

PRE-MIGRATION PLANNING: STRATEGIES FOR POST-MIGRATION SETTLEMENT

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**A Major Research Paper
Presented to Ryerson University**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies**

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2011

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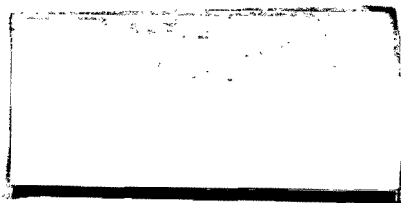
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Master of Arts

Immigration and Settlement Studies

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Abstract

Proper pre-migration planning could assist individuals in post-migration settlement.

This paper explores the unique pre-migration experience of six Chinese immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area. The study attempts to examine whether pre-migration planning alleviates some of the negative impact of migration and assists in settlement of Chinese immigrants in Canada. In the case of the Chinese immigrants in this study, there are indications that pre-migration planning has prepared the participants for the various barriers that they encountered during their initial settlement stages.

Key Words: Chinese immigrants, pre-migration planning, post-migration settlement.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my research supervisor, Dr. Francis Hare for his encouragement, support, advice, time, patience, understanding, and enthusiasm in the development of my research paper, and to thank him for his guidance throughout the last two years. I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Vappu Tyyskä for her thoughtful comments, advice and encouragement as my second reader, professor, faculty advisor and confidante.

The research project would not have been possible without the contributions of the six participants who generously volunteered their time to share their unique experiences with me. It has been a tremendous privilege and honor for me to be able to participate in their lives and to interview them.

I owe much gratitude to Paul Coccia, my friend and editor, for his time, effort, love and friendship. I would like to thank Diana Liu for keeping me grounded and consistent during the past year. As well, I would like to thank Rebecca Nava for providing me with her time, support and resources to do this research. I also wish to thank all of my friends for their continuous support.

To my parents who gave up their life in Hong Kong in order to ensure that I had all the opportunities that life has to offer. I am forever thankful for their love and support. Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Ken Wong, for his unconditional love and support during the past two years. His patience, understanding and encouragement have allowed me to complete this research.

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INTRODUCTION

Each year, Canada receives approximately 250,000 permanent residents (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010b). Many of the immigrants chose to immigrate and settle in Canada in search for a better life for themselves and their family. A recent study conducted by Statistics Canada (2007) titled "Immigrants' perspectives on their first four years in Canada: Highlights from three waves of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada" found the following reasons for immigrating and remaining in Canada from respondents: better quality of life; reunification with family; improved future for family; access to education; peace and absences of war; political or religious freedom and job opportunities (p.20). The study also found that for economic class immigrants (skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial/territorial nominees and live-in caregivers), the prospect of job opportunities is one of the main reasons why they chose to immigrate to Canada but also one of the main reasons cited for leaving Canada (p.5). For many immigrants, their expectations of Canada are that the country will provide them with a better quality of life, greater security and opportunities that they may not have had in their home country (Stewart et al., 2008).

The process of migration can be exceedingly stressful especially if an individual is moving to a country that is significantly different from their homeland and if the individual does not have much knowledge of the receiving country and what to expect once they have arrived. This is especially true for immigrants who have left behind lives that were once wholly familiar to them for lives that are foreign and unfamiliar. For most Chinese immigrants, the move to Canada can be very different from what they are accustomed to back home. There are many things that they have to adjust to such as

climate; language; culture and cultural diversity; political structure; the educational system; and economic conditions. The adjustment is even more difficult when one has not prepared oneself properly for the changes. Previous studies on migration have found that "a positive and well-ordered commitment to preparing for the move [to a new country] may assist to moderate the possible immediate and long-term problems associated with relocation" (Fried, 1993, 1976; Hertz, 1998; Lee, 1994; Ward, 2001 as cited in Ward and Styles, 2005). In addition, pre-migration preparation can alleviate some of the stresses that come with post-migration settlement and adaptation, thus enabling better settlement (Yijala & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2009). Pre-migration preparation/planning may include doing some basic research about the specific country; visiting the country prior to migration; making appropriate financial arrangements; and preparing oneself emotionally and psychologically for the migration.

While much attention has been given to the settlement needs of Chinese newcomers upon their arrival, little attention has been given to preparing newcomers for their migration prior to departure. Community organizations and governments (federal, provincial and municipal) offer many programs and workshops that provide assistance to newcomers shortly after their arrival (e.g. newcomer orientation, Language Instruction for Newcomers, job search, introduction to accreditation in Canada, etc.). However, it appears that such programs and workshops are difficult to access or are not widely known to Chinese immigrants prior to their migration (Leung, 2000; Sakamoto, Ku, & Wei, 2009).

This study attempts to take an initial step in examining the pre-migration planning practices of recent Chinese immigrants. For the purpose of this paper, Chinese

immigrants are defined as those immigrants who self identified as being Chinese. The study will concentrate on the unique migration experience of six Chinese immigrants from the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. There are several reasons which deem the pre-migration planning practices of recent Chinese immigrants important and worthy of examination. Since the year 2000, the People's Republic of China has consistently been the top source country of immigrants to Canada (CIC, 2009). With approximately 25,000 to 40,000 immigrants from China arriving each year in Canada, it is vital that proper settlement related assistance be provided to them. Additionally, studies on the settlement needs of Chinese immigrants have suggested that the process of settlement should begin prior to migration (Fontana, 2003; George, Tsang, Man, & Da, 2000; Guo & DeVortez, 2007). These studies suggest that perhaps pre-migration preparation may assist newcomers with the settlement process. It is, therefore, of significant importance to examine the role that pre-migration planning plays in the settlement process and how pre-migration planning can aid newcomers in adjusting to life in their receiving country more effectively.

Furthermore, being a Chinese immigrant myself, I find it important to share the migration experience of recent Chinese immigrants in the hopes that their stories can shed light on the triumphs and struggles that come with migrating to a new country as a means of preserving these unique voices that represent a larger majority of similar individuals with similar stories.

This study will focus on the migration experience of recent Chinese immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area who have been in Canada for less than five years by examining their pre-migration planning practices and the role it played during the

settlement process. This study addresses two questions. First: How does a person prepare for migration? Second: How does pre-migration planning contribute to post-migration settlement? This study will provide an overview of Chinese immigrants in Canada; the settlement issues and the needs of Chinese immigrants; pre-migration planning practices among recent Chinese immigrants; and will finally offer recommendations for the development of policy and services that will improve the settlement experience of Chinese immigrants specifically and the immigrant community as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2009, Canada accepted 252,179 immigrants (CIC, 2009), of which 29,049 were from the People's Republic of China, 2,543 from Taiwan, and 924 from Hong Kong (CIC, 2009). The highest percentage of immigrants received by Canada between the years 2006 and 2009 was from the People's Republic of China (CIC, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). Many of these immigrants came to Canada under the skilled workers and professional immigration category (Man, 2004; Salaff & Greve, 2003; Sakamoto et al., 2009) and were chosen on the grounds that their professional expertise could greatly benefit Canadian society on the whole. They immigrated to Canada under the impression that their skills and expertise were in need and, thus, that they would gain employment shortly after their arrival (Sakamoto et al., 2009). However, upon immigration to Canada most immigrants found themselves employed in fields that did not match their qualifications (Lo et al., 2007; Leung, 2002; Man, 2004; Salaff & Greve, 2003). A recent study conducted by Statistics Canada on the assessment of immigrant life in Canada four years after landing revealed that educated professional immigrants were least likely to be satisfied with life in Canada as compared

