

ADAPTING TO A NEW ENVIRONMENT:  
THE CHALLENGES FACING CHINESE IMMIGRANT YOUTH

by

Xudong Shirley Bai

B.A., Beijing Normal University of Foreign Languages, 1986

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School

of

Criminology

© Xudong Shirley Bai 1995

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

December 1995

All rights reserved. This work may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without permission of the author.



National Library  
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services Branch

Direction des acquisitions et  
des services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0N4

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0N4

*Your file / Votre référence*

*Our file / Notre référence*

**The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.**

**L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.**

**The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.**

**L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.**

ISBN 0-612-16781-X

**Canada**

## PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis, project or extended essay (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

**Title of Thesis/~~Project~~/~~Extended~~ Essay**

Adapting to a New Environment: The Challenges Facing  
Chinese Immigrant Youths

---

---

---

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

Xudong (Shirley) Bai  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(name)

Dec. 11 / 95  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

APPROVAL

Name: Shirley Xudong Bai

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of Thesis: Adapting To A New Environment: The  
Challenges Facing Chinese Immigrant  
Youth

Examining Committee:

Chair: Joan Brockman, LL.M.

Curt. T. Griffiths, Ph.D.  
Senior Supervisor  
Professor

Margaret A. Jackson, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor

Raymond R. Corrado, Ph.D.  
Professor

Kenneth Attafuah, Ph.D.  
B.C. Council of Human Rights

Date Approved:

December 4, 1995

## ABSTRACT

The influx of Asian immigrants to Canada in recent years has brought wealth and vitality to a recessive economy. However, the difficulties encountered by these immigrants in adjusting to the social patterns of their adopted country have caused great concern throughout Canadian society.

While the media have detailed the problems faced by the immigrants, very limited academic research has been done on these issues. This thesis explores the adjustment difficulties of immigrants to North America in general and studies the impact of such difficulties. The focus of this study is on young Chinese immigrants who have settled in the Greater Vancouver region of British Columbia, Canada.

For the purposes of this study, a sample of twenty-five subjects was selected from the Junior Mentor Scheme of the United Chinese Community Enrichment Society. The subjects were interviewed with regard to their adjustment difficulties in the new social environment.

The results of the research indicate that the difficulties these youths have experienced include language and cultural barriers as well as discrimination from the dominant society. Significantly, the study shows that there exists tension among different groups of Chinese youths. In addition, the "astronaut" phenomenon has made the adjustment process extremely difficult for these young Chinese.

Interestingly, this study finds little connection between adjustment problems and gang involvement. This is at odds with most of the literature on the subject which concludes that there is a direct correlation between the two. As the time-span for the research was only six months, it remains an open question whether the sample subjects will eventually assimilate into the mainstream culture.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present research would have been impossible without the kind assistance of several individuals.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Curt T. Griffiths, my senior supervisor, for his inspiration, continued guidance and encouragement. He contributed a lot of his valuable time to the completion of this thesis, which has profited from his invaluable suggestions, his diligent critique, and his support. I would also like to thank Dr. Margaret A. Jackson and Dr. Raymond R. Corrado for their prompt and precious feedback and support, and their willingness to serve on the examining committee.

I am indebted to a number of individuals from S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society), Burnaby-Coquitlam Branch. To Mr. Wai-Fu Mak, the program director, I would like to extend my appreciation for his assistance and permission to conduct my interviews with the Junior Mentor Scheme under his auspices. I would also like to thank the staff members from S.U.C.C.E.S.S. who have

contributed their comments and suggestions to the present research.

I am also indebted to our graduate secretary, Ms. Aileen Sams, for her patience and guidance during my graduate studies. Finally, I would like to extend my special appreciation to my parents for their persistent encouragement and unfailing support throughout my school years.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER II: ADJUSTMENT DIFFICULTIES FOR IMMIGRANTS IN NORTH AMERICA .....	4
CHAPTER III: CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN GREATER VANCOUVER .....	43
CHAPTER IV: METHOD .....	53
CHAPTER V: VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE: CHINESE IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN GREATER VANCOUVER .....	63
CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION .....	109
APPENDICES .....	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	123

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
2.1 Percentage of Affirmative and Negative Responses to Acculturative Stress Items .....	7
2.2 Canadian Immigration Law and Chinese Immigration, 1906-1973 .....	25
2.3 Immigration law and origin of immigrants, Canada, 1946-67 .....	26
3.1 Country of Last Permanent Residence by year of Landing .....	44
3.2 Country of Last Permanent Residence by Province or Territory of Intended Destination 1992 .....	45
5.1 An Overview of the Sample .....	65
5.2 The Number of Subjects that Regard Language as the Top Difficulty .....	66

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis is designed as a preliminary study of the difficulties which Chinese immigrant youth encounter in Greater Vancouver. More specifically, the thesis examines the various coping strategies that the youngsters employ in an attempt to address their difficulties, and the role which one agency, the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (S.U.C.C.E.S.S., in which the first "S" is just to make the abbreviation meaningful), plays in facilitating their adjustment and ameliorating their difficulties. The impetus for the research is provided by the connection which is felt to exist between the problems of adjustment which immigrant youth encounter and their involvement in youth crime, including organized gang behavior. Data for the study were gathered from a mixed-gender sample of Chinese youths participating in programs offered by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. to assist immigrant youth. And, interviews were conducted with

the staff as well as the volunteer social workers at S.U.C.C.E.S.S..

Beginning with an overview of the issues surrounding adjustment for immigrants to North America who are visible minorities, this thesis is structured as follows: Chapter Two provides the backdrop of the study and includes a review of the literature relating to immigrants generally and the problems of adjustment encountered by those persons arriving in North America. This includes both the historical and the contemporary context.<sup>1</sup> In Chapter Two, the connection between the problems of adjustment which immigrant youth often experience and youth crime, including gang behavior, is explored. Chapter Three focuses more specifically on Chinese immigrant youth, with a consideration of the diversity of the components of Chinese immigrants in North America, including those from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China. Chapter Four presents a descriptive overview of the Junior Mentor Scheme operated by S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a non-profit social institution to provide services for

---

<sup>1</sup> Immigration policies of the U. S. and Canadian governments have played an important role in the history of immigration, yet they are not a focus of this thesis.

Chinese immigrants in the Greater Vancouver region of British Columbia, Canada.<sup>2</sup> The method employed in the present research is also discussed. In Chapter Five, the findings from the interviews are presented. Chapter Six includes a summary and the conclusions of the study, with a consideration of the implications of the findings for future research.

---

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this thesis is not an evaluation of the different programs in S.U.C.C.E.S.S. or the agency itself.

## CHAPTER II

### ADJUSTMENT DIFFICULTIES FOR IMMIGRANTS IN NORTH AMERICA

This chapter provides a review of the literature on adjustment difficulties encountered by immigrants to North America, with an emphasis on those of Chinese origin. And, the immigration policies of Canada and the United States are examined, as are the problems encountered by immigrant youth.

#### **General problems of adaptation for immigrants**

There are few studies on the problems encountered by immigrants to North America in adapting to the mainstream culture. A review of the literature indicates that language and cultural barriers, together with discrimination from the larger society, constitute the primary difficulties for most new arrivals.

#### *The Language Barrier*

Knowledge of language is the key to understanding a culture, particularly for visible minorities, whose "mother tongues" are often not English or French -- the two official

languages in Canada. For these individuals, the language learning process may take a significant period of time. For example, unlike English and French, which are derived from symbolic languages such as Latin and Greek, many languages of the world, including Chinese and Japanese, are composed of pictographic characters. Chinese is a pictographic language made up of characters and determined by tones. For example, the word "moon" is shaped very much like the moon (月), and is pronounced as yue with a falling tone (if it is the same sound with a rising tone, it will have another meaning). Other languages involve writings from right to left.

The grammatical structures of English and Chinese are also dissimilar. Chinese verbs have no tenses and the difference in time is indicated by time adverbs only, whereas English verbs have different tenses to show time difference. These striking differences in the two languages make it difficult for Chinese immigrants to learn English. Even for those immigrants who learned English prior to coming to North America or who have completed language classes after their arrival, it may still be difficult to

speak without an accent and to communicate as fluently and impeccably as they speak their mother tongue. Research studies have documented language difficulties among other groups of immigrants as well (see Jabbra, 1983).

Researchers have attempted to identify the kinds of problems that new immigrants encounter when there is a language barrier. Chiswick (1991) explored the relationships between poor language proficiency among immigrants and job earnings.

Chiswick's research was based on survey data gathered from over 800 immigrants in the Los Angeles area. His findings "indicate the importance of English language proficiency, especially reading and writing skills, for the labor market success of immigrants" (Chiswick, 1991, p. 167). Those newcomers who did not know the dominant language tended to seek out a "language-minority enclave", which made it difficult for them to obtain training opportunities and to have job mobility (Chiswick, 1991, p. 168).



Nicassio et al (1986) examined the experiences of Laotian refugees who settled in southern Alabama and middle Tennessee after the Vietnam War. The refugees were requested to answer questions about their experiences and the problems which they encountered upon arrival in the United States. The sample was made up of 23 male and 25 female subjects with a mean age of 35.32 years and an average length of residence in the United States of 42.67 months. Table 2.1 presents the responses of the sample on a number of items relating to adjustment.

Table 2.1

Percentage of Affirmative and

Negative Responses to Acculturative Stress Items

<u>Item</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Learning to speak and understand English	86%
2. Finding a job that is satisfying to you	86%
3. Understanding the behavior of Americans	80%
4. Finding adequate housing	69%
5. Knowing how to take care of daily needs	61%

6.	Conflict over Indochinese and American ways of behavior	58%
7.	Not having enough money for basic necessities	71%
8.	Americans not understanding your cultural ways	82%
9.	Having to live in an undesirable or unsafe neighborhood	57%
10.	Having to get used to a different climate	80%
11.	A loss of social status or prestige	39%
12.	Feeling that Americans are unfriendly or prejudiced towards you	50%
13.	Being unsure of how to act in public places	46%
14.	Difficulty in relating to your sponsor	46%
15.	Difficulty with your children being in American schools or in relating to the American educational system	48%
16.	Not knowing what happened to, or not being able to communicate with, family members or other loved ones in your homeland	77%
17.	Feeling afraid or anxious when you meet Americans	43%

18. Experiencing a significant change in  
your role in your family 68%
19. Difficulty raising children due to  
confusion over Indochinese and American  
values and behaviors 52%
20. Being separated or isolated from family  
members or other loved ones 44%

(Nicassio et al, 1986, p. 25)

Among all the items, the variable of language problems (item#1: learning to speak and understand English), was positively correlated with depression (86%). Also, a few variables such as item#3 (understanding the behavior of Americans), #6 (Conflict over Indochinese and American ways of behavior), #8 (Americans not understanding your cultural ways), #15 (difficulty with your children being in American schools or in relating to the American educational system), and #19 (difficulty raising children due to confusion over Indochinese and American values and behaviors) are, more or less, related to the differences of culture. All of them are correlated with depression to varying degrees. From an

analysis of these data, Nicassio et al went on to conclude that it was conceivable that immigrants without English proficiency and with a confusion of cultural differences might experience considerable social isolation and hopelessness or helplessness in the face of resettlement problems (Nicassio et al, 1986, p. 27).

These findings, however, are based on Laotian refugees with similar backgrounds who arrived in the United States as political or economic refugees. Many of the variables in Table 2.1, such as items #7, #14, #16 and #20, do not apply to immigrants from different socio-cultural backgrounds. While the adjustment problems which the Laotian refugees encountered might not be applicable to other groups of immigrants, the findings suggest that all immigrants will encounter varying degrees of problems in adapting to North American society.

### *Cultural Barriers*

Alvin Toffler (1971) coined the term "Culture Shock" to describe the experience of immigrants in a society that is significantly different from their countries of origin. The

differences can generate considerable conflict. For example, Khalsa Sikhs carry kirpans (a kind of knife) with them wherever they go, consistent with their cultural tradition. Yet, this tradition was not acknowledged appropriate by some institutions. The Peel School Board of Education issued a policy prohibiting students and teachers from wearing kirpans at school, which was challenged by a Sikh person. After a legal battle in the Ontario Divisional Court, the right for Sikhs to wear the kirpan as a religious symbol was granted (C.H.R.R., 1990).

The changes that new immigrants must make in cultural traditions are generally easier to make than those which involve the philosophies of the subcultures of different minority groups. Several researchers have argued that with regard to minority cultures, the conflicts experienced with mainstream society can be very significant. Whittaker (1988) conducted interviews with Mexican immigrants in Vancouver. One common experience of these immigrants was their "yearn for distant family" (Whittaker, 1988, p. 41). One woman

participant, who was a "holiday bride",<sup>1</sup> contrasted her Mexican and Canadian families in the following way:

They are warm. They are loving. My children talk about and miss their Mexican grandmother, but do not talk about their Canadian grandmother. I don't say anything against my Canadian mother-in-law...she's nice, educated lady...but it's not the same.... Mexican children are pampered very well. Not the same way Canadian children are pampered with toys and this and that, but with affection. It's a different way. The mother and father work. Mother comes home and she's tired and brings a toy for the kid and says, 'Here. Have fun. Enjoy yourself.' And then she goes with her friends and has an easy time. While I am at work I look forward to being with my kids. This is a Mexican tradition and you bring it wherever you go... (Whittaker, 1988, p. 42).

Whittaker (1988, p. 42) noted that Canadian child rearing patterns were frequently described by Mexicans as "essentially instrumental, devoid of discipline and true affection." Furthermore, a recurring disappointment for the interviewees was "an inability to establish friendly relations with neighbors and co-workers." The significant cultural differences gave rise to nostalgia among the Mexican immigrants.

---

<sup>1</sup> This term is used to describe Canadians who are on holidays in Mexico bring back Mexican brides.

Jabbra's (1983) detailed study of Lebanese extended families in Nova Scotia also identified differences between Lebanese and Canadian mainstream cultures. He presented case studies of three Lebanese extended families, the Khalils, the Azarys, and the Bedacios, who moved to North America as early as the 1920s. Measured by (1) friendship and marriage; (2) food and hospitality; and, (3) family and sex roles, it was found that the three families still retained much of their cultural traditions. For example, although the Khalils spoke English very well, they had few Canadian friends, and none of them had married Canadians (Jabbra, 1983, p. 59). The Khalils, like other Lebanese, stereotyped Canadians as "sexually immoral, and prone to drink, irresponsibility, and desertion" (Jabbra, 1983, p. 61). Furthermore, the Khalils "eat Lebanese food almost exclusively, with the exceptions of breakfast cereals and the like" (Jabbra, 1983, p. 61). And, "like other unacculturated Lebanese, the Khalils like to entertain, and feel it is an honor to be hosts for important persons" (Jabbra, 1983, p. 62).

