"?
- Does your company do anything to help solve the problems?

7. What Does "Work" Mean to You?

- What does your current job mean to you?
  (probe for:
  "job" = salary; killing time
  "career" = personal development; job satisfaction in terms of salary, or recognition; career development; commitment; establishment)
- What is the career prospect of your job?
  - Is it the same as the one you had in Hong Kong?
- Why can't you get the job you were trained for?
  (probe for: Economic recession? Racial discrimination? Being scared of hunting around? Afraid of being rejected? Being ignorant about the job market? Too much trouble to search for jobs, prefer to stick to the current one?)
- If your job is a low status one, why did you accept it in the first place?
- Do you tolerate an inferior occupation because you perceive your situation as temporary?
- Define "status".
- Define "job security".
- Define "job satisfaction".
- Are you a hard working person? Define "hard working".

8. Comparing Employment Experiences in Vancouver and in Hong Kong

- What did you achieve in Hong Kong?
- What have you achieved in Vancouver?
- How do you compare your job in Canada, in terms of financial reward, job satisfaction and security, with the one in Hong Kong?
- Is the way you handle your job any different? Please explain.
- How do you find your work environment in terms of work habits, office routine, and job responsibility in Vancouver?
  Is it different from the one in Hong Kong? Please explain and elaborate.
- Are the "Employee Work Performance Evaluation" Criteria any different between the two cities? Give examples.
- Does "work pressure" come from different sources or from the same source? Give examples.
- Is the work relationship between the employer and the employee any different? Give examples.
- Is the relationship between or among colleagues any different? Give examples.
- In which city is it easier to find jobs?
- In which city is it easier to find a satisfactory job?
- Are your criteria for job finding any different in Vancouver than in Hong Kong?
- Is the job hunting process any different?
  - Which process do you prefer?
- What are advantages/disadvantages about working in Vancouver?
- What are advantages/disadvantages about working in Hong Kong?
- What does "work" mean to you? Did you have the same perspective when you were in Hong Kong?

9. Do you have any personal feelings or comments to supplement the information provided above?

* 溫哥華獨立移民婦女職業 *
專 訪

前言

很多謝你同意接受我的訪問。

1. 這訪問的目的是收集有關以「獨立移民」身份來加拿大的香港職業婦女在溫哥華的職業出路。專訪內容包括你在溫哥華的工作經驗；對“工作”看法；以及工作環境，制度，架構與及文化背境相異對工作進升影響。

2. 這訪問內容是絕對機密，你的姓名會用數碼替代。你有權拒答任何問題及要求中途停止被訪。

3. 這訪問需時約三小時。訪問題目共分八部份。第一部份是個人學歷及職業表格，請先填妥，其餘七部份是錄音訪問。題目包括：香港工作經驗，加拿大工作經驗，官方語言能力，文化相異在工作上影響，加拿大工作的應付策略，你對“工作”看法，比較香港和加拿大工作經驗。所擬定問題只用作帶動你的話題，希望你能主動地盡量發表你的個人感受，經驗和想法。

多謝！

趙小苗
一九九二年五月

第一部份（填方表格）

個人資料：教育，職業履歷

1. 你現年幾歲？
   28 — 34 _____
   35 — 44 _____
   45 — 54 _____

2. 是否已婚？
   是 _____
   否 _____
   其他 _____

3. 有多少個子女？
   _____個？

4. 他們年齡是：
   5歲以下 _____個
   6 — 12歲 _____個
   13 — 18歲 _____個
   18歲以上 _____個

5. 移民原因是：（可有多個答案）
   與家人團聚 _____
   為子女前途 _____
   香港政治前景不明 _____
   經濟因素 _____
   轉換生活環境 _____
   時勢流行移民，人移我移 _____
   其他（請註明）： _____

6. 移民來加拿大多久？ _____年_____月

7. 在卑詩省住了多久？ _____年_____月

8. 你的教育程度是：

小學	_____
中學	_____
專科學院	_____
專上學院或大學	_____
研究院（請註明）	_____

9. 請列舉你的專業資格：

_____

_____

10. 你在那國家接受專業訓練？

_____

11. 列舉職業及年資（從最近例數）

香港或其他國家(請註明)	加拿大
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

12. （以最高額為準）

	香港月薪（加幣）	加拿大月薪（加幣）
$ 4,000 以上	_____	_____
$ 3,001 - 4,000	_____	_____
$ 2,001 - 3.000	_____	_____
$ 1,001 - 2,000	_____	_____
$ 1,000 以下	_____	_____

13.

	初抵加英語水平			現在英語水平		
	好	中等	不好	好	中等	不好
聽	____	____	____	____	____	____
講	____	____	____	____	____	____
讀	____	____	____	____	____	____
寫	____	____	____	____	____	____

第二部份（口述及錄音）

一、香港工作經驗

1. 請詳述你在香港最後一份工作。
   （包括工作銜頭、職務、所需專業訓練、主管行政、機械或電機工程、裝配線工作等）。

二、加拿大工作經驗

1. 找工作過程
   - 你一抵達溫哥華便找工作嗎？
   - 找工作的原因是什麼？
   - 你如何找第一份工作？（通過親戚朋友，政府部門如人力部，報紙，薦人公司，其他_____）。
   - 若果你的工作在未抵加拿大時已有安排，是誰給你作安排？
     — 你得到這職位是因為你曾當同一職位？因為你擁有工作所需技能。
   - 你以什麼準則去找工作？
   - 你當時是選擇唐人圈子的工作？或白人主流社會的工作？
   - 當你找第一份工作的心情怎樣？為什麼？
   - 詳述你找工作過程？經歷？
   - 在過程中遇到什麼困難？舉例。
   - 敍述一個見工經驗。
   - 公司用什麼理由拒絕 / 接受你求職申請？
   - 有沒有找到自己覺得滿意或一技所長的工作？若沒有，為什麼？
   - 期間有沒有失過業？有多久？為什麼？心情怎樣？
   - 曾做過幾多份工作，為什麼轉工？