with those immigrants with less education (Houle & Schellenberg, 2010). When asked what the participants of the study disliked most about life in Canada, 17% referred to lack of employment opportunities with most of the responses coming from immigrants from the economic class (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). In addition to employment barriers, Chinese immigrants suffer from lack of social support since many of them have few networks on which they could rely on for settlement related problems (Bergeron & Potter, 2006; Salaff & Greve, 2004). Scholars have found that social networks play an important role in the settlement of immigrants and refugees as they provide resources that help newcomers (Bergeron & Potter, 2006; George et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2008). Bourdieu (1985) defined the concept of social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are lined to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (p.248). For newcomers, social networks not only provide information about the receiving country upon arrival but they can additionally provide information about the receiving country prior to migration which can greatly affect the adjustment process. As Bergeron and Potter (2006) suggest, "social support or helping networks help newcomers solve daily challenges. Through their networks, newcomers gain access to many kinds of assistances that are critical to their settlement and longer-term integration into Canadian society" (p.76). Furthermore, Bergeron and Potter explain that the larger a person's network is, the more access s/he will have to different social supports and information. Social networks, whether they be strong ties (one's family members or friends) or weak ties (outside of one's immediate personal network), can translate into more information about the receiving country that an individual is able to obtain prior to migration. Stewart et al.'s (2008) study of

social support for Chinese and Somali immigrants and refugees suggests that social support is crucial to the successful settlement and integration of newcomers. The participants from the study felt that social networks provided them with both emotional and informational support that assisted them in their settlement process. The concept of social capital will be explored in later sections.

A recent study conducted by Zhao, Xue and Gilkinson (2010) on recent immigrants' perceptions of their overall health suggests that a connection exists between friendship networks and the health status of recent immigrants. Using data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, it was discovered that "immigrants who have more diverse friendship networks and who are in contact with their friends more frequently are more likely to report being in good health" (pg.16). Simich and Jackson's (2010) study on the social determinants of immigrant health in Canada also found that "social support from family and community sources buffers the stresses of migration and resettlement, promotes mental and physical health, and enables help-seeking" (p.27). These studies reveal that social support also contributes to the health outcome of immigrants.

Numerous studies have been conducted to address the settlement issues that Chinese immigrants in general are facing (George et al., 2000, 2004; Leung, 2000; Li, 2003; Sakamoto et al., 2009; Salaff & Greve, 2003, 2004, 2006; Stewart et al., 2008). Other studies suggest similar findings, namely, that Chinese immigrants face barriers to educational qualifications, language barriers and difficulty in gaining Canadian work experience. In addition to the barriers faced, certain settlement related needs of this immigrant group should also be addressed. Such needs include job search skills, language courses designed to meet the needs of professional immigrants with possible

connections to professional associations, knowledge of Canadian culture, and access to affordable child care and housing, to name a few. All of the barriers and needs aforementioned are typical of settlement issues that newcomers to Canada generally encounter. The recommendations given in these studies are similar. These include recommendations for better recognition of foreign credentials; and propose that settlement services should be culturally sensitive by hiring more Mandarin speaking staff. Also recommended are: creating more suitable language courses targeted at educated professionals; and that services should be made accessible to all. Although the recommendations in these studies are well supported, they seem to suggest that the needs and barriers that Chinese immigrants face can be solved by creating better programs and services catering to their needs in particular. However, if one were to do a quick search on the internet of services and programs available to Chinese immigrants in Toronto, one would find that there are at first glance over thirty agencies offering services specifically to the Chinese community (Leung, 2000). In addition, government funded programs such as Enhanced Language Training for foreign trained professionals, Career Bridge, and other mentorship programs are created specifically to meet the needs of foreign trained professionals. A recent study by Sakamoto et al. (2009) found that amongst one of the many barriers that Chinese immigrants face in their settlement is difficulty in locating and accessing settlement-related information that is understandable to and useable by them. As a result, many Chinese immigrants are unaware of the various programs available to them. More often than not, Chinese immigrants rely on their social networks (family and friends) to provide them with such information. Caidi's (2008) research on the information practices of ethno-cultural

communities found that the number one information source to new immigrants is family and friends with media sources (newspaper and internet) being the second information source cited (p.4). The study also identified social networks, whether local or transnational, as playing an important role in providing information that "facilitates the settlement and inclusion process, potentially leading to more employment opportunities and opportunities in other aspects of immigrant's life" (p.4). Unfortunately the study only examined the post-migration informational practices of immigrants. In addition to barriers to information, scholars have also found that Chinese immigrants are often unable to access such programs due to certain program requirements that often have constraints on eligibility, such as language and time limitations imposed. For example, only newcomers who have been in Canada for three years or less are considered (George et al., 2004; Leung, 2000). Since most immigrants are only able to gain knowledge of these programs upon arrival, they often learn of these programs only after they have been here for an extended period of time which does not necessarily fit into the set time constraints.

Several studies have stressed that the process of settlement need not begin upon arrival but should, in fact, begin prior to migration (Fontana, 2003; George et al., 2000; Guo & DeVortez, 2007). These studies have found that there are huge information gaps between immigrants' perceptions of Canada and what is actually experienced after arrival. Citizenship and Immigration Canada has tried to address the issue of pre-migration orientation by providing orientation to Canada abroad through the Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) program. The program is designed to educate and prepare potential newcomers on what to expect of life in Canada in order to facilitate

new immigrants' integration into Canadian society (CIC, 2005). Several issues have surfaced during the evaluation of this program. Firstly, the program has been effective only for conventional refugees since International Organization for Migration (IOM), the agency funded to deliver COA, cannot contact other potential immigrants in other categories. In addition, the program is only offered in certain countries and China is not one of them. Secondly, participants of the program commented that although the general contents of the program provide useful information about life in Canada such as: land and weather, people/inhabitants, government, laws, human rights, education, and cost of living, (to list a few examples), there is a need for more information that deal specifically with employment, education, health, and finance. In the report, IOM states that they receive little support from Canadian organizations to update their course material, suggesting that perhaps, the course content is not up-to-date. In addition, there are severe limitations on the distribution of the manual given to participants which greatly impacts the potential benefits of the program. Furthermore, time constraints on the delivery of the COA have meant that many of the courses have been shortened to one or two day courses which hinder the capacity of the facilitator to adequately cover the course material. Moreover, CIC (2005a) acknowledges that while facilitators for the program are provided with sufficient training, some facilitators seem to lack direct knowledge of Canada as some of them have either never lived in Canada or have been away from Canada for an extended and lengthy period of time. It is still unclear if the Canadian Orientation Abroad initiative aids immigrant in the settlement process as the only evaluation of the initiative to date has been conducted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and only a small sample of COA participants were involved in the

evaluation process after their arrival in Canada. However, CIC (2005b) asserts that the COA program has led to a reduction of settlement services by newcomers in Canada which suggests that pre-migration orientation for newcomers can aid in the settlement process. Guo and DeVortez's (2007) study of Chinese immigrants in Vancouver further supports the idea that the process of settlement needs to begin prior to migration. When asked about possible suggestions and improvements the Canadian government could implement to aid Chinese immigrants as they integrate into society, participants provided the following suggestions:

- Immigrant settlement needs to begin prior to migration by having Canadian officials abroad to better educate Chinese immigrants about life in Canada
- Classes should be conducted in China so immigrants can better adjust to life in Canada
- A more 'realistic' view of Canada needs to be provided since many immigrants felt misinformed

This reinforces the suggestion that there is a gap in information between immigrants' pre-migration perception of Canada and the reality that they experience upon arrival. However, the existing literature on Chinese immigrant settlement has largely focused on post-migration settlement issues. Pre-migration orientation has only surfaced as recommendations and suggestions but has never been the primary focus of any studies to date.