However, the significance of the findings of the studies conducted by Whittaker (1988) and Jabbra (1983) are mitigated by the fact that there are not a great number of Mexicans and Lebanese in Vancouver and Nova Scotia. In particular, the nostalgia felt by the Mexicans was most likely due to their small population. However, the Chinese in North America are one of the largest ethnic minority groups, and it is important to consider how the cultural barriers have affected their adjustment to the mainstream society.

Throughout Chinese history, there has never been a time when China had only one national religion. Yet, the imported religions, including Buddhism, Islamism and Christianity, were always adapted to the Chinese context. The Chinese people have been influenced by a mixture of religious and philosophical ideas. Among those, Confucianism and Taoism are the most prevalent and have dominated the minds of Chinese people for thousands of years. The emphasis of both philosophies is balance and harmony, and there is always obedience to authority -- the authoritative figure can be



the ruler of the country, the father of the family, or the husband of the wife and concubines: "Themes of strict discipline, control, proper conduct, and acceptance of social obligations are those most often invoked in descriptions of Chinese culture" (Rosenthal et al, 1990, p. 497). A Chinese person is born to a net of relatedness, and, the identity of oneself is the collective "we."

Based on the observation of Chinese immigrants in the United States, Wang (1991) identified five types of "Chinese in diaspora." Each type is connected with the Chinese word "gen" (根) which means "root", yet it conveys a larger connotation than the English translation. Apart from its biological meaning, "gen" is the source from which one derives his or her personal identity and cultural heritage. The bond to one's "gen" is unique, sacred and eternal.

The five types identified by Wang are *yeluo guigen* "葉落歸根" (with the sojourner mentality), *zhancao chugen* "斬草除根" ("get rid of the root and have total assimilation"), *luodi shenggen* "落地生根" (accommodation), *xungen wenzu* "尋根問祖" (with ethnic pride and

consciousness), and *shigen kunzu* “失根困祖” (the uprooted). Even though none are static, they all have not come out of their Chinese “gen”.

With the exception of the second type, all are closely related to the “gen”, which suggests that the majority of Chinese immigrants still maintain a strong connection to their cultural heritage. And, the second type “total assimilation” is paradoxical in that those who claim to be totally assimilated into mainstream American society are in denial of their own racial and cultural identity. This type is primarily associated with the American-born generations. When they find out that the values and behaviors taught by their parents are perceived as different, repressed and backward by the overwhelming superiority of the dominant culture, they become ashamed and their sole objective is to be accepted. They begin to pursue a new identity and become Americanized. They seek a better education, join Christian churches, and take part in social and cultural activities of the main stream institutions. Some go as far as to dissociate themselves from their Chinese relatives and Chinese friends and even go to change their physical

appearance by plastic surgery. Yet, they are still perceived as Chinese. This "no-win" situation -- the racial and cultural differences and the social distance between the dominant society and the small Chinese American community, would continue to present difficulties for Chinese Americans (Wang, 1991, p. 198).

In sum, the Chinese, who comprise one of the largest immigrant groups in North America, experienced similar adjustment difficulties in terms of cultural barriers as the smaller Mexican and Lebanese groups did.

The above discussions are based on studies on immigrants in both the United States and Canada. As the research for this thesis was carried out in Canada, the question remains whether the findings of previous studies apply in the Canadian context. The United States is always "referred to as a 'melting pot', where immigrants from a variety of countries and cultures are absorbed into American culture" (Hatch and Griffiths, 1992, p. 166). Canada, however, has characterized itself as a "cultural mosaic" and

as having a policy of multiculturalism, under which immigrants can keep their cultural heritage.

The term "multiculturalism" came into being in Canada when former Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, announced in Parliament a policy of multiculturalism on October 8, 1971.

It was designed to:

affirm Canada's pride in all of the various ethno-racial-religious groups that comprise our population, and if they wish to sustain their cultural identity, the federal government will encourage and support them in this (Herberg, 1989, p. 15).

And, in 1988, the government of Canada passed the *Canadian Multicultural Act*. The Act states that:

The Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards of race, national or ethnic origin, color and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada (Ministry of Social Services, 1992, p. 3).

There is, however, a question as to whether Canada is a true multicultural society. While, in theory, the policy of multiculturalism has advocated equality and cultural awareness, there is a question as to whether it has assisted

immigrants in assimilating into the main stream culture. In a way, assimilation and multiculturalism contradict each other.

Furthermore, some of the policies which have been developed under multiculturalism also discourage immigrants, especially the youngsters, from assimilating into the larger society. For instance, one of the major recommendations of the Legislation and Policy sub-committee of B. C. was that the policies and programs of the Ministry of Social Services be translated into various languages (Ministry of Social Services, 1992, p. 9). Certainly, for older immigrants, it would be convenient for them read in their own mother tongues, but for young persons, particularly teenagers who have completed elementary education in their home countries, it is very likely that the translations will function as an obstacle to them in learning English. Since English and French are the official languages (with English being predominant in B.C.), the youngsters have to master one of them in order to establish themselves in the society. The translations will surely slow their progress in learning the

official languages. Therefore, to a certain extent, a policy of multiculturalism can give rise to more difficulties.

### *Discrimination*<sup>2</sup>

Looking back at Table 2.1 which presents data from the sample of Laotian refugees, it can be seen that other variables such as item#12 (Feeling that Americans are unfriendly or prejudiced towards you) are highly correlated with depression (fifty percent). This finding suggests another major problem new immigrants have faced: discrimination. Again, the study on the Laotian refugees perhaps is too limited to represent the experience of other immigrants, but some larger minority groups have experienced the same problems. This is true for the Chinese in Canada.

In Canada, apart from a number of pioneers from China coming during the gold rush in the 1880s, a large number of

---

<sup>2</sup> In Andrews V. Law Society of British Columbia (1989) I.S.C.R. 143 at 175, 10 C.H.R.R. discrimination was defined as:

...a distinction, whether intentional or not but based on grounds relating to personal characteristics of the individual or group, which has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations or disadvantages on such individual or group not imposed upon others, or which withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits, and advantages available to other members of society.

This definition was approved by the Supreme Court of Canada in Brooks V. Canada Safeway Ltd. (1989), 10 C.H.R.R. D/6133 (S.C.C.) and has been relied on by numerous human rights tribunals.

Chinese immigrants arrived when "the industrial development of Western Canada in the latter half of the nineteenth century required massive labor power that was not readily available from existing White workers" (Li, 1988, p. 266). In other words, most Chinese first came to North America as cheap laborers, and were viewed as "inferior".

In the eyes of the American and Canadian public, Americans or Canadians are usually equated with Caucasians, while non-white North Americans are seen as foreigners. A Canadian-born Chinese depicts this phenomenon:

....I would really be bugged when people would say, "Are you Chinese or Japanese?" And, I'd say, "I'm Canadian. I was born here!" They would say, "You? How can you be Canadian?".... "How come you don't have an accent?" (Chinese Canadian National Council, 1992, P. 163).

Moreover, Chan (1981) stated that one of the most enduring images in the history of Asians in Canada, that has always been taken without question, is the "sojourner image." It is the view that the Chinese would "sojourn elsewhere with the clear intention of returning to their home, and they plan to work hard, earn a fortune, and return rich to China" (Chan, 1981, p. 38). Yet, Chan (1981) found

no indication from linguistics and history that Chinese called themselves "sojourners".

First, there was the linguistic evidence. In Chinese, *huaqiao* (華僑) is the translation of "overseas Chinese." "qiao" (僑) in Chinese means migration, instead of "lu ju de ren" (旅居的人) or sojourner (Chan, 1981, p. 38). In addition, as early as 1885, the Chinese Consul General in San Francisco, Huang, Cunxian told an Inquiry into Chinese immigration to North America, which also denounced the "sojourner image":<sup>3</sup>

That it is charged that the Chinese do not emigrate to foreign countries to remain, but only to earn a sum of money and return to their homes in China. It is only about thirty years since our people commenced emigrating to other lands. A large number have gone to the Straits' settlement, Manila, Cochin China and the West India Islands, and are permanently settled there with their families. In Cuba, fully seventy-five percent have married native women, and adopted those Islands as their future homes...

There is quite a large number of foreigners in China, but few of whom have brought their families, and the number is very small indeed who have adopted that country as their future home.

You must recollect that the Chinese immigrant coming to this country is denied all the rights and privileges extended to others in the way of citizenship; the laws compel them to remain aliens.

---

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (Ottawa, 1885, p. 41).



I know a great many Chinese will be glad to remain here permanently with their families, if they are allowed to be naturalized and can enjoy privileges and rights (Chan, 1981, p. 39).

Since the Chinese have never acknowledged that they were transients, the question arises as to how this sojourner conception of Chinese immigrants originated. Chan (1981) argued that the "sojourner image" was a discriminative term, which excluded Chinese from the main stream society in North America. In Canada, the first official reference of Chinese being sojourners was made by the first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald. In 1882, in his second term of office, Macdonald emphasized that the Chinese, who were hired to blast mountains, dig tunnels, and lay tracks for the Canadian Pacific Railway, were unlikely to remain as permanent settlers.<sup>4</sup> In this way, Macdonald simply justified the removal of Chinese from Canada once their labor was no longer required (Chan, 1981, p. 39). This also justified the passage of discriminatory government legislation against Chinese immigrants.

---

<sup>4</sup> Macdonald, Debates, House of Commons, 1882, p. 1476., cited in Chan (1981, p. 38).

### *Discriminatory immigration policies*

Immigration policies of the United States and Canadian governments have reflected discriminatory attitudes towards visible minorities. For instance, in Canadian immigration policy, the Chinese were "subjected to more racist laws than any other group in Canadian history" (Taylor, 1991, p. 5). When the Chinese were brought to Canada to help build the western portion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, they were welcomed because they were willing to accept lower wages. However, after the railroad was finished in 1885, the Chinese Immigration Act was passed, which discouraged Chinese from coming to Canada. A head tax of \$50 per immigrant was imposed and, subsequently, this amount was increased to \$500 a person. The head tax did not completely prevent Chinese from entry. Eventually, a modified Chinese Immigration Act was enacted, which shut the door to Chinese immigration completely (Taylor, 1991, p. 6). This Act was not repealed until 1947.

Table 2.2

Canadian Immigration Law and Chinese Immigration, 1906-1973

Special Exclusionary  
Provisions in Chinese  
Immigration Act and  
Regulations

	Period	Number of Chinese Immigrants	Data Source
\$500 Head tax	1906-10	10325	Canada Yearbook 1945:175
	1911-15	21564	Canada Yearbook 1945:175
	1926-20	7261	Canada Yearbook 1945:175
	1920-23	4353	Canada Yearbook 1945:175
Entry prohibited	1924-37	15	Canada Yearbook 1945:175
	1938-44	0	Canada Yearbook 1945:175
Act repealed 1947 Sponsorship of relatives permitted	1946-50	3584	Immigration and Population Statistics 1974:32
	1951-57	16455	
	1958-62	8010	
No restrictions	1962-67	17831	Immigration and Population Statistics 1974:32
	1968-73	46036	

(Taylor, 1991, p. 5)

Table 2.3

Immigration law and origin of immigrants, Canada, 1946-88

Immigration Law	Years	*White Europe	**Non- White Non-Europe	%	Total Number
Explicit racist Restrictions	1946-50	95	5	100	430,389
	1951-57	96	4	100	1,238,951
	1958-62	92	8	100	482,165
Europeans have sponsorship privileges	1963-67	86	14	100	770,134
No explicit Racist Restrictions	1968-73	68	32	100	921,324
	1974-81	48	52	100	1,140,833
	1982-87	37	63	100	678,060
	1988	29	71	100	160,768

(Taylor, 1991, p. 7)

\* White Europeans = immigrants from Europe, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

\*\* Non-White non Europeans = from Africa, Asia, Central America, South America, and Oceania.

Table 2.2, compiled by Taylor (1991) provides an overview of Canadian immigration laws and Chinese immigration between 1906 and 1973. The explicit discrimination in Canadian immigration policy towards Chinese is quite evident. It makes all the more clear that the "sojourner image" is merely a myth, which has been imposed upon the Chinese immigrants as a tool to justify discrimination against them. And, this myth is so deceiving that it was even perpetrated by members of the Chinese community. Just as Wang's (1991) sojourner type indicates, some Chinese also consider themselves as transients.

In addition, not only the Chinese but other visible minorities have also been regarded as outsiders. Whittaker (1988) documented the image of Mexicans in the eyes of the Americans:

...Population culture has perpetuated the stereotypes of illegal immigrants of California and Texas, marginal city dwellers in the Chicano ghettos of large cities and so on. Indolence, ineptness and buffoonery have been made into Mexican national characteristics... (Whittaker, 1988, p. 29).

In terms of the immigration policy described by Taylor (1991), discrimination against non-White and non-European immigrants in general has also existed in Canada. Table 2.3 presents information on the origin of immigrants and immigration law between 1946 to 1988. It is evident that during the period of restrictions between 1946 and 1962, the percentage of White Europeans who moved to Canada every year exceeded well over ninety percent, whereas the non-White and non-European immigrants consisted of no more than ten percent (Taylor, 1991, P. 7). The non-White and non-Europeans were allowed to immigrate to Canada in greater numbers only after 1967 when the restrictions in Canadian immigration law were repealed.

A major issue is the extent to which immigrant youths encounter the problems of adjustment noted above. The following discussion is focused on this question.

#### **Young immigrants and their adjustment difficulties**

Compared with the few studies that have been discussed previously on adjustment difficulties for all immigrants,

the studies on immigrant youth and their problems of adaptation in the new social environment are even more deficient. Most of the studies on young immigrants in North America reveal that the cultural differences, the language barrier and discrimination from the mainstream culture were also significant problems that the youths encountered in the new social environment. These findings are consistent with those identified by studies on immigrants in general. Moreover, several researchers who have studied immigrant youth found a positive link between the problems of adaptation and gang involvement.