2. 工作經驗
   - 自抵溫哥華後工作上所遇有什麼困難？
     — 為什麼會有這些困難？
     — 你怎樣解決這些困難？
     — 這些困難仍然存在嗎？若仍然有，為什麼？

・有沒有升過職？
— 若有，為什麼？
— 若沒有，為什麼？
— 有沒有被解僱？為什麼？
— 有沒有辭職？為什麼？
・你與同事、上司工作關係，社交關係怎樣？
・你與同事有社交活動嗎？
— 假期或周末有相約交往？
— 在工作時有閒談嗎？
— 與中國同事或白人同事交往多些？
— 食午餐或小休時多數和什麼同事在一起？
— 若與同事關係不好嗎，為什麼？
・工作上有壓力嗎？
— 壓力來源？
— 你如何解決？
・你覺得在溫哥華工作有沒有保障？
— 有沒有被解僱的經驗？詳述過程。
— 你如何處理？
・在工作上有沒有困難事件？詳述。
— 人的問題？
— 制度問題？
— 文化背境不同？
— 工作習慣不同？
— 語言隔膜？
・你找現時工作找了多久？是怎樣找？
・請詳述你現時的工作？
（包括工作銜頭、職員、所需專業訓練、主管行政、機械或電機工程、裝配線工作等）。

· 詳述一日的工作。
· 在每日工作程序裡，你是獨立工作或是參與組隊工作？
· 公司升職，加薪制度怎樣？
· 有沒有定時 / 非定時「職工表現評估」？
— 你覺得評估內容合理嗎？
· 你喜歡 / 不喜歡目前工作？為什麼？
· 其他工作也曾喜歡 / 不喜歡？為什麼？
· 若請你評估自己「工作表現」，你會結那個級數？

甲	極好
乙	好
丙	平均
劣	不合格

— 為什麼有這評估？
— 請具體分析你的工作能力。

3. <u>官方語言能力</u>
· 在工作上，有沒有以下的語言障礙？困難？舉例。
— 詞彙
— 句構
— 語句運用
— 文化
· 你現在的英語水平（見第一部份“個人資料”表格）在聽、講、讀、寫提高 / 降低了，為何原因？
· 若果你上司在你的「職工表現評估」表格上註下：
「她的英語很好。」
又或；上司或同事在閒談中對你說：「我很驚奇你有如此好的英語！」
你會有怎樣反應？
· 上司有沒有要求你進修英語？
· 若有，上司有沒有幫助你去進修？如何幫助？選修什麼課程？
· 你自己有沒有主動去進修英語？為什麼？
— 選修什麼課程？
— 自資？

4. 文化相異在工作上影響
   - 在工作上，“文化傳統衝擊”有否存在？
     — 有沒有影響工作表現？
   - 文化背境不同對工作處理手法有沒有不同？舉例。
   - 你寧願在中國人圈子工作？或在白人主流社會工作？為什麼？

5. 「傳統工作」作風
   - 何謂「香港人工作作風」？
   - 你有沒有因你的「香港人工作作風」影響你的工作表現？舉例。

6. 在溫哥華工作的「應付策略」
   - 當你初抵溫哥華找第一份工的「應付策略」是什麼？
   - 若果你在工作上所遇困難是“人”的問題，你的策略是什麼？
   - 若果你在工作上所遇困難是“文化相異”的問題，你的策略是什麼？
   - 若果你在工作上所遇因難是“組織架構”的問題，你的策略是什麼？
   - 公司有沒有實施任何政策去幫助你？

7. 你對“工作”看法
   - 你現時對“工作”看法怎樣？
   - 你對現時職位及薪酬比以前較低的感覺怎樣？
   - 你覺得現時工作有沒有前途？
   - 現在你工作“勤力”嗎？怎樣為之“勤力”？
   - 怎樣為之“身份地位”？
   - 怎樣為之“工作保障”？
   - 你覺得怎樣才有“工作滿足感”？

8. 比較香港，溫哥華工作經驗
   - 你在香港工作所得到是什麼？
   - 你在溫哥華工作所得到是什麼？
   - 公司組織結構，工作模式，管理方法有何不同？舉例。
   - 處理工作方法有何不同？舉例。
   - 工作程序，責任，分工有何不同？舉例。
   - “辦公室文化”，工作習慣有何不同？舉例。

· 香港與溫哥華僱主對僱員“工作表現評定”制度有何不同？
· 工作壓力來源有何不同？舉例。
· 老板，上司與職員的關係有何不同？舉例。
· 同事之間的關係有何不同？舉例。
· 在香港或溫哥華找工，何處較易？
· 選擇理想職業機會，何處多？
· 在香港找工作準則與溫哥華有何不同？舉例。
· 香港與溫哥華找工作方法，過程，經驗有何不同？舉例。
— 你較喜歡選擇那種形式？為什麼？
· 從香港經驗看溫哥華工作，有何好處？壞處？優點？缺點？
· 從溫哥華經驗看香港工作，有何好處？壞處？優點？缺點？
· 你現在對“工作”的看法是怎樣？與香港時看法有何不同？

9. 除了以上問題外，有什麼個人感受、想法你喜歡補充？