Research on the issue of pre-migration preparation and its affects on the adaptation process has been scant (Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004; Burgelt,

Morgan, & Pernice, 2008; Chou, 2009; Negy, Reig- Ferrer, & Schwartz, 2009; Ward & Styles, 2005; Wang, Li, Stanton, & Fang, 2010; Yijala & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2009). Although each of the studies centers on different ethnic groups, the scope of their research is similar. Their research questions revolve around the importance of pre-migration preparation, beliefs and expectations, and their affects on settlement adjustment. The studies found that pre-migration preparation, beliefs, and expectations can have negative or positive effects on settlement. Lack of pre-migration preparation or high pre-migration expectations can create high acculturation stress which results in many negative outcomes such as marital/family stress and depression. Negy et al.'s (2009) study on pre-migration expectations and post-migration experiences of Hispanic immigrants in the United States found that a discrepancy between pre-migration expectations and post migration experiences has an impact on the level of acculturative stress. The study found that individuals with more realistic pre-migration expectations of life in the U.S. experienced less acculturative stress, while those individuals whose post-migration experiences were vastly different from their pre-migration expectations experienced more acculturative stress.

Pre-migration planning has also been found to influence both physical and mental health outcomes of migrants. Chou's (2009) research suggests that a relationship exists between poor pre-migration planning and depression amongst immigrants from Mainland China to Hong Kong. The participants in the study did not adequately prepare for their migration to Hong Kong and as a result suffered from mental health problems. A study conducted by Wang et al. (2010) on the physical and mental health of rural-to-urban migrants in China revealed a discrepancy between

migrants' expectations of life in urban China and the lived reality which greatly impacted their quality of life and psychological outcomes post-migration.

Proper pre-migration preparation and beliefs have been found to have positive post-migration effects. Ward and Styles' (2005) research on the impact of migration on women from Britain who migrated to Perth, Australia, found that proper pre-migration preparation strategies enabled the women to adjust to life in Australia and resulted in the reduction of acculturation stress. Pre-migration strategies such as reading pertinent books, newspapers and maps about Australia; investigating employment opportunities; searching for housing options and pricing; watching videos; bringing certain mementos that reminded settlers of Britain; and even choosing to visit Australia prior to the move, were believed to be vital in making the transition to the new country easier (p.428). The study concluded that by ordering their life and preparing for the reality of a new country before migration, the women were better able to adjust and settle into the new country.

Another study conducted by Burgelt, Morgan and Pernice (2008) on the pre-migration experience of German migrants to New Zealand suggests that pre-migration interpretations and actions significantly influenced their immigration and settlement experience. The study found that proper pre-migration actions (e.g. language acquisition, realistic expectations, adaptation strategies and cultural awareness) prepared migrants to accept and deal with the challenges that they encountered post-migration.

The aforementioned studies have focused on the positive and negative effects of pre-migration preparation on the post-migration settlement process and the overall health of immigrants in countries outside of Canada. Little is known, however, of the

effects of pre-migration preparation among Chinese immigrants in Canada. Only one study has been conducted specifically regarding how pre-migration preparation can affect settlement adjustment of immigrants in Canada (Ngo & Este, 2006). Ngo and Este (2006) studied professional immigrants who were able to gain employment similar to that which they held in their home country. They found that pre-migration awareness and preparation have an effect on post-migration outcomes. The participants in this study knew and anticipated the challenges that they might encounter upon migration. Prior to migration, they gained information about Canada through the Internet, friends and relatives (if available), immigrant professionals, and publications (p.32). Some immigrants even went so far as to travel to Canada prior to migration to gain first-hand knowledge and experience of life in Canada. In addition, the participants in the study also understood the importance of language proficiency in finding employment in Canada. They anticipated the financial difficulties that they may experience during the initial settlement period and, thus, prepared financially. The participants in the study had realistic expectations of life in Canada and were prepared emotionally to deal with the barriers that they encountered in the process of trying to regain employment. As a result, the immigrants in the study were able to find employment that was similar to that in their home country. The study concludes with recommendations for programs abroad that can assist immigrants with pre-migration preparations.

In reviewing the literature, it becomes evident that there is a gap in research involving immigrant settlement issues. A majority of the existing literature seems to suggest that settlement should begin upon arrival at the receiving country. However, as a few studies on pre-migration have shown, immigrant settlement needs to begin prior

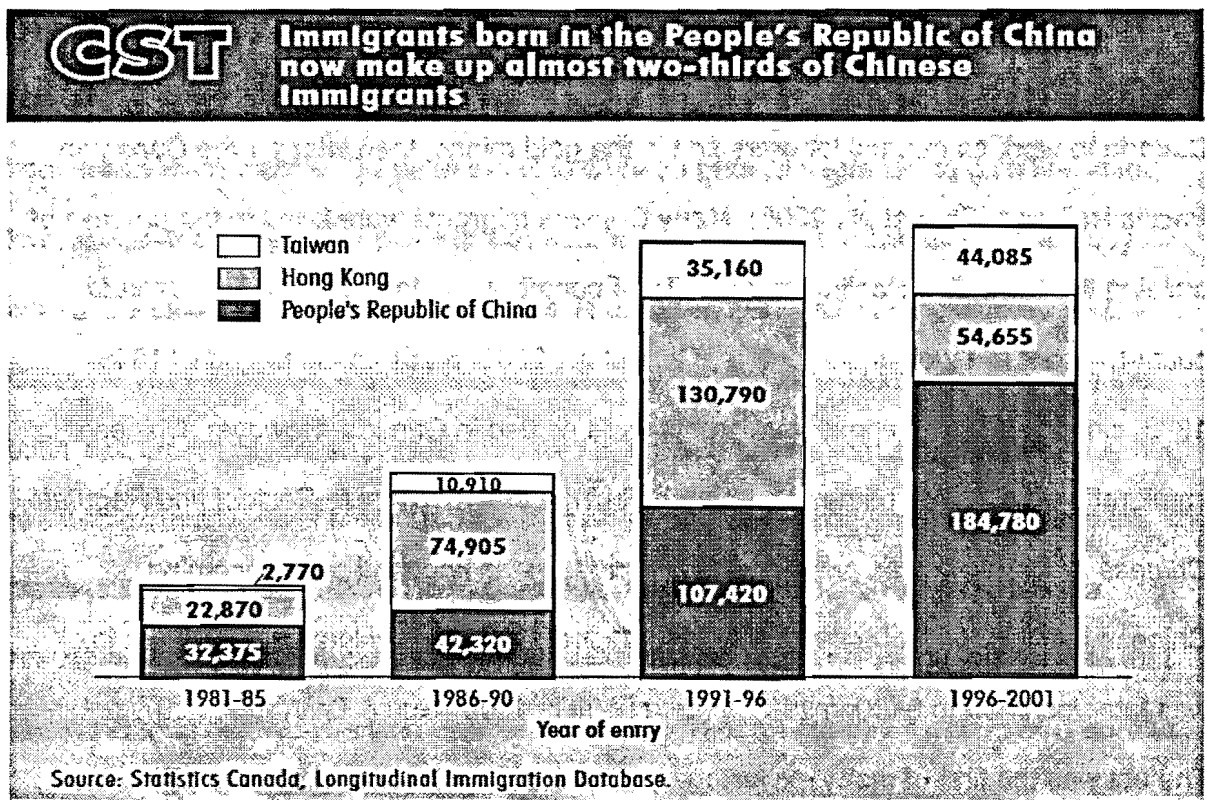
to actual or physical/geographical migration to the receiving country as pre-migration preparation may offset some of the stresses that occur during settlement and allow for more successful settlement. The area of immigration needs to be fully explored as this can greatly affect the settlement outcome for Chinese immigrants. In the next section, a brief overview of the current context of Chinese immigrants in Canada is reviewed.