In addition to the problem of cultural differences, Rosenthal and Feldman (1990) identified two dimensions of cultural variation. One is that of individualism/collectivism. They maintained that individualistic oriented societies emphasize individual achievement, personal growth, and the rights of the individual, whereas collective societies emphasize a tight social framework with the needs of the group as the most important. Differences between Chinese culture and English-speaking cultures on this dimension have shown that the

former rates high and the latter rates low on collectivism. independence and autonomy are positively valued in Western societies, but collective cultures attach great importance to social rules that emphasize respect and obedience, maintain harmonious relationships, and depress emotional expression.

The second dimension is that of power distance. This is the degree of acceptance of a hierarchical order in a society. Chinese culture rates high on this dimension, which advocates harmony with hierarchy. In addition, the stress on filial piety increases power distance, and implies children's loyalty and submission to parental wishes. On the other hand, in Western families, individual growth and development is valued and children are encouraged to grow physically and psychologically away from their parents and to be self-reliant and independent at an early age. Consequently, the question remains, "What would happen when families from a collective-prevailed culture immigrate to an individual-oriented one?"



In an attempt to answer this question, Rosenthal et al (1990) conducted two studies in Australia and the United States on the acculturation of first and second generation adolescents of Chinese origin in comparison to youth from the host culture (Anglo-Australian or Euro-American) and from Hong Kong. Questionnaires were administered to a sample of five hundred students in classrooms in the U.S., Australia and Hong Kong. The findings of this study are consistent with those of other studies of Chinese culture and family dynamics. The analyses of the United States and Australia data provided evidence of the individualism and collectivism that distinguished Western and Hong Kong Chinese youth and family environments. In addition, the youths from immigrant Chinese families, whether they were born in the West, Hong Kong, or China, viewed their families as more structured and controlling and as stressing achievement more than did non-immigrant Chinese or Westerners. These findings indicate that not until the Chinese moved to the West do the cultural differences between China and the West become evident (Rosenthal et al, 1990, p. 512).

To study cultural differences in child rearing patterns, Kelley and Tseng (1992) undertook research using a parenting dimensions inventory (PDI) with thirty-eight middle-class immigrant Chinese mothers and thirty-eight Caucasian American mothers of three to eight-year-old children. Comparison of the PDI scale scores revealed that Caucasian American mothers scored higher on sensitivity, consistency, non-restrictiveness, nurturance, and rule setting, whereas immigrant Chinese mothers scored higher on physical punishment and yelling at the child. The results also revealed that the Chinese orientation toward children was moralistic rather than psychological. The underlying socialization is Confucianism. One of the main Confucian concepts is filial piety. Children should try to satisfy their parents and respect and show reverence for their elders in all circumstances. Children were also taught group identification and self discipline. The Chinese immigrant families were considered more controlling and restrictive (Kelley and Tseng, 1992, p. 445). These findings are consistent with those of Rosenthal et al (1990) in terms of

the differences in family dynamics and the cultural dimensions between Chinese and Western societies.

### *Young Immigrants and Youth Gangs*

An important consideration is how the differences of culture affect immigrant youth in their adjustment in a new environment. Several researchers have found that gang involvement is one significant outcome of adjustment failures among young immigrants. For example, Spergel (1992), after examining youth gangs in North America, stressed that social and cultural disorganization in minority communities caused ambiguity and confusion among young people, which, in turn, affected their sense of cultural identity and loyalty. When the ethnic boundaries were weakened by the demands of the new culture, a subculture based on new boundaries developed and became a cohesive new cultural system. This leads to the organization of youth gangs. Racism has also been posited as responsible for gang formation because it hinders opportunities for immigrant youth and fair treatment at schools or at work (Spergel, 1992, p. 130 & 131).

Chin (1990) did an extensive study on Chinese criminality, including youth gangs in the United States. He stated that, according to statistics, Asian students in North America have excelled in the school system. They have been labeled the "model minority". In the United States, Asian Americans made up only two percent of the total population in 1986, yet ten percent of first year students in Ivy League schools were Asians, and in University of California at Berkeley, Asian students constituted twenty-five percent of the student body.

What has been overlooked in these studies, however, is the fact that most Asians who do well in school were either born in the United States or came before they were teenagers. For example, the dropout rate for Asian American high school students in New York city in the class of 1987 was 12.7 percent, which is the lowest of all ethnic groups. However, the Asian dropouts are mostly foreign born who arrived in the United States in their teens (Chin, 1990, p. 93).

According to Chin, the main reason that the young immigrants in the United States left school was language difficulties. In order to learn English, the newly arrived students were forced to begin in the lower grades. This was demoralizing and humiliating to the newcomers. When they had problems with their school work, they did not want to get help from their classmates because it is considered "losing face" to get answers from younger people in Chinese culture. And, they could not turn to their parents, because most likely the parents did not speak English. The language problem also made it difficult for the new immigrant youths to socialize with other ethnic groups at schools. To make matters worse, their difficulties with English encouraged other students to ridicule and discriminate against them.

Chin (1990) argued that family problems were another factor which might contribute to the involvement of young immigrants in gang activities. As noted earlier, in Chinese families, there is a hierarchical structure, and the father is always in a position of authority. However, when Chinese moved to North America, the family changed dramatically.

First, immigration visas for family members were often issued at different times, and many families were separated for a long period of time. One gang member described the separation and its effect on his family this way:

My father came to the United States first. About fifteen years ago, my big brother and I arrived here. My mother and a few brothers and sisters are still in Hong Kong. My father has been working as a kitchen helper for the past twenty years. My brother and I went to high school for a few years, and then both dropped out. We now live in a small one-bedroom apartment in Chinatown. My father sends money back to Hong Kong once in a while. I am not sure when my mother and the rest of the family are going to come; maybe they will never come (Chin's translation of the interview, 1990, p. 95).

Even when the whole family arrived together, the parents had to work hard to support the family. When the children required help, the parents were often absent. A survey of a sample of Chinese high school students indicated that thirty-two percent did not see their father from one day to the next, and seventeen percent did not see their mother from one week to the next. In addition, even if the parents had time, they did not know how to discipline their children in a new culture which was quite different from their traditional culture. Parents often disapproved of their children's demand for autonomy. Therefore, the

relationship between the parents and the children in immigrant families are often filled with conflict (Chin, 1990, p. 96).

Joe and Robinson (1980) conducted a research on four youth gangs operating in the Chinatown of Vancouver, Canada, and they found that the gangs were composed entirely of teenage immigrants recently arrived from Hong Kong. All of the members who were interviewed reported "school problems, particularly with learning English", and "they felt discriminated against by the larger Canadian society" (Joe and Robinson, 1980, p. 339). In addition, most of the youth had experienced problems with their parents:

The fathers and mothers of gang members were found to be working long hours, often at two or three jobs each. Youngsters were left alone on their own and there was little supervision or guidance (Joe and Robinson, 1980, p. 342).

With regard to other minority groups, Vega et al (1993) conducted an empirical research on adjustment difficulties and delinquent behaviors among Cuban American adolescents. The findings identified a number of factors, including acculturation conflict, language conflict and perception of

discrimination which were all significantly correlated with deviance. When the youths could not cope with difficulties, they exhibited delinquent behaviors like cutting classes and drug use. And, involvement in youth gangs was perhaps the most extreme manifestation of their failure of adjustment in the new environment (Vega et al, 1994, p. 139).

Some theories of delinquency, such as social control theories, also supported the correlation between adjustment difficulties and deviant behaviors. Proposed by Hirschi and a number of other theorists, social control theories are premised on the classical principles of "free will" and "social contract". And, unlike other positivist theories, which attempt to determine why individuals commit crimes, control theorists ask the question, "Why do people not engage in criminal activities?" (Shoemaker, 1984, P. 158). Hirschi, the most prominent control theorist, holds that it is social bonds that confine people's natural evil desires, and make them conform to societal norms. The social bonds include attachment to family and friends, involvement in conventional behaviors, commitment to social investments, and belief in social norms and values. When any of these



bonds is weakened, there is the possibility of a deviant act (Vold and Bernard, 1986, P. 232).

**Summary: *Limitations of the Literature***

From the preceding discussions in this Chapter, it can be concluded that young immigrants have experienced adjustment difficulties similar to those of adult immigrants with regard to language and cultural barriers as well as discrimination. The research findings from the literature review suggest that the difficulties which immigrant youth encounter may make them vulnerable to involvement in delinquent behavior, and in some circumstances, in youth gangs. It remains to be determined, however, whether the adjustment difficulties of immigrant youth are correlated with gang involvement.

The studies on adjustment difficulties of immigrants in North America reviewed in this Chapter have considered the adjustment difficulties of immigrants in a general manner. Little attention has been given by researchers to the age and place of origin of immigrants relative to the difficulties. Only Chin (1990) has made connections between

the arrival age of Chinese young immigrants and the dropout rates, maintaining that those who came in their teens had higher dropout rates than those who came when they were younger. In addition, while immigrants were distinguished by their different ethnic backgrounds, no distinction has been made between the different places of origin within the same ethnicity. One significant attribute of the Chinese immigrants in North America is that they have, as their countries of origin, a variety of jurisdictions including Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, North America (local born) and various parts of the world. With this diversity, the question is whether there is "in-group" preference and homogeneity among the different Chinese communities.

Earlier in this chapter, it was argued that discrimination is one of the major adjustment difficulties encountered by immigrants. For young immigrants, Spergel (1992) and Chin (1990) both argued that racism is a factor in gang involvement. Yet, the racism and discrimination are viewed as emanating mainly from the larger society. One question which has remained largely unaddressed is whether

there is inter-group discrimination which may affect the adjustment of immigrants.

Lee (1992), utilizing social identity theory<sup>5</sup>, hypothesized that social identity for ethnic minorities and inter-group comparisons would produce greater preference and perceived homogeneity within the in-group than with the outgroup. To test this hypothesis, Lee surveyed Chinese American and African American students at a university in the United States. The ages of the subjects ranged from seventeen to twenty-seven. Two scenarios, used as stimulus materials, were administered. Dependent measures of group preference and homogeneity were presented afterwards. The overall results showed that "group-membership salience and social identity increased not only in-group preference but also in-group homogeneity." (Lee, 1992, p. 229).

The study conducted by Lee (1992), however, compared only two different ethnic groups, and there was only an increase of in-group "preference" and "homogeneity" when

---

<sup>5</sup> This theory holds that group members attempt to see their group differentiated from other groups and are motivated to preserve and achieve positive group distinctiveness, which in turn serves to protect or enhance a positive social identity for group members (Tajfel, 1981).

group-membership salience and social identity were present. The question of whether tension and discrimination exist among different subgroups of one ethnicity remains to be determined from the present study, which examines the experiences of a sample of Chinese immigrant youth from a variety of jurisdictions in Greater Vancouver.

## CHAPTER III

### CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN GREATER VANCOUVER

Chinese immigrants in Canada are a kaleidoscope (Jim & Suen, 1990, p.9): there are Chinese from Mainland China, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, South American countries, Taiwan, and Canada (local-born). The focus of this thesis is the Chinese immigrants from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The recent influx of Chinese immigrants from these three places has had a significant social, economic and political impact on several North American cities, including Vancouver.

#### **Patterns of Recent Chinese Immigration**

Vancouver has always had one of the largest Chinese populations in North America. Similar to San Francisco, it was among the earliest destinations for Chinese immigrants ever since Chinese immigration to Canada started in 1830s (Li, 1988, p. 5). According to Statistics Canada (1993), in 1991 persons of Chinese origin made up of 10.6 percent of the Greater Vancouver population, an increase from 7.4 percent in 1986 (Sagi, Feb. 24, 1993, p. B6).

Table 3.1\*

Country of Last Permanent Residence by year of Landing

<u>Country of Last Permanent Residence</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1992</u>
<u>Europe</u>	<u>22,709</u>	<u>37,563</u>	<u>40,689</u>	<u>52,105</u>	<u>51,945</u>	<u>48,055</u>	<u>44,871</u>
<u>Africa</u>	<u>4,770</u>	<u>8,501</u>	<u>9,380</u>	<u>12,198</u>	<u>13,440</u>	<u>16,087</u>	<u>19,633</u>
<u>China, P.R. of</u>	<u>1,902</u>	<u>2,625</u>	<u>2,778</u>	<u>4,430</u>	<u>7,689</u>	<u>13,915</u>	<u>10,429</u>
<u>Hong Kong</u>	<u>5,893</u>	<u>16,170</u>	<u>23,281</u>	<u>19,908</u>	<u>29,261</u>	<u>22,340</u>	<u>38,910</u>
<u>India</u>	<u>6,940</u>	<u>9,692</u>	<u>10,409</u>	<u>8,819</u>	<u>10,624</u>	<u>12,848</u>	<u>12,675</u>
<u>Taiwan</u>	<u>695</u>	<u>1,467</u>	<u>2,187</u>	<u>3,388</u>	<u>3,681</u>	<u>4,488</u>	<u>7,456</u>
<u>Asia</u>	<u>41,600</u>	<u>67,327</u>	<u>81,136</u>	<u>93,213</u>	<u>111,739</u>	<u>119,955</u>	<u>139,216</u>
<u>Australia</u>	<u>503</u>	<u>752</u>	<u>745</u>	<u>894</u>	<u>988</u>	<u>952</u>	<u>1,191</u>
<u>North &amp; Central America</u>	<u>13,352</u>	<u>14,840</u>	<u>12,208</u>	<u>12,801</u>	<u>13,865</u>	<u>20,001</u>	<u>20,063</u>
<u>Caribbean</u>	<u>8,874</u>	<u>11,227</u>	<u>9,439</u>	<u>10,909</u>	<u>11,689</u>	<u>12,922</u>	<u>14,952</u>
<u>South America</u>	<u>6,686</u>	<u>10,801</u>	<u>7,255</u>	<u>8,685</u>	<u>8,898</u>	<u>10,582</u>	<u>10,389</u>
<u>Oceania and other Ocean Islands</u>	<u>724</u>	<u>1,074</u>	<u>1,077</u>	<u>1,147</u>	<u>1,659</u>	<u>2,183</u>	<u>2,468</u>
<u>Not Stated</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>59</u>
<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>99,219</u>	<u>152,098</u>	<u>161,929</u>	<u>192,001</u>	<u>214,230</u>	<u>23,781</u>	<u>252,842</u>

**Table 3.2\*\***  
**Country of Last Permanent Residence by Province or Territory**  
**of Intended Destination 1992**

<u>Country of Last Permanent Residence</u>	<u>Canada</u>		<u>Total</u>		<u>Nfld.</u>		<u>P.E.I.</u>		<u>N.S.</u>		<u>N.B.</u>	
			M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
China, P.R. of	<u>10,429</u>	<u>4,598</u>	<u>5,831</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>34</u>	
Hong Kong	<u>38,910</u>	<u>18,816</u>	<u>20,094</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>38</u>	
Taiwan	<u>7,456</u>	<u>3,695</u>	<u>3,761</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	
Total of the above	<u>56,795</u>	<u>27,109</u>	<u>29,686</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>172</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>84</u>	
Asia	<u>139,216</u>	<u>68,406</u>	<u>70,810</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>627</u>	<u>618</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>161</u>	

  

<u>Country of Last Permanent Residence</u>	<u>Que.</u>		<u>Ont.</u>		<u>Man.</u>		<u>Sask.</u>		<u>Alta.</u>	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
China, P.R. of	<u>429</u>	<u>856</u>	<u>2,499</u>	<u>2,626</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>398</u>	<u>667</u>
Hong Kong	<u>2,994</u>	<u>2,974</u>	<u>8,855</u>	<u>9,509</u>	<u>217</u>	<u>233</u>	<u>289</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>1,531</u>	<u>1,709</u>
Taiwan	<u>558</u>	<u>580</u>	<u>808</u>	<u>816</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>136</u>	<u>146</u>
Total of the above	<u>3,981</u>	<u>4,410</u>	<u>12,162</u>	<u>12,951</u>	<u>311</u>	<u>365</u>	<u>455</u>	<u>448</u>	<u>2,065</u>	<u>2,522</u>
Asia	<u>11,823</u>	<u>11,132</u>	<u>36,609</u>	<u>35,734</u>	<u>1,286</u>	<u>1,498</u>	<u>759</u>	<u>802</u>	<u>4,767</u>	<u>6,162</u>

Country of Last Permanent Residence	N.W.T.		B.C.		Yukon		Not stated	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
China, P.R. of	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>959</u>	<u>1,272</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	-	-
Hong Kong	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4,757</u>	<u>5,264</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	-	-
Taiwan	-	-	<u>2,052</u>	<u>2,079</u>	-	-	-	-
Total of the above	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7,798</u>	<u>8,615</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>13</u>	-	-
Asia	<u>10</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>12,215</u>	<u>14,460</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>28</u>	-	-

\* & \*\* Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 are adapted from Statistic Canada, Permanent Residence, Calendar Year-1992. Ministry of Industry, 1993.

Table 3.1 presents statistics for immigration from selected countries and continents to Canada during the years 1986 to 1992. It is clear from the figures that Asia ranked first among all other continents in the number of landed immigrants in Canada for every year. With the exception of 1986, Hong Kong remained the top country of origin for persons landing in Canada every year.

Table 3.2 provides a good picture of the intended destination of Chinese immigrants arriving in 1992 from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China and Asia. The Chinese immigrants from



Hong Kong, Taiwan and China made up of about one half of the newcomers from Asia (56,795 to 139,216). And, next to Ontario, the number of Chinese to B.C. ranked second as the most popular destination with a total of 16,413, most of whom resided in the Greater Vancouver region (over 15,500 according to the figure provided by Statistics Canada, 1993, p. 75).

Unlike previous waves of Chinese immigrants, many of the new immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China came to North America not for "striking it rich", but for seeking political, financial and intellectual security. Whereas the majority of pioneer Chinese immigrants were brought to North America as laborers, Chinese immigration in the new era is voluntary. According to Statistics Canada, in 1992, the principal applicants of investment immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China were 2,022, which constituted around eighty-eight percent of the total number of investing immigrants to Canada. Together with their dependents, the number totaled over 8,000. In the same year, the principal applicants of immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China coming as entrepreneurs and their dependents reached

well over 10,000 (Statistics Canada, Permanent Residents, Calendar year-1992, p. 10&64). Therefore, compared with the grand total of immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China in 1992 (56,795), the investors and entrepreneurs (over 18,000) made up of over 30 percent. An interesting fact is that although British Columbia ranks second after Ontario in the total number of immigrants, the investors and entrepreneurs coming to B.C. well surpassed those choosing Ontario as their intended destination (Dumas, 1994, p. 57).

Due to the economic slowdown in North America that began in the mid-1980s and a lack of English language skills, many affluent immigrants began commuting regularly between their homeland and North America to take care of their businesses or look for job opportunities in their home countries. As a result, the children of these parents are often left unsupervised. This is what the media referred to as "astronaut" or "spaceman" phenomenon.

### **Chinese Immigrant Youth In Vancouver**

In the fall of 1990, there were 52,106 Chinese students registered in elementary and secondary schools in Vancouver.

More than one half of the students' first language was not English, in which Chinese students made up of 53.2 percent (Au, Sept. 1993, p. 47). It is quite evident that students of Chinese origin comprise a very significant part of the school population.

Another fact is that among the new immigrants, the actual number of "astronaut" families, however, is impossible to determine. The reason is that quite a few of these "astronaut" parents have two passports of their home countries. They fly back and forth from the United States, and use one of the passports for the customs and immigration in the U.S. and their home countries, whereas the other passport that has the Canadian Immigration paper attached has no record of their trips. In this way, they will not be deprived of their landed immigrant status in Canada, and they will be able to apply for Canadian citizenship after three years without any delay.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the "astronaut" phenomenon has become quite a problem. On June 21, 1993, the

---

<sup>1</sup> A person ceases to be a permanent resident where a permanent resident is outside Canada for more than one hundred and eighty-three days in any one twelve month period, that person shall be deemed to have abandoned Canada as his place of permanent residence unless that person satisfies an immigration officer or an adjuster, as the case may be, that he did not intend to abandon Canada as his place of permanent residence (Legislation 1976-77, c.52, s.24).

phenomenon has become quite a problem. On June 21, 1993, the Province had a front page coverage entitled "Left Behind: *parents in Asia, kids home alone*"

Dozens of immigrant children are left home alone while their parents earn big bucks in the Orient. The children risk falling prey to an assortment of evils, from recruitment by teen gangs to accidents at home, say school officials.... 'Some of these students are left alone for a limited numbers of weeks and some for the whole school year.'... (Swanson, 1993, p. A1)

The school boards of Greater Vancouver and resource personnel who work with immigrant youth have shown great concerns about this phenomenon. A youth worker with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. noted, "In my caseload of 60 kids with problems at schools, I have identified six children in this (parents being 'astronauts') situation", And, a Richmond school district employee also stated, "They (the children left behind) have more than the average child, but they have no parental support." She gave an example of a 16-year-old boy who drove a 1993 car and "played hooky" all the time. Both his parents were in Hong Kong, and he was home alone (Swanson, July 21, 1993, p. A5).

However, not all of the astronaut parents return. A youth worker from S.U.C.C.E.S.S. head office in Vancouver

said many of these youths were assigned temporary guardians, but "these persons do not really live with the kids" (Swanson, July 21, 1993, p. A5). In addition, a lot of the "astronaut families" have one of the parents (usually the mother) stay home with the children, and it seems to be better than both parents being "astronauts", yet it has given rise to other problems such as divorces. The youth worker from S.U.C.C.E.S.S. who had a caseload of sixty young Chinese immigrants with school problems, indicated that in addition to six "home alone" students in his caseload, twelve more of the youths had one "astronaut" parent in their families and more than one half of these youths' parents had marriage problems (Swanson, July 21 1993, p. A5).

The lack of parental guidance in Chinese new immigrant families presents additional challenges to Chinese immigrant youth, and may hinder their adjustment in the new social environment. When the young immigrants adapt to a new culture, family bonds play a key supporting role. If the family or social bonds are loosened, there is the potential for deviant behavior. Yet, whether these factors threaten

the well being of the new immigrant children remains to be examined.

In addition, at this difficult stage of their lives, the youngsters need assistance and support from social institutions. S.U.C.C.E.S.S., is just such an organization in the Greater Vancouver region. It assists Chinese immigrants to adjust to Canadian society. The sample for the present study was selected from the Junior Mentor Scheme, which was one of the programs operated by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Most of the subjects are new immigrants whose parents are "astronauts", or they are from single-parent families. Interviews were conducted with the Chinese youths in the Junior Mentor Scheme and key resource persons in S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHOD

Before discussing the method employed in the research, it should be noted that the study was designed specifically to examine the adjustment difficulties of Chinese immigrant youth in Vancouver. It was not designed as an evaluation of the Junior Mentor Scheme of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. This chapter begins with an overview of S.U.C.C.E.S.S., and follows with the method used in carrying out the research.

#### **S.U.C.C.E.S.S.: An Overview**

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is a non-profit social service agency incorporated in 1973. It is a member organization of the United Way of the Lower Mainland. The agency is supported financially by the three levels of government and the United Way. Its head office is on Pender street in Vancouver's Chinatown, and there are four branches: the Fraser office, the Richmond office, the Burnaby-Coquitlam office and the Tri-City office. The goals and objectives of the society are specified in its annual report of 1991:

## 1. Our goals as a 'Bridge'

- To assist Chinese Canadians to overcome language and cultural barriers
- To achieve self-reliance
- To contribute fully to the Canadian society

## 2. Objectives:

- - To promote the well being of Chinese Canadians, and to encourage their full participation in community affairs in the spirit of multiculturalism.
- - To assist in the settlement process of citizens and immigrants of Chinese decent in the province of B.C., Canada, particularly those who have difficulties in English.
- - To foster and promote social awareness and community involvement through civic education, volunteer and membership development and preventive social services.
- - To reflect the needs and issues of the Chinese Canadian community to individuals, agencies and the public media, and to advocate for positive social changes.
- - To cooperate and work with other citizens and ethnic groups sharing similar objectives (Annual Report, 1991, P. 6).

Over the past twenty years, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has developed a multitude of services for Chinese Canadians in Greater Vancouver. A number of youth services have been provided as well. The Junior Mentor Scheme is one such service. The pilot project began in February, 1993, which was named "Big Brother and Sister" program. Each term of the program lasted six months, and in the second term, it was



revised to the " Junior Mentor Scheme." A big brother or sister (a mentor) is a caring and reliable adult (18 or above), either studying or working, who is willing to give some of their time to befriend a child -- a little sister or brother. The "big" and the "little" have regular contact. They go out for fun activities or do whatever they enjoy. And, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. also organizes monthly group activities.

### **Interviews with the Immigrant Youths<sup>1</sup>**

As a piece of empirical research, this thesis gathered data based on scientific facts, which are "very special entities....recognized by the fact that they are reliable and valid bits of information". And, "Reliable implies that repeated observations of the same phenomenon should yield similar results, and that different observers following the same procedures should arrive at the same conclusions. By valid, .... it means we are indeed measuring what we want to measure" (Palys, 1990, P. 4-5). There are a number of methods to gather valid and reliable facts. Interviewing,

---

<sup>1</sup> Since underage children are involved in the research, the proposal of the interviews was handed to the Ethic Review Committee of Simon Fraser University together with the letter of consent from S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for approval, and permission of the research was granted on June 21, 1994. Under the specifications of research ethics, while the validity of the interviews is ensured, the names of the interviewees will remain confidential for protection of the rights of the subjects.

one of the methods involving contact and response, was employed in this study.

Interviewing is a technique with both direct contact and direct response. There are three types of interviews: the in-person interview, the telephone interview or survey, and the focus group interview. The in-person interview was used in this thesis. As the name implies, in-person interviews "occur when researcher and respondent stand (or sit) face to face and the former asks questions (verbally) which the latter answers (verbally)" (Palys, 1990, p. 146). The advantages of in-person interview are the "higher response rates, an opportunity to clarify ambiguities as they arise, and an opportunity to ask verbally stingy respondents to elaborate further" (Palys, 1990, p. 146). Moreover, Palys (1990) has argued that the in-person interview is most effective when the researcher is interested in in-depth responses from a relatively small sample of subjects. In this context, a small sample of young Chinese immigrants and resource persons was the target of the interviews.

The next key step was to design the questions for the interviews. Both open-ended and closed questions were used. Open-ended questions leave the respondent latitude for answering such questions as "Please tell me about your school life" (Palys, 1990, P. 152). A closed or structured question only "allows a small range of 'appropriate' responses", such as "please rate the book on a 5 point scale ranging from 0 (dislike the book) to 5 (like it very much)" (Palys, 1990, P. 153).

As previously noted, the Junior Mentor Scheme is divided into a six-month period for each term. From its beginning in February, 1993 to the time of the interviews in July, 1994, the scheme was at the end of the third term. All together, thirty little sisters and brothers had joined. Among those, a sample of twenty-five participants was randomly selected. All of them come from new immigrant families arrived in Canada within the past six years. As mentioned previously, the participants in the scheme have had problems in their new lives in Canada, and either their parents or teachers turned to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for assistance.

The interviews were conducted during the time period from early July, 1994 to September, 1994. A mini-recorder was used and notes were taken. However, most of the youngsters were not at ease when talking with a recorder on. This made them feel nervous and they would forget what they really wanted to say. Many were only able to express themselves with broken sentences. As a result, the information obtained from the initial interviews was not felt to be accurate.

To enhance the data, a second round of interviews with all of the subjects was scheduled in January of 1995. This time, the interviews were conducted during the group activity of the month. No recorder was used. And, notes were jotted down either during or after talking to the subjects. They were more at ease this time and more information was obtained.

The questions designed for the interviews with the young subjects covered a wide range of areas, including family backgrounds; their feelings about schools in Canada

and in their home countries; their new friends; and the problems they have encountered since their arrival in Canada. The questions were designed to provide insights into the experiences of Chinese immigrant youth and, more specifically, to examine the difficulties which they had encountered since arriving in Canada (see appendix A).

There are two types of research method: quantitative and qualitative. The former values "numerical precision", while the latter prefers rich detail (Kidder et al, 1987, p. 57). Both approaches were applied to the research. In addition, case study, as a research strategy that comprises an all-encompassing method -- with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis, has been applied in the research conducted for this thesis as well. Four cases chosen from the interviews are presented in Chapter Five.

According to Yin (1994), the definition of a case study method is two fold: on one hand, it is an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries

between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p. 13); on the other hand, the case study inquiry "copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). In this sense, the case study is neither a data collection tactic nor a design feature alone but a comprehensive research strategy. Therefore, when the case study method was combined with the "numerical precision" and "rich detail," the validity of the research findings was enhanced.