HISTORY OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

Chinese migration to Canada began in the mid-1800s during the gold rush era. The first Chinese community in Canada was in Barkerville, B.C (Chui, Tran, & Flanders, 2005). Early Chinese immigrants were mainly comprised of young men brought over to Canada to work as manual laborers first in the gold mines, then later for the Canadian Pacific Railroad (Chui et al., 2005). Many Chinese migrants were killed in the process of building the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Their contributions to "helping to link Canada coast-to-coast are well-documented" (Chui et al., 2005, p.25). In the period of 1848-1885, close to 7,000 Chinese immigrants were settled in Canada. However, Chinese immigration to Canada came to a sharp halt when the *1885 Act to Restrict and Regulate Chinese Immigration* was passed. A \$50 head tax was imposed on all incoming Chinese individuals in order to limit the number of Chinese immigrants. The head tax was later increase to \$100 in 1900, and to \$500 in 1903 (Guo & DeVoretz, 2007, p.4). The act was the first of many exclusionary pieces of legislation that deterred Chinese immigration. It wasn't until the mid-1980s that the number of Chinese immigrants in Canada began to increase again.

Since the mid 1980s, the number of Chinese immigrants in Canada has been steadily increasing each year. In fact, between 1980 and 2000, close to 800,000

Chinese immigrants migrated to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, as cited in Wang & Lo, 2004, p.1). Chinese immigrants came mainly from three source countries: China, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Chui et al., 2005; Guo & DeVoretz, 2007; Wang & Lo, 2004). Certain political factors in these countries facilitated the increased number of Chinese immigrants to Canada. What follows is a brief account of the events that led to the increase of Chinese immigrants from the three countries mentioned above.



Hong Kong

In 1984, the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom signed a joint agreement called The Sino-British Joint Declaration which stated that China will resume sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997. The declaration quickly caused fear amongst middle-class Hong Kong families as they were pessimistic about the return of

sovereignty to China. Fears of political and economic uncertainties resulted in the large exodus by Hong Kong citizens, most of whom were from highly skilled middle class backgrounds. Between 1991 and 1996, Canada received 130,790 immigrants from Hong Kong (Chui et al., 2005). Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were the most popular destinations because these countries favoured immigrants who were highly skilled and educated, with considerable wealth, and most Hong Kong citizens immigrating at the time fell into those categories (Ip & Chui, 2006; Lam, 1994).

Taiwan.

Two major events in the 1970s contributed to the increase in the number of Chinese immigrants from Taiwan to Canada (Tseng, 2001). The first one was "the withdrawal of the Republic of China from the United Nations and the concomitant acceptance of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legitimate government in China" (Guo & DeVoretz, 2007, p.7). The second major event was the change in the relationship between China and United States. Many Taiwanese people were concerned that the normalization of the relationship would result in the return of Taiwan to Communist China (Guo & DeVoretz, 2007). As a result, close to 50,000 Taiwanese emigrated between 1985 and 1991 (Guo & DeVoretz, 2007), 74,905 chose Canada as their destination of choice (Chui et al., 2005). Similar to Hong Kong migrants, Taiwanese migrants turned to emigration as the solution to the political instability of the time.

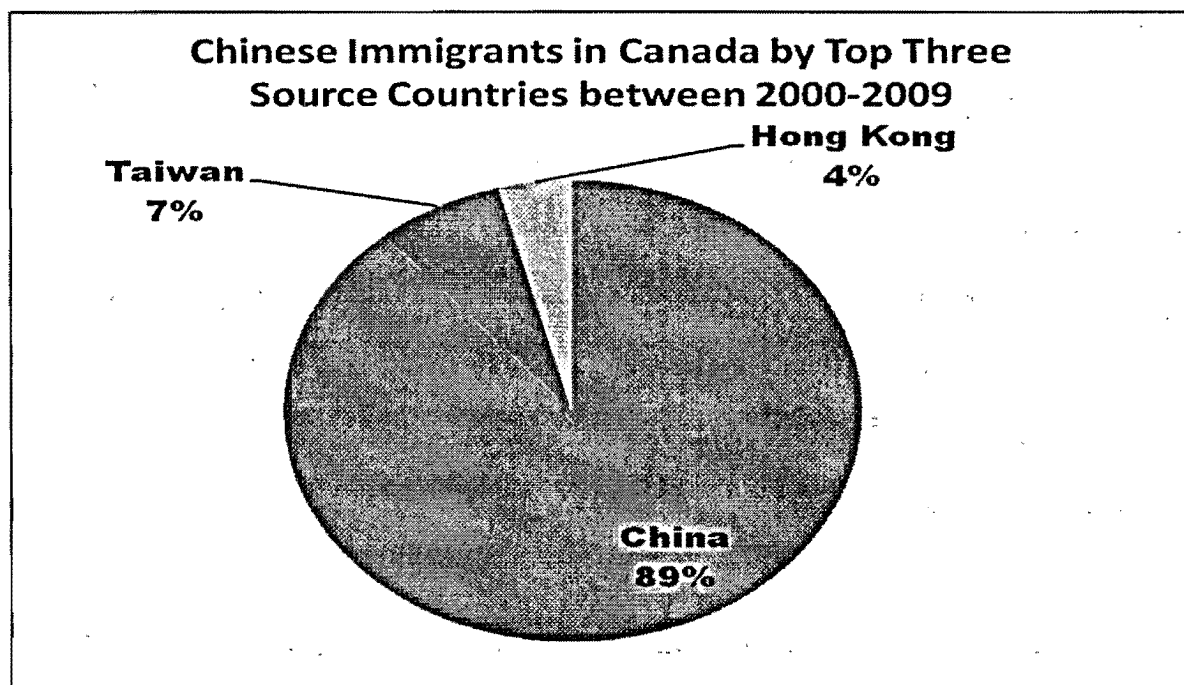
People's Republic of China

Several historical events in the People's Republic of China (PRC) contributed to the growth of Chinese immigrants in Canada. The first major event that marked the beginning of migration from PRC to Canada was the "establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Canada and China in 1973" (Guo & DeVoretz, 2007, p.6). The establishment of the relations made it possible for the movement of people between the two nations thereafter. The second major event was the number of new reforms that were introduced upon Deng Xiaoping's rise to power in 1978. The new reforms called for an "open door" policy which created "the economic conditions for the mobility of Chinese people" (Guo & DeVoretz, 2007, p.6). However, it wasn't until the mid 1990s that Chinese immigrants from PRC began to immigrate from PRC to Canada in large numbers. Approximately 290,000 emigrated to Canada between 1991 to 2001 (Chui et.al., 2005). By 1998, the number of immigrants from PRC surpassed that of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Today, China is the number one source country for immigrants to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009; Li, 2010)

RECENT CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

Compared to the early Chinese immigrants who arrived in British Columbia during the mid-1800s as manual labourers, recent Chinese immigrants (in the past two decades) tend to be more educated, possess more human capital and have entered into Canada through either the skilled immigrant or family reunification category (Chui et al., 2005; Li, 2010; Yu, 2008). In particular, a higher rate of immigrants from PRC hold degrees when compared to other sending countries (Li, 2010). As mentioned in the previous section, the majority of newcomers in the past decade are from the People's

Republic of China with the number of immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan decreasing each year. British Columbia, (Vancouver in particular), and Toronto remain the most popular settlement destinations for Chinese immigrants (Chui et al., 2005; Colin, 2001; Yu, 2008).