The interviews with the resource persons included social workers, family and youth counselors related to the Chinese community in Greater Vancouver. Several mentors in the Junior Mentor Scheme also shared their thoughts about the volunteer work they have done and their concerns about the new immigrant youth. The questions are similar to those designed for the immigrant youths (appendix B). The purpose

was to find out whether the answers from both groups were consistent with one another. Furthermore, the interviews with resource persons touched upon the question as to whether the involvement of immigrant youths in gangs was related to the difficulties of adjustment in a new country.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Sample**

Before presenting of the findings of the research, the strengths and limitations of the sample should be noted. As mentioned earlier, the sample was selected from the Junior Mentor Scheme of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. The twenty-five subjects interviewed by the researcher were randomly picked from the list of participants in the Junior Mentor Scheme. First, the advantages of the interviewing technique enhanced the present research. In addition, the interviews of the present study took place between the researcher and the immigrant youth who have direct experiences of adjustment difficulties themselves. This certainly contributed to the validity of the data.

However, since the researcher was a volunteer mentor in the pilot project of the Junior Mentor Scheme and knew the

sample subjects, while on one hand, the subjects may regard the researcher as trustworthy, but it is possible that when in-person interviews were conducted, they would not always tell the truth. Furthermore, as the sample exclusively came from one agency, it may not be representative enough of Chinese immigrant youth who have encountered adjustment difficulties in general. It would, however, be difficult to conduct this study by selecting a sample of Chinese immigrant youth in the Lower Mainland because the Chinese population is not concentrated in one area. As well, since all the participants in the Junior Mentor Scheme have experienced adjustment difficulties in one way or another, the subjects selected for the research were both relevant and available sources for the data collection of the present study. It is not known whether the adjustment difficulties experienced by the youth in the sample are similar or different from problems experienced by Chinese immigrant youth generally.



## CHAPTER V

### VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE:

#### CHINESE IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN VANCOUVER

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews conducted with the sample of Chinese immigrant youth. It begins with a general discussion of the interviews with the youth. Four case studies are then presented together with the interviews with the resource persons. These provide greater insights into the data which were collected.

#### **General Attributes of the Sample**

Before the discussion of the research, it is important to note that, all of the subjects have encountered adjustment difficulties and were either referred by their schools or their parents to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for help. The schools and parents recognized the problems the immigrant youths faced in the new environment. The act of seeking help can, in itself, be regarded as part of the assimilation process. Yet, it is not known what specific factors contributed to the decision of teachers and school

administrators and/or parents to refer a youth to S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Table 5.1 presents the general information on the interviewees, including age, sex, birth place, status of family upon entry to Canada, and arrival time in Canada. The mean age of the youngsters was 14.04 years. The youths had moved to Canada with their families during the time period from 1989 to 1993. The average length for their stay, at the time of the interview, in Canada was 3 years, and the mean age at the time of their entry to Canada was 11.24 years old. The gender distribution was 15 males and 10 females.

Forty-eight percent of the subjects were born in Hong Kong; thirty-six percent in Taiwan, and the remainder in the People's Republic of China. Eighty percent (20 out of the 25 families) of the children's families came to Canada as investment immigrants and entrepreneurs, which implies these families are financially secure<sup>1</sup>, and that they are mainly from Hong Kong or Taiwan. Only one family from Hong Kong

---

<sup>1</sup> While the families are financially secure, this does not, in itself, ensure that the youths will not have adjustment difficulties.

Table 5.1

An Overview of the Sample

AGE	SEX	BIRTH PLACE	STATUS OF FAMILY UPON ENTRY TO CANADA	ARRIVAL TIME IN CANADA
11	M.	Hong Kong	entrepreneur	7/1992 (8) *
11	F.	Taiwan	entrepreneur	6/1993 (9)
11	F.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	3/1993 (9)
12	F.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	5/1993 (10)
12	F.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	9/1992 (9)
12	M.	Hong Kong	entrepreneur	8/1992 (9)
12	M.	Taiwan	entrepreneur	6/1993 (10)
12	M.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	6/1993 (10)
13	M.	P.R. China	graduate student	4/1990 (8)
13	F.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	12/1993 (12)
13	M.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	8/1992 (10)
13	F.	P.R. China	graduate student	10/1990 (9)
14	F.	Hong Kong	sponsored by relative	2/1989 (8)
14	F.	Taiwan	investment immigrant	10/1993 (13)
15	F.	Taiwan	investment immigrant	5/1993 (13)
15	F.	P.R. China	independent	6/1992 (12)
15	M.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	12/1993 (14)
16	F.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	9/1992 (13)
16	M.	P.R. China	language student	7/1992 (13)
16	M.	Hong Kong	investment immigrant	3/1990 (10)
16	M.	Taiwan	investment immigrant	10/1993 (14)
17	M.	Taiwan	investment immigrant	9/1992 (14)
17	M.	Taiwan	investment immigrant	11/1992 (15)
17	M.	Taiwan	investment immigrant	9/1991 (14)
18	M.	Taiwan	investment immigrant	8/1992 (15)

\* The numbers in brackets of the same column indicate the age of the subjects by the time of their arrival in Canada.

Table 5.2

The Number of Subjects  
that Regard Language as the Top Difficulty

Arrival Time in Canada	Age (at time of their arrival in Canada)	Still in ESL Class	Regarding Language Barrier* as the Top Difficulty
7/1992	8 years old	no	no
4/1990	8 years old	no	no
2/1989	8 years old	no	no
6/1993	9 years old	no	no
3/1993	9 years old	no	no
9/1992	9 years old	no	no
8/1992	9 years old	no	no
10/1990	9 years old	no	no
5/1993	10 years old	no	no
6/1993	10 years old	no	no
6/1993	10 years old	no	no
8/1992	10 years old	no	no
3/1990	10 years old	no	no
12/1993	12 years old	no	no
6/1992	12 years old	no	no
10/1993	13 years old	yes	yes
5/1993	13 years old	yes	yes
9/1992	13 years old	yes	yes
7/1992	13 years old	yes	yes
12/1993	14 years old	yes	yes
10/1993	14 years old	yes	yes
9/1992	14 years old	yes	yes
9/1991	14 years old	no	yes
11/1992	15 years old	yes	yes
8/1992	15 years old	no	yes

\* compared to other difficulties they have encountered, which are discussed in this Chapter.

came on a sponsorship by relatives. Three families from mainland China came to Canada as students, and the other one in the independent category, in fact came to Canada from the United States, and the father went there as a graduate student.

### **The Language Barrier**

When asked about the difficulties they encountered after arriving in Canada, the subjects focused on language problems, cultural differences and discrimination, which were identified as adjustment difficulties in Chapter Two. Forty percent of the subjects (10 out of 25) regarded the language barrier as the first and foremost difficulty. There appears to be a relationship between the age of arrival in Canada and difficulties experienced with language: the older the youths were when they arrived, the harder it was for them to learn English and to overcome the language barrier (Table 5.2).

From Table 5.2, it appears that thirteen is a crucial age for language problems. Those in the sample who came to

Canada before the age of thirteen have generally been successful in overcoming the language barrier, whereas those who came after that age have had great difficulty in learning English. However, with the exception of the two youths who came to Canada at the age of twelve, the rest of the subjects arrived before the age of ten. And, of the two who came when they were twelve, one of them was in the United States for four years prior to moving to Canada, so she was only eight when she first came to North America. English was not a problem for her. The other 12-year-old youth in the sample attended English school in Hong Kong before immigrating to Canada and progressed very quickly from the regular ESL class. She still speaks with a Hong Kong accent, yet she has no problem communicating in English.

Therefore, while it can not be said for certain that thirteen is the breaking point, it is clear that the language barrier is the most difficult problem for immigrant children who arrive approaching or in their teens. As one of the youngsters in the sample who came in his teens recalled his experience:

I came to Vancouver in 1992 when I was fifteen years old. I almost finished my junior middle school in Taiwan, and I learned English for three years there. However, when I first came here, my first day at school - I will never forget.

I only took two courses in the first semester: math and ESL, and I had the two classes on the very first day. Gee, it was horrible. In the first ESL class, I had a hard time understanding the teacher. She was speaking very slowly, and even I knew some of the things she was talking about, yet I just could not answer in English. It was completely different from what I learned in Taiwan. We learned a lot of grammatical rules, but never got a chance to talk in English.

I heard a lot about how simple math is in the schools here. However, my first math class was a disaster. The teacher gave us an easy test of grade 9 math. It was so easy. I had no problem finishing all the calculations, yet I left the problem solving section completely blank for I did not understand the mathematical terms at all. And, now my English has been improved to a certain extent, yet, I still speak with a strong accent. I am eighteen now. I am supposed to graduate this summer, yet, I have to stay for another year. I really hate it. I want to go back to Taiwan..." (From the interview with H. conducted for this study. The subject spoke with half Chinese and half broken English. This is a translation by the researcher).

For the purpose of the following discussion, the youth in the sample have been divided into group A (under thirteen years of age) and group B (thirteen years of age and over). The ten subjects from group B, who considered English as the most difficult problem, had similar experiences. Their view

was that Canadian English was not the same as what they learned in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. In Chinese, consonants can never be independent words; therefore, many Chinese stress the consonants in English as if they are vowels. As one youth noted:

When I first came to Canada in the summer of 1992, I was thirteen. And, I learned English for one year in Beijing, China, but when I went to the ESL class in my school here, the teacher had a hard time understanding me. Pointing at a book, she asked me "What is this?" I said "dis is a booker." It took her ten minutes to correct me. Now that I have been here over two years, I am still in ESL. My pronunciation has got a little better, but from time to time, I still can not say the "th" sound very well....(Interview with T. Most of the "th" sound was replaced with a "d" by T. and consonants were pronounced like vowels).

In Mainland China and Taiwan, English is compulsory for middle school students, yet most schools still employ a traditional teaching method in English classrooms. Students learn only grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension through memorization, while listening and speaking skills are generally ignored. Therefore, those who had learned English before they came to Canada still have a handicap in speaking the language. The pronunciation problems for Chinese discussed in Chapter Two are quite common among the subjects in group B.



Compared to the youths who had come from Taiwan and Mainland China, those from Hong Kong spoke much better English. This is due to the status of Hong Kong as a British colony. However, even though the youths from Hong Kong had less problems communicating in English, most of them spoke with an accent which is often misunderstood by Canadians. These youths may also have a hard time understanding North American English because they have been taught in a British school system. One youth recalled:

A year and a half ago (the beginning of 1993), I came to Vancouver from Hong Kong. I just turned twelve at that time. I went to a bilingual elementary school in Hong Kong, so we learned every subject in both Chinese and English. I am lucky that language was not my number one problem when I first came. Yet, in Hong Kong, we were taught English by teachers who were trained by the British, and they speak with a Hong Kong accent. I do, too. I still can not understand every word the teachers say here, and they sometimes are confused by my English. For example, I asked my teacher where the canteen was when I first came. She looked at me, very puzzled. Not until I told her that I wanted to look for the place where I could buy lunch did she understand I meant 'cafeteria'. And, one time I said 'three', but the teacher thought I said 'free'....(Interview with C.).

In sum, all of the immigrant youth interviewed for the study had experienced language difficulties. For those who

came in the early teenage years, language problems were perceived to be the greatest obstacle to a successful adjustment in Canada.

### **Cultural Barriers**

Youths of all ages in the sample found it difficult to make friends when they first came and it is still not easy for a number of them now. Those over the age of thirteen unanimously agreed that, after the language problem, making friends was the most difficult aspect of adjusting to the life in Canada. One of them stated:

I speak broken English and with an accent, too. I just can not relate myself to those kids who were born here including Chinese, which we call 'bananas'. They do not want to talk to me because of my English, and I do not want to talk to them. It is not always the language problem. Having been here for over a year now, I can understand most things they talk about even though I do not speak very well. However, when they use slang, I just go nuts. And, at times they talk about things that I am not interested at all. They like to talk about hockey. I do not know any of the names from the Vancouver team, and I do not like to watch hockey games, either. They talk about their favorite bands or pop stars, but I am not familiar with any of them. The few stars I know are Michael Jackson and Madonna. I like Chinese singers such as Jackie Cheung, Leo Lai, Jimmy Lin, Sandy Lam, Vivian Chow, etc.<sup>2</sup> I play a little basketball, and I watch Taiwan baseball or a little NBA. And, I hate the way they dress, too. They

---

<sup>2</sup> All of these people are super pop singers in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

wear much bigger clothing than their real sizes, which are so ugly..... (From the interview with K., who came to Canada in October, 1993 at the age of 14)

The above comments are very typical of the responses obtained from the youths who were thirteen years and older. Most of them had been immersed in their culture of origin. And, with a big Chinese population in Greater Vancouver (even some of the celebrities from Hong Kong and Taiwan have immigrated to here!), they can still keep pace with the trends from home. There are plenty of Chinese stores, video and laser rental places, karaoke bars, and movie theaters around. When they are unable to communicate in English fluently with fellow students who were born here, they would gravitate to their own culture. All of them said that they had made more friends than before, yet all their friends were experiencing the same difficulties: they were also newly arrived Chinese immigrant youths who spoke broken English and who shared similar interests. Therefore, the reasons behind the "making friends" dilemma are derived from both the language and cultural barriers.

Even among those youths under the age of thirteen, for whom language is not the major problem of adjustment, the difficulty of making friends is a major concern.

While these youths acquired English faster than the older youth, it was difficult for them to assimilate into the mainstream culture. A lot of them associated more with immigrant youths who were similar to them. Similar to those from group B, these younger subjects think that they can not really engage with what their fellow students talk about even though they understand every word of it. As one of the girls who came here when she was 10 years old in 1993 related:

I understand what they (her classmates) talk about, but I just can't talk the same. When they talk about new movies, hockey players, or boys, I just do not know what to say...." (Interview with E., one of the subjects from group A who came to Canada in the summer of 1993)

And food, as one of the components of culture, also created barriers for these youths. Young people from Canada eat or drink a lot of cold things, whereas Chinese youth would frequently warm up food, especially meals, because

there is the belief that cold things can make your stomach sick. "...at lunch, I wanted to have warm milk, but they all looked at me and think I am really weird 'cause we drink warm milk at home all the time....", said one of the subjects from group A.

Many of the youths had difficulties breaking the bonds with their culture of origin, while others experienced conflict at home with their parents. Ten of the fifteen youths under the age of thirteen thought that it was their parents who kept them from making friends. D., one of the boys in the sample, complained that his parents were too much in control of his life:

It was real hard to have friends at first. And, now that I have got to know more cool guys, I really want to be the same like them. They wear big baggy clothes, and when I asked my parents to buy me those clothes, they were so mad. They think I would make them ashamed to wear oversized clothing 'cause they said that looks you are 'poor'. I have a hard time to explain to them. They won't listen. You know how Chinese parents are. Whatever they say is the law of the house. And, I play with my new friends in the neighborhood, they will always go and get me. Since those guys did not call my parents 'uncle' and 'auntie' like Chinese kids do, they think they do not show respect to elders, and they are bad kids. As a result, some friends do not want to play with me anymore...." (Interview with D., who came to Canada in 1993 at the age of 10)

Consequently, what should be noted here is that those young Chinese immigrants can be identified by Wang's (1991) five types of Chinese in diaspora as discussed in Chapter Two. The "gen" of the Chinese culture was still strong among these youths of all ages. Even for those who blamed their parents for their failure of making friends, they were a mixture of the "getting rid of the root and having total assimilation" type, the "accommodation" type and the "uprooted" type, because they were in a state of confusion: they wanted to assimilate, yet they were taught not to by their parents, and they failed to disobey their authority figures.

### **Discrimination**

In addition to the language and cultural barriers, ninety-five percent of the interviewees stated that they had been "ridiculed" by youth born in Canada, including Chinese. A few of them had been bullied. The most commonly stated reasons for having been ridiculed included their poor language skills and the cultural differences. One youth

recalled an incident in which he felt ridiculed and humiliated:

One day, I brought some dumplings made with Chinese chives to school for lunch. When I opened the lunch box in the classroom at noon, the smell of the chives (stronger than garlic) came out. They said, "Yuk, what a yucky smell! get out of here, you!" I felt really embarrassed. And, they made fun of me for a long time after that.

Many of the youths in the sample, at all age levels, had been threatened by their peers. One female, who arrived here in 1990 at the age of 9, recalled that at the first school she attended, her classmates were very rude to her, calling her names and telling her to go back to China. One time, she was held up by a bunch of kids after school on her way home, and for no reason they wanted to beat her up. She was so scared that she started screaming.

But, can the fact that these youngsters were ridiculed or threatened be categorized as an act of discrimination? The ridicule or threatening described above is not clearly determined, because it is quite normal for children to laugh at each other even within the same race. This is different from the discussion in Chapter Two about discrimination against visible minorities, which is either

institutionalized or comes from government policies. Perhaps, what can be said is that, due to language and cultural barriers, the new immigrant youth are more sensitive and vulnerable in the new environment; consequently, they feel more hurt when being threatened and mocked.

Furthermore, one interesting phenomenon from the interviews is that, when speaking about the difficulties of learning English and making friends, the subjects also said that not only did they have a hard time making friends with the Caucasian students but they also did not generally get along with different groups of Chinese youth. As noted in Chapter Three, Chinese immigrants to North America come from various places in the world. Even though the sample of the study for this thesis is focused on Chinese from only three jurisdictions - Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China, - the question as to whether there is in-group favoritism and conflict among the Chinese immigrant youth is an interesting one.



## **Conflict Among the Chinese Immigrant Youth**

In the interviews, the immigrant youth identified numerous sources of conflict. All of the subjects from group B (those over thirteen years old) and forty percent of those from group A (those under thirteen) said the local-born Chinese do not want to hang out with them. They all shared the belief that local-born Chinese are "bananas" (yellow on the outside, white on the inside) and they can not relate to them.

Second, close to half of the subjects in the sample (11 out of 25) stated they had very little interaction with Chinese youth from other foreign jurisdictions. One reason for this is that they have a hard time communicating with one another.<sup>3</sup> Even though both Chinese from Mainland China and Taiwan speak standard Mandarin, they may misunderstand

---

<sup>3</sup> In Chinese, the writing is the same for everyone, yet there are thousands of dialects in China. (people who live on different sides of a small creek may speak different dialects.) The standard dialect of the two governments in China and Taiwan is Mandarin, while Cantonese is spoken by people from Hong Kong and Guangdong province, Mainland China. However, the majority of the Chinese in North America speak Cantonese.

each other because of different idiomatic usage in the same language or different slang terms. As one youth noted:

When I first came, I saw so many Chinese faces in my class. I was happy that I could make friends with them, yet soon I found out I was the only one among them from Mainland China. The majority is from Hong Kong, and the rest from Taiwan. I did not understand Cantonese at all, and I do not know some of the words those Taiwan guys use. When the Taiwanese students laugh at certain jokes, I can not get it...(Interview with T.).

This youth also mentioned that the Hong Kong and Taiwan youth looked down upon him because of the view that people from Mainland China are mostly poor refugees. Yet, this youth's father is a wealthy private businessman in China.

On the other hand, Cantonese is spoken by the youths from Hong Kong. Even though it is considered a dialect of Chinese, it is significantly different from Mandarin. In addition, since people from Hong Kong are under the influence of the British, the Hong Kong culture is a mixture of Chinese and British, which is not accepted by a lot of Chinese in Taiwan or Mainland China. As one youth from Taiwan noted:

I really hate it when they (the Hong Kong students) speak Cantonese together. I can not understand a word of it. It sounds like dog barking. And, they all think

they are some body, just because they are ruled by the British, and they think they are superior. I think they are really no body. They are not Chinese, and they are not British either..." (Interview with S.)

It can be concluded, that, for Chinese youth, there are difficulties of adjustment among themselves because of their different countries of origin.

### **The "Astronaut" Phenomenon**

In addition to all the above difficulties, many Chinese immigrant youths in the sample have experienced another problem -- the "astronaut" or "spaceman" phenomenon. This was initially discussed in Chapter Three, and it exists among the twenty-five subjects interviewed for this research. Fifty-two percent of the youngsters (13 out of 25) currently have one or both parents who fly to Asia on a regular basis for business. Among the remaining twelve youths, six are from fractured families, in which three of the divorces were directly related to the "spaceman" phenomenon. The divorce was a direct consequence of separation. The "astronaut" phenomenon and/or the single parent families have had negative effects on the youth. All

of the youths interviewed indicated that it complicated their adjustment. As one of the youths noted:

I first went to the United States with my mom to visit my father. He was a Ph.D. student at time. After we moved to Canada in June 1992, my dad was hired by a big company and he was very busy with his work. My mom used to work at odd jobs here and there, but then went back to China to look for a better job in the booming economy there. My grandmother came from China to take care of me, yet she does not know much about schools and kids here. And she does not allow me to go out to play after school. My father is home very late every night and seldom talks to me except asking how I'm doing at school. I have been a straight A student, but I am so lonely. I hope to have more quality time with my father and I want my mom to return home instead of making money in China. I was so devastated at one time that I wanted to kill myself (Interview with S.).

## **Impact of Adjustment Difficulties on Chinese Immigrant**

### **Youth: *four case studies***

While an attempt was made to determine the impact of adjustment difficulties on Chinese immigrant youth, only one of the subjects interviewed mentioned vaguely about knowing some gang members. There is apparently no relationship between the adjustment difficulties experienced by the Chinese immigrant youths in this sample and gang involvement. Among the twenty-five interviewees, the most common strategy utilized to cope with the difficulties they have encountered is cutting classes at school. In fact,

eighty percent of the subjects had serious records of skipping classes, e.g. skipping more than forty percent of one class in one semester. Four of the youths have attempted suicide. And, more than half (fourteen out of twenty-five) have had problems with their parents or with school teachers. Therefore, the adjustment difficulties have generally resulted in minor deviant behaviors. There was little or no evidence of criminal or gang activities among the youths interviewed.

In addition to the strengths of the case study method which were outlined in Chapter Four, Yin (1994) also noted that when the "boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, P. 13), the case study method should be employed to investigate the phenomenon. In the present study, the phenomenon -- the Chinese immigrant youths in the Junior Mentor Scheme, and the context -- the adjustment difficulties the youths encountered, were not made "clearly evident" after a general discussion of the findings. Therefore, in the following section, four cases were selected from the sample in order to "guide data collection and analysis" (Yin, 1994, p. 13).

The following four cases were selected as representative of the sample subjects. Case #1 (J.) is typical among the older youths (thirteen years and older). Case #2 (U. & V.) compares the impact of adjustment difficulties encountered by two sisters who belong to different age groups (at the time of their arrival in Canada, one was thirteen and the other was nine). This further illustrates that the distinction of age played a different role in the adaptation process. Case #3 (K.) exemplifies the problems of the younger youths (under thirteen years of age), who have fewer problems of adaptation, yet often have conflict with their parents who represent their traditional culture. Case #4 (L.) is the most extreme example of the older youths, who experienced significant difficulties in the adjustment process and became deviant to the extent that he was expelled from school.

Case #1: J.

### Family Background

Born in 1978 in Taiwan, J. was a grade 10 (as of 1994, the time of the interview) student in a secondary school in Burnaby. He came to Canada in the fall of 1991 at the age of fourteen. His parents are investment immigrants and are quite wealthy. They have a big house in Burnaby. J. drove a BMW bought by his father. His parents do not work in Canada. His father goes back to Taiwan four to six times a year to take care of their family business, and each time stays there for one week. When they were in Taiwan, his mother used to work for the Telecommunication Bureau of Taiwan as a senior employee, and his father was a journalist for one of the major newspapers in Taiwan. Both professions have more than average income in Taiwan. They also have a family business, which is a big publishing house.

### Family Relations

According to J., his is a traditional Chinese family with a domineering father and an obedient mother, but it is quite unusual that his mother graduated from the top

university in Taiwan while his father has a high school diploma. As J. stated, "My dad is jealous of my mom, so he controls everything".

J.'s father decided which school J. attended. He was in a public high school when he first came to Canada, but just like other youths from Taiwan, his English was not improving after two years. Without any discussion with J, his father transferred him to a private high school. The private school had no ESL, and the courses were too hard for him. The two English tutors his father hired virtually wrote his homework for him. Half a year later, his father realized it was a mistake and sent J. back to his former high school.

One of the reasons his father put J. in the private school was his discovery that J. had missed one half of his classes in one semester. J. told his "big brother" at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. that when his parents dropped him off every morning at school, he would get out, wait for them to leave and then take buses around town for the whole day. At around 3:00 p. m., when school finished, he would return to school on time for his parents to pick him up. He said there was



too much pressure at home: he had a variety of tutors: two for English, one for math, and one for painting, which occupied most of his evenings, including weekends. And his father constantly scolded him. According to J., the house was like the Central Intelligence Agency. There was a monitor in the telephone system, and all outgoing and incoming phone calls were recorded. When J's father went back to Taiwan, he still knew what was going on at home. J. said he felt like he was in jail. He was interested in a lot of things, among those painting was his favorite, but when he was forced to put certain time each week to learn from an art tutor, he was not interested any more.

J.'s mother is a highly educated and kind hearted woman. Yet, she is very traditional, obeying the old Chinese saying that a woman was supposed to "marry a dog and obey the dog; to marry a rooster and listen to the rooster", (嫁雞隨雞, 嫁狗隨狗) meaning to accept your fate to be an obedient wife no matter what kind of husband you would have. Much younger than her husband, she was like another child of the family. She did not even have any control of the money. When her husband was away from home, he left the portion of

grocery money and checks for the tutors in different envelopes. Though disagreeing with her husband at times, she did not openly oppose him. When J.'s father was not home, she set J. absolutely free. He could do whatever he liked to do. If he did not want tutors, she would trade the checks into cash with the tutors and cancel the classes.

J.'s brother was seven years younger. Coming to Canada when he was only seven, J.'s brother was very different from J. He spoke better English than Chinese, loved hockey, collected hockey cards, and sent gifts to girls he liked. J. did not like his brother at all, calling him a "banana". J. had a big collection of laser disks and compact disks, all of which were current singers from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China.

#### Difficulties encountered

English was a problem for him. Like a lot of immigrant youths from Taiwan, his English was not improved after he had been in Canada for three years. Most of his friends were young Chinese immigrants from Taiwan. They hung out together, listening to Chinese pop music, going to karaoke,

going bowling etc. The Caucasian students at school were only acquaintances. One of the reasons for that was the language barrier; J. used to be ridiculed by his fellow students for his accent in speaking English. And, the cultural barrier was there, too. He shared almost nothing in common with the students who were born here -- no interest in hockey, knowing little about pop music in English, and the dislike of the food young people ate here and the way they dressed. In addition, he said there was a hatred between the new immigrant students and those Caucasian students, even including some local born Asians. One time, in a Social Studies class, the teacher asked if any one had discriminated against the Chinese at school. J. said all White students raised their hands.

#### Impact of the difficulties

With conflict and pressures from home and with the difficulties faced in his new life in Canada, J. "played hooky" very often. He said he got to know some gang members, but had no direct relation with them. At home, materially he had everything, yet he had no spiritual and emotional support. He turned to food to seek security. After over

three years in Canada, he changed from 165 cm (5'5") and 70 kg (155 lb.) to 180 cm (5'11") and 120 kg (264 lb.). He joined the Junior Mentor Scheme referred by a family friend in August, 1993.

#### After joining the Junior Mentor Scheme

J. was assigned with a big brother, who came from Taiwan when he was three years old. He could speak fluent Mandarin. J. refused his big brother at first because he had prejudice against "bananas". His big brother was patient. He knew that J. liked Jackie Cheung, the hottest singer from Hong Kong, who sings both Mandarin and Cantonese songs. When Jackie came to Vancouver in August, 1993, he took J. to the concert. The tickets were quite hard to get, and it was very costly, from \$40 to \$100. However, the big brother got two tickets. J. was very happy, and, from then on, he began to open up to his big brother.

Then, his big brother started to help him with his English, took him to English movies and concerts, went to English restaurants together, and played sports together. He even talked J.'s father into stopping all the tutors.

Gradually, J. had improved. He started to enjoy his life more in Canada and accept things teenagers like here. He got out of ESL class, and was able to speak English a lot better than before. He left the Junior Mentor Scheme after two terms in August, 1994. Yet, he was still seen in group activities.

### Future Expectations

J. was very much interested in painting. He heard about Emily Carr, and was hoping to get in after he finishes high school. However, this was not what his father wanted. His father held the traditional belief that being an artist was not a real profession. J. said he would fight for it, and if he failed to persuade his father, he would study art anyway.