Source: Facts and figures 2009 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents

According to Chui et al.'s (2005) study on Chinese immigrants in Canada, "nearly one-third (31%) of Chinese, whether they were foreign-born or Canadian-born, had a university education, almost double the rate of 18% among the general population" (p.27). However, the study also found that recent newcomers experience greater difficulties in entering the labour market. Guo and Devoretz's (2007) study on economic outcomes of recent Chinese immigrants to Canada found that "they have substantial human capital endowments, but they are clearly failing in the labour market" (p.21). A recent study by Li (2010) on immigrants from China contends that "university degrees held by PRC-born men and women are not rewarded at the same rate as degrees held

by Canada-born white men and women" (p.7). In addition to experiencing barriers in entering the labour market, recent Chinese immigrants also encounter barriers in other areas. What follows is a brief overview of the settlement-related issues that a majority of recent Chinese immigrants experience during settlement.

Language

Language barriers consistently emerge as one of the most pressing issues facing Chinese newcomers. Language barriers have adverse effects not only in the everyday life of a newcomer, but also affect a newcomer's ability to obtain information and services that can aid them in their settlement. Additionally, inadequate English has been identified as one of the key reasons why many Chinese immigrants experience difficulties in gaining occupations comparable to their skills (Leung, 2000; Stewart et al., 2008; Wang & Lo, 2004).

Occupation

Newcomers experience barriers when trying to get their credentials recognized. Newcomers are forced to either seek employment in menial jobs or delay their participation in the labour market in order to take credit courses to upgrade their current skills or obtain new skills to match those that are deemed suitable for the Canadian labour market (Stewart et al., 2008; Wang & Lo, 2004; Yu, 2008). Yu's (2008) study on Chinese immigrants in Vancouver found that many professional Chinese immigrants had difficulties securing jobs that corresponded to their training and, as a result, were forced to work within the Chinese community in grocery stores, bookstores and restaurants which usually offer low wages. Unfortunately, not accepting these jobs in

hopes of gaining a preferable one is not an option for most newcomers to a country because often these positions are the sole means of survival for these individuals.

Access to Services

Recent research on the settlement needs of Chinese immigrants found that Chinese immigrants experience challenges when trying to gain access to settlement-related services (Leung, 2000; Sakamoto et al., 2009). Research by Stewart et al. (2008) on settlement issues among Chinese Canadians found that "newcomers had insufficient information about how the 'system' works in the host country (i.e., Canada)", and "they have limited means for seeking and obtaining needed supports" (p.11) which can hinder the settlement process. Sakamoto's et al. (2009) research on Chinese skilled immigrants from China in Toronto also found that the participants were unaware of the services available to them or stated that there was inadequate information about the services. Furthermore, a study conducted by Leung (2000) found that many immigrants revealed that even when services are obtained, they are often inadequate and do not meet their specific needs (e.g. interpretation, translation and job search). Several participants in the study commented that the programs and workshops available to them are often too general. They additionally stated that service providers often do not speak their language or dialect and this makes accessing services extremely frustrating and difficult.

Social Support

Several scholars have pointed to the importance of social support during the settlement process (Bergeron & Potter, 2006; Chou, 2009; Kazemipur, 2004; Stewart et al., 2008). The loss of social support in Canada can have negative effects on new

immigrants who are not accustomed to the lack of social support that they once enjoyed in their country of origin. Immigrants from China (PRC) are especially affected by the lost social support that is normatively provided by the family in China. For many Chinese immigrants, this is the first time in their adult lives that they are unable to call upon the help of their family in assisting them with their needs while they pursue career goals (Salaff & Greve, 2003).

Mental Health

Recent research on immigrants indicates that "immigrants often experience an elevated level of psychological distress in the period soon after immigration" (Fang, 2010, p.70). Sources of stress associated with the initial adjustment process may include: finding a place to live, seeking proper employment, adapting to the different culture, and learning to live in a new environment. The stress is elevated when there is no social support. Many Chinese immigrants are hesitant to seek help for mental health-related issues because it is deemed a taboo in Chinese culture. Studies of Chinese immigrants' mental health have found that many immigrants delay seeking treatment and, thus, require longer periods of hospitalization (Snowden & Cheung 1990; Chen et al., 2003 as cited in Fang, 2010).

It is evident from the above that Chinese immigrants continue to face many barriers in trying to adapt to life in Canada and that settlement support is necessary.

METHODOLOGY

In reviewing the current literature on immigrant settlement, it becomes evident that there is a significant gap in research involving immigrant settlement issues, related to pre-migration planning and its affects that on post-migration settlement. The purpose

of this study is to examine the pre-migration experience of Chinese immigrants and to identify the role of pre-migration planning in post-migration settlement.

The methodology that this research adopts is that of Interpretive Social Science (ISS). ISS is concerned with studying the everyday lived experiences of individuals. It seeks to understand the personal reasons and motives that determine why a person acts and behaves in the way that s/he does. Through the study of the experiences of individuals, the researcher not only enriches his/her own knowledge but also that of the social world (Neuman, 2006). In order to best explore the pre-migration experiences of Chinese immigrants, qualitative method was employed involving in-depth face-to-face interviews.

Interview questions were devised after a review of the literature related to pre-migration planning and settlement. In addition, the interview questions were guided by the two major research questions (How does a person prepare for migration? How does pre-migration planning contribute to post-migration settlement?). Interview questions were mainly open-ended and included basic questions regarding the participants' backgrounds such as reasons for migration, length of time in Canada, and expectations of Canada prior to migration. The researcher began recruiting participants in the middle of May, 2011, immediately after receiving approval from the Research Ethics Board at Ryerson University. Interested participants were asked to contact the researcher via e-mail. In total, seven participants responded via e-mail. However, the researcher was only able to conduct interviews with six participants as one of the participants who originally agreed to be interviewed later declined to discuss their migration experiences. The researcher contacted the six interested participants via e-mail and phone to

arrange mutually agreeable times, dates and places for interviews. Due to time and physical constraints, one participant was interviewed over the phone. The researcher ensured that all ethical procedures were observed. Prior to the beginning of each interview, participants were reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary and that their confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. Since all participants were proficient in English, the consent forms as well as the interviews were conducted in English. Before each interview, participants were asked to review both the interview questions and consent forms. They were given the opportunity to ask for clarification of questions if needed. The researcher conducted all the interviews and each participant was only interviewed once. The interviews took approximately 45-90 minutes and were all taped and transcribed verbatim. All interviews were conducted in the month of June, 2011.

Data collected from the six interviews were analyzed using the qualitative analysis method of coding. During the first initial examination of the interviews, the researcher identified prevalent themes that were present throughout the interviews. The researcher, using the themes identified, then reviewed and examined the interviews again to identify any sub-themes that were connected to the more prevalent themes. Finally, the researcher coded the comments and experiences of the participants into respective categories (Neuman, 2006). The four major themes identified through this process are: informational planning, educational planning, financial planning, and emotional planning. These major themes allowed the researcher to identify and compare the strategies used by Chinese immigrants during the pre-migration stages and to examine the value of pre-migration planning in aiding post-migration settlement.

Participants were recruited using a variety of methods, including distribution of posters to local community centres and ethnic churches, and through e-mails to the researcher's personal contacts as well as previous L.I.N.C students that the researcher taught three years ago. Although the researcher had previously taught the students, that relationship ended well in advance of this research project. Such a relationship does not currently exist nor would it resume in the future. For this reason, the review conducted by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board did not find this to be a situation of undue influence.

The Language Instruction for Newcomers (L.I.N.C) program at the University Settlement Centre, where the researcher was previously employed as an instructor, provides free English language courses to adult newcomers wishing to learn or improve their English skills as they settle in Canada. Through the language classes, students learn about such topics as education, employment, housing, banking, Canadian culture, community and government services, health and safety, and travel and transportation. Students are assigned to the L.I.N.C classes after they have received a formal assessment of their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Students are then assigned to a benchmark level for each of the four skills. They are then placed into L.I.N.C classes based on their benchmark level. The L.I.N.C class that the researcher previously taught was levels 3-5. Most of the researcher's previous students were in level 4-5 and had a good understanding of the English language.