Case #2: U. and V.

### Family Background

U. and V. were sisters, who were born in Hong Kong in 1983 and 1979. They came to Canada in 1992. Their parents came as entrepreneurs. Their mother was staying here with the girls and taking care of their business. As with many new immigrants in the entrepreneur category, whose

enterprises in Canada either lose money or do not make any profit, their business was not running very well. U. and V.'s father had to become an "astronaut" to make money in Hong Kong to support the whole family. After one year of traveling back and forth, their father found a close friend to operate the business in Hong Kong. This allowed him to stay in Canada with his family. While the father and U. and V. were happy that the family was reunited. Their mother wanted a divorce and left with her lover. U. and V. were now living with their father.

### Family Relations

The sisters would not say anything about their mother in front of their father. And, their father hired a maid to take of them. He was seldom at home. When the two sisters talked about their father, they seemed to be afraid of him. They saw their mother every weekend, but she was expecting a baby. They felt they had been deserted. U. was younger and V., attempted to protect her all of the time. Yet V. herself was reserved and silent in front of other people. She did not do well at school. She was not making progress in her

ESL class. Her school counselor referred her case to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in early 1994.

### Difficulties encountered

U. seemed to enjoy school here. She did not have a clear memory about her school in Hong Kong. V. missed Hong Kong a lot more. She had a happy family in Hong Kong. She blamed everything on their coming to Canada.

For both of them, language was the first problem they faced. U. had done well in her ESL class, and her English was now better than her Chinese. V. was still in ESL class. She said she had no motive to learn English. Another problem for them was making friends. V. regarded her sister as her best friend. She said other students who were born in Canada, no matter they were Caucasians or Chinese, did not want to talk to her because they laughed at her English and called her names. Although the new immigrant students hung out together, she did not like them because as she said, "they just want to show off how rich they are". U. had made some friends at school, but she liked her sister the best,

so she seldom went out to play with her friends when her sister was around.

#### Impact of the difficulties

V. had been very depressed due to all the problems she had met since moving to Canada. She looked older than her age. She was very uptight, and seldom smiled. She did not want to go to her ESL class, and whenever she did attend, she did not speak. Her school counselor turned to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for help when she thought she could not help V. improve her English.

#### After joining the Junior Mentor Scheme

Their mentor also came from Hong Kong and had a similar childhood. Her parents were divorced after moving to Canada. Yet, she was adopted by her aunt when both parents remarried. The latter half of her childhood was good after she started to live with her loving aunt and uncle. She could relate to U. and V. in many ways. V. liked her the first time she met her.



The big sister gave her generous help to the sisters. She went to their house at least once a week to play with them and took them out to have fun. V. liked reading stories. She then bought English fairy tales for V. and read for her. She taught them games in English, too. V. was still in ESL class, yet she was making progress. She was happier than before.

### Future Expectations

"I do not know what to do when I grow up, but I will make a lot of money, and let my dad take a break..." U. said. V., having gone through a tough stage in her life, was very grateful to her big sister. She said she wanted to become a social worker when she grew up.

Case #3: K.

### Family Background

K. was a 14 year-old girl in grade 8. Born in Hong Kong in 1981, she had been adopted at the age of four. Two years later, her adopted father died of cancer. Her adopted mother moved to Canada with her in 1989 with the sponsorship of

their relatives in Vancouver. Her mother had some property in Hong Kong, which was enough for them to make a living here, and she had a few part time jobs since they moved to Canada to make some extra money.

### Family Relations

K. had a troubled relationship with her adopted mother. To begin with, her mother had been nice to her when her father was alive. Yet, after the father died, her mother had a superstition that the adoption of K. was the curse for her husband's death. Her mother was a traditional Chinese woman, and not very educated. She was not used to the life in Canada herself. However, K. came here when she was eight, and grew up in a culture that was quite different from her mother's. They had frequent arguments. And when she had problems at school with her fellow students or teachers, not only was she unable to get help from her mother, but also her mother would end up scolding her. On one occasion, she had problems with her English teacher, and talked to her mother about it, but her mother blamed her for everything. She had attempted suicide, which brought her to the attention of the Ministry of Social Services. She was

referred to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. through the Ministry in late 1992.

Furthermore, unlike girls of her age who dress up with colorful clothes, K's mother always bought drab second hand clothing. With a pair of brown glasses, K. looked at least three or four years older than her age. And, her expressions were not those of an average teenage girl's, which were supposed to be cheerful and carefree. Instead, she looked gloomy and depressed. The only thing she liked before joining the Junior Mentor Scheme was Star Trek. She enjoyed it not because it was fun and exciting, but she could picture herself in that imaginary world.

The trouble K. was having with her mother at the time of the interview was that the mother went back to Hong Kong for a few months after getting her Canadian citizenship. Her friend's mother was her legal guardian. Her mother recently phoned, and said she probably would stay in Hong Kong a little longer. When she came back, she would take K. with her and move back to Hong Kong. K. was really mad, because she had completed most of her schooling in Canada and had

become used to life here. The last time when she was back to Hong Kong for holidays, she had hated it. Moreover, she spoke Cantonese, but was unable to write Chinese. She said if her mother forced her to go back, she would run away. The youth worker was having difficulty dealing with K.'s case. Unless a permanent legal guardian could be found for her in Canada, K. would have to follow her mother. The youth worker had a few long distance phone conversations with the mother and it seemed that the mother would insist that K. go back to Hong Kong., and she would not want to leave K. in Canada with a guardian.

#### Difficulties encountered

K. had completed grade one in elementary school in Hong Kong. And, while she had experienced problems with her teachers in Canada, after attending more activities in the Junior Mentor Scheme, she was beginning to like school more.

Language was a problem for K. when she first arrived in Canada, but it was not a major one. She had problems making friends. She felt inferior to other students, because she did not dress the same way, and, due to the problems at

home, she had locked herself up emotionally. She was very silent.

#### After Joining the Junior Mentor Scheme

K. had improved considerably since joining the Junior Mentor Scheme. She was in the pilot program. She gradually smiled more and started to behave like a child. And, the family she was staying with was a great help as well. It is a family of inter-racial marriage -- the father is Chinese and the mother is Caucasian. They have a girl and a boy. The girl and K. were classmates. The mother is a homemaker. They live very close to K.'s place. The mother has always been concerned about K.

K.'s big sister went out with her at least once a week. She took her to movies, Science World, museums and did sports with her such as swimming and skating. And, she talked to K.'s mother, and suggested that K. take part in activities. Then, K. got into a karate class shortly before her mother left for Hong Kong. The class had been really helping her a lot. She was stronger physically and she looked more lively now. She already finished with the Junior

Mentor Scheme after three terms, and she still went to the group activities. A youth worker was provide for her when this problem with her mother started.

### Future Expectations

K. wanted to become a psychologist. However, if nothing worked out in Canada and her mother forced her to go back to Hong Kong, K.'s future would be very much in question.

Case #4: L.

### Background Information

Similar to J., L. was born in 1978 in Taiwan. He came to Canada a year later than J. in 1992. He was a grade 10 student in a secondary school in Port Coquitlam. His family was in the investing immigrant category, too. He had two older brothers. His parents were not used to the life in Canada, and in addition, there was nothing for them to do here because they did not speak a word of English and neither of them finished high school. They were building contractors in Taiwan, and made a fortune in the real estate there. The reason of L.'s parents to move their family to Canada was that their children could have a better education

here. After a few months of staying in Canada, the parents started to travel back and forth. Now they spent most of their time in Taiwan, and took turns to come back to check their children every three or four months since L. and his brothers were old enough to live by themselves.

#### Family relations

L. was the youngest of the three children in the family, having been very much spoiled by his parents. His oldest brother could not control him at all. He talked to his parents in a very rude and demanding manner. His parents would not do anything about it. They had become even more tolerant of his insolence after the family moved to Canada, because they did not live with him all the time. L.'s demands had to be satisfied all the time. On one occasion, when the parents did not allow L. to go out at night, he threatened them with a knife.

#### Difficulties encountered

L. hated schools in Canada because he did not want to learn English. He hated his parents for moving the family to Canada: "I miss Taiwan a lot. I have a lot of friends, and

we played all types of games together". L. has never had an interest in learning English. When he took English in the first year of middle school, his teacher made fun of him because he was a little slow in speech even in Chinese. This hurt him badly. He has hated English ever since. Therefore, language was his top problem. Since his parents were not always in Canada, he kept cutting classes at school. In April, 1994, he had an argument with his ESL teacher. The school referred L. to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. because they could not contact his parents.

L.'s situation improved after he joined the Junior Mentor Scheme. However, he became involved in a serious incident.

L. phoned in sick one Friday morning to his ESL teacher. In fact there was nothing wrong with him. He just did not want to go to the classes. On that night, there was a school dancing party. He wanted to go because he heard the girl he had a crush on would be there. When he got there, he saw his ESL teacher checking admission at the door. The teacher was pregnant. She saw him and said he could not go



in because he was "sick". She asked him to admit to her that he lied. They started to argue, and finally, he hit her. The police were called, and he was subsequently expelled from school. His parents were called to come back from Taiwan.

### Future Expectations

L. was staying home at the time of the interview. His parents were thinking of taking him back to Taiwan, but he was already sixteen, and if he went back, he could not leave until he finished serving in the army.<sup>4</sup> S.U.C.C.E.S.S. was trying various options to help. There was a chance that he would be going to another high school, but he would be on academic probation for one semester. L. regretted what he did. He never thought that he could be kicked out of school. He wanted to start all over if he could go to the new school.

---

<sup>4</sup> According to the law in Taiwan, it is compulsory for every male who is eighteen years old to be drafted into the army for two years. And, boys can not emigrate from Taiwan once they reach fifteen years old. If they go back there after turning fifteen years old, they can not leave until they finish the service in the army.

## **An Analysis of the Cases**

The analysis of case study evidence is "one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies" (Yin, 1989, p. 105). According to Yin (1989), there are no fixed guidelines about how to analyze case studies. It is generally up to the investigator to employ his/her own style of rigorous thinking, along with a sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations.

From these four cases, it can be noted that, consistent with the discussion of the sample, the age of arrival in Canada played an important role in the adjustment process of the immigrant youth. K. and U. both came before their teens, so it was easier for them to adapt to a new environment. When the cases of the two sisters, U. and V., are considered, along with J's dislike of his younger "banana" brother, a contrast between the different age groups in terms of adjustment difficulties is revealed: V., the older sister had experienced a much more difficult adjustment than

U., who was younger, and J.'s brother had gone through an easier transitional stage than J. had.

In addition, the impact of Chinese culture was evident in the cases. The most typical example was J's family (case#1). His father was the "authority" figure, whom everyone in the family had to obey. This was consistent with the discussion on Chinese culture in Chapter Two. And, the Chinese cultural "gen" was deeply rooted in those who came to Canada in their early teens as in the cases of J., (case#1) L. (case#2) and U.(case#3). On the other hand, in K.'s case (#4), there was conflict between the two cultures. K., educated in the school system in North America, simply could not get along with her Chinese mother. There was no communication in the family, and K. was torn between the two cultures.

A significant observation was found relative to the issue of gang involvement with the immigrant youth's adjustment difficulties. From the discussion of the four cases, it again indicated that only behavioral problems, such as cutting classes and having trouble with teachers and

families, were correlated with the adjustment difficulties. Perhaps, L. (case #2), who was expelled from school, had the most serious problems of adaptation in a new social environment among all the twenty-five subjects in the sample.

### **Interviews with the Resource Persons**

One of the big brothers and sisters agreed to talk about his experience in volunteering in the Junior Mentor Scheme. And, two family and youth counselors from S.U.C.C.E.S.S. have also provided their valuable thoughts on the adjustment issue of the immigrant children.

G. became a volunteer worker of the Junior Mentor Scheme, with a willingness to understand and help these children. He said he had really learned a lot. He thought that new immigrants who came in their young adolescent years needed proper guidance in adjusting a new environment. Apart from the common adjustment problems encountered by most immigrants, such as language and cultural barriers, the new immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China also had difficulties with the "spaceman" or "astronaut" families.

Both G's "little brothers" were from "astronaut" families. G. said, "When they have problems in school, they do not have a family to support them. Of course, this creates more problems".

N. is the youth counselor in charge of the pilot project of Big Brothers and Sisters program, which started in early 1993. In the second term, the project was revised to become the Junior Mentor Scheme, and it was taken over by W., another worker from S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Through their experiences in the Junior Mentor Scheme, both N. and W. thought that the young immigrants would be the most at risk in the adjustment process if they came in their teens. Compared to those youths who were younger, teens had more difficulties in learning a new language. And, in contrast to adults, they were at a stage of change -- physically and psychologically. Most of the cases N. and W. had were referred by schools. And they believed that when those new immigrant youngsters had problems at schools, it means they had problems at home as well.

Speaking about gang related activities, N. and W. agreed that theoretically, a failure to adjust to the new environment for the young immigrant youth might lead to the involvement with gangs, because the youngsters were quite vulnerable. Youths experienced a great deal of pressure, including language and cultural barriers and family conflicts. However, gang involvement was not significant among their cases. Most of the youth have had behavior problems at home or at school, and required help. As W. concluded, "They (the new immigrant youth) still need help to overcome the difficulties. If social institutions like ours are not taking the responsibility, I am not sure who they will turn to when their behavior problems become worse".

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the adjustment difficulties experienced by twenty-five Chinese immigrant youth who had been referred to a service agency, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for assistance. In the literature review in Chapter Two, it was noted that both young and adult immigrants encounter major difficulties when attempting to adjust to a new social environment. Language and cultural barriers often prevent them from assimilating into mainstream North American cultures, as do prejudice and discrimination. Chinese immigrants have experienced many hardships due to the significant differences in Chinese culture and the host cultures. The hard-to-break Chinese "gen" (root) makes it extremely difficult for Chinese immigrants to adapt to mainstream North American society.

Most researchers argue that these difficulties, when experienced by immigrant youth, may be correlated with criminal and/or gang activities (see Chin, 1990; Joe and Robinson, 1980; Spergel, 1992; and Vega et al, 1993). In

addition, some theories of delinquency, particularly social control theories, also contend that such difficulties may lead to deviance (Shoemaker, 1984 & Vold and Bernard, 1986).