Participants were included if they met the selection criteria: First, that the participant self identified as a Chinese immigrant, and second, that the participant has been in Canada for less than five years.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Characteristics of Participants

In total, six participants, four males and two females in their mid thirties and forties, were interviewed regarding their migration experiences. Of the participants, four were from the People's Republic of China and two were from Taiwan. All six participants came through the skilled immigrant category with their families. None of the participants had visited Canada prior to immigrating. The average number of years that the participants have resided in Canada is between 2.5 and 4.5 years. In addition to taking L.I.N.C classes, each participant spent some time since their arrival taking credit or non-credit courses in universities and colleges in order to obtain education that is recognized by Canadian employers. One participant recently graduated from the University of Toronto with a Masters in Chemical Engineering. Only two participants were able to take courses to upgrade their existing skills, while the remaining four participants have had to obtain new skills to better suit those of the Canadian labour market. Currently, only two participants have obtained full-time employment (Appendix B provides a profile of the research participants).

The findings of the interview have been separated into two sections: pre-migration and post-migration. The first section answers the question: How does a person prepare for migration? The findings in this section have been categorized into four major themes that emerged from the interviews. They are 1) Informational Planning; 2) Educational Planning; 3) Financial Planning; and 4) Emotional Planning. Section two presents participants' post-migration settlement related findings. This section provides insights to the second major research question that has helped guide

this paper: How does pre-migration planning contribute to post-migration settlement? In answering this question, the findings in this section have been categorized into two major themes: initial settlement and long-term settlement.

Pre-migration Preparation

Informational Planning

In order to better inform themselves of Canada, all six participants did background research on Canada prior to immigrating. Their search for information included the following sources: internet, travel books/magazines, information kits provided by immigration consultants, videos, blogs, friends, classmates, family, and previous co-workers. Most of the participants began their search for information with the information kit that was provided to them by their immigration consultant. According to the participants, it is a common practice to hire an immigration consultant to assist potential Chinese immigrants with the immigration application process. As part of the immigration package, the participants were given information kits which contained basic information on Canada (weather, history, geography and population); lists of helpful websites; and a DVD on Canada. In terms of the internet, two participants consulted government and not-for-profit organization related websites that were specifically designed for new and potential immigrants. The websites mentioned were:

www.cic.gc.ca, www.settlement.org and <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca>

Through information accessed from these websites, one participant was able to create his own guidelines for his family for their initial first days in Toronto:

For the general information, in my case, immigrate here is also be the first time here to the North America so I really need a lot for general information so the government website really gave me the overview and also give me some

guidelines for example what will happen after I landing here and how I can get help and the way like the institution and organization who I can asking for help. I make some notes like prepare my own guidelines.

Another popular website that most participants consulted was <http://www.51.ca>.

This website is specifically designed for Chinese immigrants and provides an abundance of information on Canada with the main focus being Toronto. The website offers information about life in Toronto including such topics as cost of housing, transportation, food pricing, neighbourhoods, jobs, restaurants, and weather. With the exception of one participant, all other participants felt that the website was useful as it provided information about Canada in Chinese which was extremely important to the participants. For one reason or another, one of the participants was unable to view the website from his hometown and, consequently, was able to gain the information from the website only after he arrived in Toronto:

Most stories of course are good story ... they tell you how to buy some groceries and compare price of travel because in China we can't see some website. Some website we can't use it in China so it's very lack of the source. Just like 51.ca we couldn't see, that's very useful for us but we can't see it. Once I came to Canada I see it and Oh! It's very useful.

Another feature of the website that was particularly useful in providing information about "real" life in Canada for participants was the forums/blogs. The forums and blogs allowed participants to read stories posted by other Chinese immigrants who reside in Toronto. There are stories about the struggles that one might encounter during the settlement process, and there are also stories about cultural norms that might be different from Chinese cultural norms. The forums additionally allow participants to post questions and comments to other immigrants. As one participant commented:

I use some information from websites. Usually I try to find some useful information from ... there's a very famous website for Chinese people www.51.ca.

I also get information from their blog. As we have some previous immigrants in Canada they have the blog here. They also offer rich information about the real life in here, like some critical information and also like some kind of the small skills to surviving here.

Another participant also gained helpful information from the blogs:

The blogs offered some real life questions for example, the website offer regular information about the renting. Rent a house and about the traffic but the blog offer more detail information for example, some kind of area will be suggested to living there for the first year or what kind of house you can find out so detailed resource.

Beyond basic background information and real life detailed examples of what to expect of life in Canada, blogs also provided an avenue for participants to build their social networks prior to migration. One participant in particular, through a Taiwanese blog, made contacts with individuals from the blogs in order to connect herself to the Taiwanese community prior to her migration:

I tried to research from the people that already lived in Canada. They have their blog and I see their blog and I understand the Canada's life style. And I try to contact them and ask them their opinion and what I should prepare. They told us about the weather and how different between Canada and Taiwan, and how the education system is very different from Taiwan, and how kids can study here, it's very different... and how can we find a job here. They told us it's very difficult to find a job here.

Through the information gathered from the contact, this particular participant anticipated the challenges of finding a job and prepared herself mentally and financially to face the challenges.

Other participants also used their existing social networks to gain information about life in Canada. Three of the participants contacted classmates from high school and university to gain information on possible housing options, cost of living, as well as to rekindle their friendships so that they had social support upon arriving in Canada. As one participant said: "I also ask for some information from my friends in Vancouver to

know how to rent some place to live and the prices of some living foods or some other things...furniture or other things."

Three of the other participants had relatives who lived in Toronto and were able to gain information about living in Canada from them. One participant recalls her aunt's instructions on what she should and shouldn't bring to Canada and how it helped her during her settlement:

She prepare everything for us. Even we bring 7 boxes from Taiwan that's all my aunt think we need in Canada so we bring everything. After when we arrived here we didn't need to go out for lunch or anything we can quickly eat at home.

Through various information sources, the participants were able to gain not only background information on Canada but were able to seek advice and suggestions from existing social networks as well as through new networks that were formed as a result of the search for information. Additionally, the knowledge gained from the act of searching for information is useful in assisting immigrants with other pre-migration preparations.

Educational Planning

Through their social networks, several participants learned that it may be difficult for them to have their credentials recognized once they arrived and that they may have to take courses at local colleges and universities in order to upgrade their skills, including English language. These participants were prepared to spend the first couple of years in Canada taking courses in order to have their skills recognized by the Canadian labour market. One participant noted: "I think in order to find a good job in Canada I need to take some education here, to get Master degree in the education system like university or college in Canada. So I applied for admission of University of

Toronto before I came". The participant, a senior automotive engineer who graduated from the top engineering university in China, anticipated challenges to finding a good job and knew that he would need to obtain education from a recognized Canadian university in order to have his skills recognized. By applying for admission to university prior to migration, he was able to begin his education shortly after his arrival in Canada. Other participants also anticipated the challenges of finding suitable employment and had developed strategies within the family to deal with the challenges prior to migration. One participant responded:

We want to get a position that we used to but I really expect my wife can get this position but I'm not sure that I can get it so I just prepare for it but I just think at least I can do some labour job so I just made a plan that the priority is that my wife gets the technical job because at that time my wife's English is more better than me. She used to work in the GE company and maybe she would will be used to work in the North America company, I think she will be easier to find job like that so it was planned that she go back to school first.

The participant knew that in order to support the family, one person would have to get a job while the other obtained their schooling. The participant realized that his skills would not be recognized in Canada until he obtained further education, and was prepared to work in a job not comparable to what he had held in China, in order to support his family for a period of time until other avenues could be pursued. By anticipating the challenges, the participant was able to alleviate some of the emotional stress that many immigrants encounter as a result of job status loss in the new country.

While all six participants attended L.I.N.C classes, not every participant had knowledge of the program prior to migration. Only two participants were aware of the free language training classes prior to migration and had prepared to join the classes as soon as they arrived in Canada. The two participants learned of the program through

their relatives in Canada. Through the knowledge of their relatives, both participants were directed to the local community centre webpage where they were able to gain information on how to enroll in the program. As a result, they were able to plan and schedule testing times prior to migration so that they could be placed into the L.I.N.C class within days of their arrival. Other participants, however, joined the L.I.N.C classes during different stages of their settlement (as will be discussed in later sections) because the lack of knowledge about the program delayed their learning process.

Financial Planning

With the knowledge that they might have difficulties gaining access to the Canadian labour market as a result of their unacknowledged credentials, several participants realized that they would need to prepare enough savings at least for the first initial year in Canada. As one participant asserted:

First, we need to prepare enough money. I think this is very important at least for me. I think you cannot say, "Ok, I'll earn money there. I don't have enough money now but I can earn it there." Yes, you can say that but at the beginning you will have a very tough time, maybe even can lead your career in the wrong direction so if you prepare money well you will have enough time after arriving, you can try to make a good plan.

This participant anticipated that it might be a while before he could obtain employment and in order to ensure that he allows himself some flexibility in choosing the right career, he saved enough money for the first few years of arrival. He further commented that he didn't want to work at menial jobs in order to make ends meet. He wanted to be able to focus on achieving his career goals and in order to do this he needed to have enough money so that he could go back to school to obtain proper credentials.

Other participants also viewed being financially prepared as important. When asked how they planned for their migration, one participant responded:

First I think I should save money as much as possible because I know it's not easy to find a job at the very beginning and we need to feed ourselves so if I've got enough money I can prepare better for my new life here.

Another participant anticipated the financial challenges and chose to sell her stock and some of her investments in order to ensure that she had enough money for her first year in Canada. One participant was even able to secure a fellowship from the University of Toronto so that his tuition fee for the duration of the two years was covered. This preparation allowed him to focus solely on his education without having to worry about the cost of education.

Another participant was able to prepare his finances prior to migration through information that he obtained from the immigration kit provided by an immigration consultant. He was able to set up a bank account with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) prior to migration so that his money was already wired to a Canadian account prior to his arrival. The knowledge that his money was secured at the bank allowed him to focus on other pre-migration preparations. As the participant recalls:

The immigration agent gave us some information about the bank so it really useful and before we came to Canada we choose a bank, CIBC, so that information was very useful. We put into CIBC bank and then when we got to Canada we have to make it active.

By having their finances properly organized, the participants were prepared for financial difficulties that they might encounter during their settlement.

Emotional Planning

Aside from planning for their education and finances, some participants also prepared themselves emotionally for the migration. Participants anticipated that they would encounter certain challenges during the settlement process and they knew to

prepare mentally for these challenges. One participant highlighted the importance of emotional planning by setting out mental roadmaps:

For example for the first half year which kind of the environment or situation you hope to reach then first year then the second year then the third year. If you build such kind of roadmap then you will not feel worry about something or feel horrible here or don't know what you should get. I will say that well prepared doesn't mean that you should prepare like the some kind of stuff you should bring like clothes and stuff but why you come here and what kind of life you hope to reach. You should have such picture in your mind. It will help you to really settle down and be in the part here.

The participant further commented that by creating mental roadmaps and setting realistic expectations for each milestone, one is well aware of what to expect and even if things were not to go as planned, one would not be extremely disappointed or upset. He also pointed out that some immigrants have very high expectations of Canada and when those expectations are not met, they can become disappointed and fall into depression. Another participant anticipated that it would take a long time to secure a good job and was mentally prepared to deal with the challenge:

Maybe the reason is the bad economy but I know many people who have been here for more than ten years and they told me in Canada it's very hard to find a job but now it's very, very hard to find a job. I know if I be patient enough, persistent enough, finally I believe I can find a job here.

By being patient and positive, the participant is able to deal with the challenges of employment that many newcomers to Canada face. For several of the participants, they expected that life would be different and that the first couple of years would be hard but they believed that circumstances would improve in time. As one participant suggested:

You know what you will do when you came to Canada. Everything can happen you have to be positive to it. You have to face everything. It's a good choice to immigrate to Canada but you have a lot of work to do.

Having a positive attitude was deemed to be one of the elements necessary to effectively and smoothly settling in Canada. For this participant in particular, he believes that his positive attitude allowed him to overcome many difficult events that he had not anticipated post-migration (a job-related injury and a divorce). Other participants also felt that having a positive attitude and open mind prior to migrating was important as it allowed them to welcome any unexpected changes and challenges that arose.

Post-migration Settlement

During the interview process, participants were asked to identify factors that have helped them settle as well as those that did not aid them with their settlement. What follows are the findings from this section of the interviews.

Initial Settlement

For the purpose of this study, initial settlement refers to the first six months of settlement when participants are still trying to adjust to the immediate demands of life in Canada. These include: the first days of arrival, locating housing, and arranging for education. In terms of information, the few participants who consulted government websites prior to migration found that although the information located on these websites was useful in providing them with an overview of what to expect, they were not so helpful in terms of settlement. Additionally, the language on these websites was often too difficult to understand and they found that the language barrier hindered their ability to navigate the webpage. It was often difficult to quickly locate the information that they wanted. As one participant said:

Some legal information maybe we will use it later but for the first year the information really didn't matter. Also national information, governor general, etc. is not important. This information is offered together with the government website... for migration it really takes time to prepare everything so if the

settlement.org or CIC can offer more briefly or for first year only and give some essential information it may be more helpful. Even though we can read such kind of information but for me to organize them and to build a reasonable guideline for our first week surviving still have some gaps.

Another participant also commented that the government websites he visited did not include sufficient information about housing. What was offered on the website was basic information about locating housing but did not provide details on the process involved in obtaining a rental property. He discovered upon arrival that in order to rent a house in Toronto he needed to have a good credit history:

Even for the settlement like to find some places to live it was not very easy for me, I still remember for example they will give you some information about how to rent apartment but I didn't know at all that I need to guarantee at that time. I thought it's very easy like in China I just pay and I can rent apartment. But after I came here I find it's not so easy. Because I'm a newcomer I don't have credit report and I need a guarantee but I didn't know anyone in Toronto at that time so it was very hard time for me.

The participant further commented that as a result of this lack of knowledge, his family was forced to live in a temporary rental unit originally arranged by an immigration consultant but that the location was not suitable for a family to live. The participant later read in a local Chinese newspaper that the owner of those rental units had cheated many other newcomers into renting his properties. Another participant mentioned that some of the information provided by the immigration consultant to him was false. The consultant had promised that they would receive airport pick-up and help locating a job for the participant. An airport pick-up was arranged for the participant, however, the participant never heard from the agency after the pick-up:

They didn't contact me, only that one person that picked me up from the airport. They also promised that they will train us how to write a resumé and things like that. They promised to us that once we get to Canada they will gave us a chance to... they said their company have a ... They said that the agency that they own in

Canada, one person used to work in the labour department in Canada, maybe they retired or something, so they have a lot of source of the job to help people to look for a job, they promise that they will help us find a job until we get a job. When we get here we didn't use that, it's not useful. It really isn't helpful. They are lying.