In Chapter Three, an in-depth examination of Chinese immigrants in the greater Vancouver region was provided, including the patterns of recent Chinese immigration and current problems faced by Chinese immigrant youth. In addition to the problems of adaptation discussed in Chapter Two, how the "astronaut" phenomenon also hinders the young Chinese immigrants from adjusting to a new social environment was noted. This phenomenon concerns the fact that the parents of a number of the immigrant youth commute back and forth between Canada and Asia in order to make money, leaving their children behind to fend for themselves. This has become a significant problem for both Canadian schools and Canadian society in general.

Chapter Four outlined the method employed in the present study, including an overview of S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the social agency that provides assistance for new immigrants in the Greater Vancouver region. Both qualitative and



quantitative approaches were applied in the present research. In addition, case studies (Yin, 1994), as a research strategy that embraces the logic and decision incorporating specific approaches to data collection and data analysis, was employed as well. The data for most studies in this area have been gathered by means of interviews between the researcher and the resource persons, whereas in the present study the data were also obtained by means of interviews, but the interviews were between the researcher and the persons actually experiencing the problems of adaptation, which certainly enhanced the strength of the data.

While the findings, which are presented in Chapter Five, support many of the findings of previous research, they also suggest additional factors which contribute to the difficulties experienced by Chinese immigrant youth. The results of the present study and their implications are discussed in the following section.

## Results

Consistent with previous research, the present study revealed that the twenty-five subjects who were interviewed for this study experienced adjustment difficulties similar to those experienced most immigrants to North America. Problems common to all immigrants, including those resulting from language and cultural barriers as well as from discrimination, were also common to those in the sample of the present study. However, the language barrier, was more problematic for some subjects than it was for others. This could be accounted for in terms of age: the younger group (under thirteen years of age) overcame the language problem much faster than did the older group (thirteen years of age and older).

Members of both age groups had problems assimilating into the dominant culture, such as making friends and understanding the behaviors of their Canadian peers. Again, the older youths encountered more difficulties in their attempts to accept the host culture. This is not to say that it was easy for the younger ones to assimilate; many of them

experienced conflict with their traditional Chinese parents, who were not eager to see their children abandon their culture.

The only previous research to appreciate the importance of distinguishing subjects according to age is Chin's (1990). He concluded that, even though Chinese youth are expected to excel at school, those who arrive in North America as teenagers are very likely to do poorly.

It should also be noted that discrimination from the larger society was not regarded as a major problem by the twenty-five Chinese youths. Although they acknowledged being ridiculed and/or threatened by their peers from time to time, they felt that most young persons go through the same thing.

The present study recognizes the fact that Chinese immigrant youth come from a variety of geographical jurisdictions. For example, the twenty-five subjects included Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China, most of whom could not get along with the local-born Chinese

youths, who were referred to as "bananas." Furthermore, the three different groups in the sample seldom had any interactions with one another, and when they did, there was often conflict. Mainland Chinese, in particular, were discriminated against by youths from Taiwan and Hong Kong, because they were believed to be poor refugees. Therefore, before integrating into the mainstream society, the youths had to go through an adjustment process with regard to their immigrant peers. This two-stage adjustment period obviously confounded their acclimatization to Canadian culture.

Moreover, the "astronaut" phenomenon, which was discussed in Chapter Three, was common among the interviewees. More than one half of the subjects came from such families, and three fractured families were the direct result of one parent being an "astronaut." This phenomenon militated against the successful adjustment to the new social environment, as the loosening of family bonds created more difficulties for the youths.

Most previous research contended that there is a link between the problems of immigrant adaptation and criminal or

gang activities. The present study, however, found little connection between the two. Adjustment difficulties were only associated with some minor delinquent behaviors, such as cutting classes and having problems with teachers and/or parents.

### **Implications**

The first implication of the present study is that it found little connection between the problems of immigrant adaptation and criminal or gang activities, whereas most previous research did (see Chin, 1990; Joe and Robinson, 1980; Spergel, 1992, and Vega et al., 1993). Since the twenty-five subjects who were selected for the research were referred by their parents and/or schools to the Junior Mentor Scheme of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for assistance, the referrals themselves can be regarded as recognition of assimilation. This, perhaps, can account for the insignificant relationship between adjustment difficulties and criminality. In addition, the fact that the researcher was involved in the Junior Mentor Scheme and knew the youths, as discussed in Chapter Four, may also play a role in obtaining this result of insignificant relationship

because the youths would probably not want to confess if they have been involved in any gang activity. However, this result may also indicate that even though young immigrants experience difficulties in adjusting to a new social environment, this does not necessarily lead to criminality. In a new country, social bonds (Shoemaker, 1984), particularly attachment to families and to schools, may loosen, but it does not mean that immigrant youth will become deviant.

Moreover, previous research and theories tended to make sweeping generalizations with regard to the problems faced by immigrants. Indeed, all immigrants to North America share similar problems of adjustment, as was discussed in Chapter Two. Yet one can not ignore the fact that they come from different parts of the world and that they arrive in North America at different ages. Even within the same nationality, immigrants (such as the Chinese, for example) may come from different geographical jurisdictions. All these factors complicate the adjustment problems.

Only two previous studies, Chin's (1990) and Lee's (1992), made some distinctions within immigrant groups: the former with regard to age and the latter with regard to in-group preference and homogeneity. The present study, however, has examined both and, in addition, it has acknowledged the conflict that exists among different groups of Chinese immigrant youth.

In recent years in Canada in general, and in Greater Vancouver in particular, the influx of Chinese immigrants has brought with it significant changes. While various ESL (English as a Second Language) classes have been offered to immigrants to help them adjust to a new life, there has been no significant progress in overcoming the language barrier. The findings from the present research indicate that other factors also hinder the immigrants from adjusting to their new life in Canada. One of the most noticeable findings, and one which has definite implication for policy, is that the differences between immigrants with regard to origins and ages should be taken into account when attempting to counter problems of adaptation. As has been mentioned, most

immigrants, particularly the Chinese, have to go through a two-stage adjustment period: (1) among different groups of Chinese and (2) between themselves and mainstream society. Thus, a second policy implication of the present research is that the problems of immigrant adaptation for immigrants should be dealt with on an individual as well as on a group level.

As mentioned at the outset, this thesis is not an evaluation of either the Junior Mentor Scheme or S.U.C.C.E.S.S.; nonetheless, a third implication for policy may be found in the fact that the present research clearly shows such programs provide important assistance to immigrant youths who are attempting to adjust to a new social environment. Interestingly, all the subjects in the sample of the Chinese immigrant youth were referred to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. either by their parents or by their schools. If there were more such programs for immigrant youth, they could be accessed by families and schools whenever necessary.



The final implications of the present study concerns future research. As mentioned previously, the present study found little correlation between adjustment difficulties and gang involvement, and there are a few reasons to be accounted for this result, including the selection of the sample and researcher bias. Yet, perhaps, an implication for further research to find out if this connection exists is to conduct the study through other avenues, such as examining the cases of youth gangs in law enforcement agencies.

In addition, the twenty-five subjects, selected from the Junior Mentor Scheme developed under the auspices of S.U.C.C.E.S.S., were recent immigrants. Given the short time-span of the present research, and given the fact that the adjustment process may take a long time, it is unclear whether or not the subjects of the research will eventually assimilate into mainstream Canadian society. Since at the time of the interviews, the average age of the subjects was a little over fourteen years, and they had been in Canada for no more than six years, it would be worthwhile to conduct a longitudinal research on this sample group of at

least a four-year period after most of these youths complete high school.

In sum, given the paucity of literature on immigrant youth and crime, the study completed for this thesis has certainly made substantial contributions to the research in this area. The findings provide new insights into the adjustment difficulties faced by Chinese immigrants to Canada in general and to Greater Vancouver in particular.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### *Questions For The Immigrant Youth:*

1. Background information: age, sex, birthplace.
2. Family information: parents' professions (both back home and in Canada, and whether they are "astronauts".), how their families came to Canada -- entrepreneurs, investment immigrants or other, their relations with their parents, etc.
3. The length of time lived in Canada.
4. School: both in Canada and home -- general feelings.
5. The difficulties they have encountered here: language, discrimination, culture shock, etc.
6. If there are any of the difficulties faced by the respondent, how does he or she cope with it?
7. Types of friends they associate with, and the extra curricular activities they do together.
8. Involvement with the community: attending any activities in the community or social institutions. Are any of the activities helpful for overcoming the difficulties they have faced?
9. Their expectations of their futures and their parents'-- are there conflicts ?

## Appendix B

### **Questions For The Resource Persons:**

1. General impression of the youth with whom you work.
2. The common difficulties you think exist for young people in coping with the new environment.
3. Do you see how the failure of overcoming the difficulties could lead to deviant behaviors?
4. How does the work you do help the youth to cope with the difficulties?
5. How important is your work both to you and to the youth? And, what more do you think you could do to give them assistance?
6. Do the social institutions have adequate programs to help the new immigrants? If not, what are the limitations?
7. How can you and the institutions at large improve what you do for the young immigrant youth?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrews v. Law and Society of British Columbia (1989),  
I.S.C.R. 143 at 175, 10 C.H.R.R. D/5719 at D/5746
- Au, J. (1993, September). Where do secondary students in  
B.C. come from? Cathay T.V. Monthly (國泰電視). p. 47.
- Chan, A. B. (1981, Fall). Orientalism and Image Making: *The  
Sojourner in Canadian History*. The Journal of Ethnic  
Studies, 9(3), 37-46.
- Chinese Canadian National Council, *The Women's Book  
Committee* (1992). Jinguo: Voices of Chinese Canadian  
Women. Toronto: Women's Press.
- Chin, Ko-lin (1990). Chinese Subculture and Criminality:  
Non-traditional crime groups in America. New York:  
Greenwood Press.
- Chiswick, Barry R. (1991). Speaking, Reading, and Earnings  
among Low-skilled Immigrants. Journal of Labor  
Economics, 9(2), 149-170.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (1976-77), Legislation:  
c. 52, s. 24.(2)
- Dumas, J. (1994, March). Report On the Demographic Situation  
in Canada 1993. Ottawa: Ministry of Industry.
- Hatch, A. & Griffiths, C.T. (1992, Fall). Youth crime in  
Canada: *observations for cross cultural analysis*.  
International Journal of Comparative and Applied  
Criminal Justice, 16(2), 166-183.
- Herberg, E.N. (1989). Ethnic Group in Canada: Adaptations  
and Transitions. Scarborough, Ontario: Nelson Canada.
- Huang, E. & Jeffery, Lawrence (1992). Chinese Canadians:  
Voices from a Community. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre  
Ltd.

- Jabbara, Nancy W. (1983) Assimilation and Acculturation of Lebanese Extended Families in Nova Scotia. Canadian Ethnic Studies, 15(1), 54-72.
- Jim, E. & Suen, P. (1990). Chinese Parents & Teenagers in Canada - Transitions and Cultural Conflicts. Vancouver: B.C. Council for the Family.
- Joe, D. & Robinson, N. (1980, September). China Town's Immigrant Gangs: *the new young warrior class*. Criminology, 18, 337-345.
- Kelley, M. & Tseng H. M. (1992, December). Cultural Differences in Child Rearing: *a comparison of immigrant Chinese and Caucasian American mothers*. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 23(4), 444-455.
- Kidder, L. H., and Fine, M. (1987). Qualitative and quantitative methods: When stories converge. In M.M. Mark & R.L. Shotland. (Eds.) Multiple Methods in Programme Evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, pp. 57-75.
- Lee, Yueh Ting (1992). Ingroup Preference and Homogeneity Among African American and Chinese American Students. The Journal of Social Psychology, 133(2), 225-235.
- Li, P. S. (1988). The Chinese in Canada. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Minister of Social Services. (1992, August). Multiculturalism: Towards Cultural Competence. Province of British Columbia: Minister of Social Services.
- Nicassio, P. M., Solomon, G. S., Guest, S. S., & McCullough, J. E. (1986, Spring). Emigration Stress and Language Proficiency as Correlates of Depression in a Sample of Southeast Asian Refugees. The International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 32, 22-28.

- Palys, T.S. (1990). Research Decisions: quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Simon Fraser university: School of Criminology.
- Pandori v. Peel Board of Education (1990), 12 C.H.R.R. D/364 (Ont. Board of Inquiry)
- Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1885) Ottawa, p. 41.
- Rosenthal, D.A. & Feldman S. S. (1990). The Acculturation of Chinese Immigrants: *Perceived Effects on Family Functioning of Length of Residence in the Cultural Contexts*. The Journal of Genetic psychology, 151(4), 495-514.
- Sagi, D. (1993, February 24). Asians make up 1 in 9 in B.C., census shows. Vancouver Sun, p. B6.
- Shoemaker, D.J. (1984). Theories of Delinquency: an examination of delinquent behaviors. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Spiegel, I.A. (1992, March). Youth Gangs: *an essay review*. Social Service Review, 66, 121-140.
- Statistics Canada (1993). Annual Demographic Statistics. Ottawa: Science and Technology, Ministry of Industry.
- Statistics Canada (1993). Ethnic Origin. Ottawa: Science and Technology, Ministry of Industry.
- Statistics Canada (1993). Permanent Residence, Calendar Year -1992. Ottawa: Science and Technology, Ministry of Industry.
- S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (1991). Annual Report. Vancouver.
- Swanson, J. (1993, July 21). Left Behind: *parents in Asia, kids home alone*. The Province, P. A1 & A5, .
- Taifel, H. (1981) Human Groups and Social Categories Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

- Taylor, K.W. (1991) Racism in Canadian Immigration Policy. Canadian Ethnic Studies, 23(1), 1-20.
- Toffler, A. (1971) Future Shock Toronto: Bantam Books
- Toronto Star (1993, February 13). Hong Kong Immigrants Set Record. Vancouver Sun, P. A9.
- Vega, W., Gil, A.G., Warheit, G.J., Zimmerman, R.S. & Apospori, E. (1993). Acculturation and Delinquent Behaviors Among Cuban American Adolescents: toward an empirical model. American Journal of Community Psychology, 21(1), 113-125.
- Vold, G.B. & Bernard, T.J. (1986). Theoretical Criminology (3rd ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wang, L. L. (1991, Spring). Roots and Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States. Daedalus, 120, 181-206.
- Whittaker, E. (1988). The Mexican Presence in Canada: *Liberality, Uncertainty and Nostalgia*. The Journal of Ethnic Studies, 16(2), 29-46.
- Yin, Robert K. (1989). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. (Rev. ed.) Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Yin, Robert K. (1994). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.