Both participants experienced disappointment with the immigration consultants as they spent a large sum of money to obtain the services and felt the consultants were not helpful at all other than assisting them with submitting their applications to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (a task which they felt they could have easily completed themselves).

Some participants felt that information gained from not-for-profit organizations' websites was useful in providing them with information about community centres. One participant was able to obtain help from a local community centre shortly after his arrival:

I know an organization called University Settlement, they give us some help at the very beginning. For example, to apply for kids' benefit, and to fill out tax refund documents, something like that. Now it looks not like big trouble for me but at the very beginning it was very hard for people like me to do that independently I mean.

After the initial contact with the community centre, the participant learned about several other programs that were useful for him and his family. As mentioned previously, other participants were able to locate information related to L.I.N.C classes through the websites and were able to start learning English within days of arrival. Through the L.I.N.C classes, the participants were able to gain additional helpful settlement related information. As one participant recalls:

The L.I.N.C program is very helpful for me because when I studied in L.I.N.C program the teacher teach us everything and I always ask questions when I have some problems. When I have some problems in my life I always ask everything

and the teacher every patient to teach me and let me know a lot of information so that's why we can survive until now. I think it's very important reason.

However, some participants were not aware of any government assisted programs and workshops prior to migration. A few of the participants learned about the programs and workshops within the initial months of settlement, however one participant did not find out about the program until a year after his settlement. By the time this particular participant enrolled in L.I.N.C classes and had improved his English level to match the requirements for career bridging programs, he had already been in Canada for 3.5 years which exceeded the eligibility requirements for the bridging program.

Information gathered from social networks was considered to be the most useful, trustworthy and helpful by all participants. As mentioned in the previous section, several of the participants were able to locate housing information through various social networks (family, friends, or classmates) and were able to locate permanent housing within days of arrival. The social networks provided participants with significant social support during the initial months of settlement. One participant recalls:

The most helpful thing is our friends helped me a lot. My wife has a classmate in Mississauga and they helped us a lot for rent some house or for us so the first day we can live in a house. When we first came here, my wife's classmate rent house first, after half a year we moved to downtown East and that's my classmate to help me to rent it and also do a lot of things, to drove me to the grocery store to show me around or told me something about Toronto. It's really helpful.

Social support is of integral importance to immigrants during their first few months as it is the only source of support that they felt they could trust and rely upon. The above participant was very thankful that contact had been made with the former classmate prior to migrating because that gave the classmate time to prepare different things to assist in the participant's settlement. The arrangements helped offset some of the stress

that this participant would have had to deal with during the initial settlement stage. Another participant noted that she has been living at her aunt's house rent-free since she first arrived in Canada. This generous gesture from her aunt has greatly alleviated some of the settlement related stress as both she and her husband are currently in school and have no real source of income other than their savings:

My aunt is the only support and she let us live in her house and don't need to pay rent. That's why we can spend our little saving until now. If we need to rent house, I think we don't have enough money to live until now.

By preparing financially for the migration, the participant with the help of her aunt was able to use savings to support herself and her family. The participant further stressed that no matter how hard times got, they did not want to rely on any social welfare so she was glad that she had brought over most of her savings and has been able to survive until now.

In terms of initial settlement, it appears that information and help obtained from social networks were deemed the most useful asset in immigrating and settling into a new country.

Long-term Settlement

Long-term settlement refers to those settlement needs that remain after the initial settlement, such as employment; education; and social participation.

In terms of employment, all participants felt that networking was very important in obtaining a job but felt that building one's network is extremely difficult.

I went to several workshops and it said in Canada most job need to have networking and I think it's more than 80% job is networking but for us now we have a difficult time to have the networking to find the job.

Several participants also suggested that neither the workshops nor their immediate personal social network were useful in helping them gain employment that would be comparable to their skills. A few participants commented that jobs obtained through their personal networks were often within their own ethnocultural communities and were often short term and unreliable.

From friends it depends because if your friends can find a job, a good job maybe they can give you some useful information but some friends they even cannot find good job here, they do some... they are underemployed here so they cannot help you at all.

A few participants felt that the workshops provided by the community centre and the L.I.N.C program were very important in assisting them with their settlement. One participant recalls:

Also the community centre helped me a lot too. I went to a LINC class and that community centre its name is Woodgreen so I studied English and attend some workshop that for they teach us how to prepare for the interview, how to write resume, how to find the source and they give us some websites and a lot of things. I also got some clothes for interview so that's very helpful. They also have a program and I'm very interested in that. They call it one-on-one English learning program that's what they called it. They have one person lived in Canada, sometimes it's a native speaker sometimes it's an immigrant, the bottom line is that they can speak English very well and they teach me to try to improve my English skills. I also go to Salvation Army, they also have this program.

The programs not only allowed the participants to learn English and job searching skills, but it also provided them with some Canadian cultural training. Almost all the participants felt that in addition to overcoming the language barrier, cultural barriers were another hurdle to be overcome during their settlement. Many felt that understanding Canadian culture was important not only in helping them adjust to daily life, but also in helping them obtain a job.

As one participant explained:

I think the most difficult barrier for us is language and culture. We get some support from the community center. I went to LINC school and learn English. I think studying helped us because you know through the two year study I learned a lot of culture of Canada and I also learned law about Canada and I get some skills to begin my career in Canada so I think study is very important for me.

Most of the participants felt that community centres continue to assist them as they are still going through the process of settlement. Participants highlighted the fact that even though they have resided in Canada for several years, they are still trying to adjust to the new environment. They pointed out that through their involvement with the community centre, they have been able to develop new friendships that have been integral in providing them with assistance through their settlement:

I received a lot of small help from the community and we got some workshop such as finding a job and how to take care of kids in Canada from recreation centre and related organization. At least we will have a way to step by step to settle down and because we have been past this stage we begin to feel comfortable to stay here so the community support is really important in my experience

Participants felt that by maintaining a positive outlook, they were able to overcome many of the challenges that settling in Canada posed. One participant even made it a point to have small celebrations with his family to mark the first three, six and twelve months of being in Canada. He commented that this allowed his family to celebrate and appreciate all the little achievements that they had made within those few months. He further added that of all the sources that were available to aid with his settlement "the family is still the first power to help me settle down here."

Recommendations from Participants

Participants were asked during the interview what additional resources they believed would have helped them during their settlement. What follows are recommendations from the participants on ways to improve future immigrants' settlement.

Most participants felt that employment is one of the crucial elements of settlement as it enables immigrants to provide for their family. Employment allows the individual to feel like s/he is contributing to Canadian society. Since all six participants had entered through the skilled immigrant category, they all felt that they had been misled by the government. One participant in her responses captured the struggles of skilled but unemployed immigrants during settlement:

I think if we have a job everything is okay. I would like to say because we are the skilled immigration, I think the government they allow us to immigrate... I think they should give us more chance to have the job. If Canada don't need this kind of skill person don't let us come because we already have a dream to come here but when we come here our dream is broken because we cannot find a job. I think a lot of couple divorce because they have a very difficult life here... I think it's so bad. I would like to say if the investment immigration because they have money, they use the money to move here but they don't care about the job. But I think especially skilled immigration I would like the government to try to find a way to help the skilled immigration to find a job here because if we cannot find a job here, some people I know they just left their kids and wife here and they just go back to their country just earn money I think it's not good for Canada because they cannot invest their ability to the society. I think because you need the skilled immigration so I think we need to have a way to help them to find a job and then they can contribute their ability to society

Another participant shared similar views and suggested that perhaps the government could provide more realistic expectations for potential immigrants so that they are well prepared for what is to come:

I want the government to tell the people who want to immigrate to Canada not only the good thing, also to tell them some cases that are not successful for the

immigrant. I mean I want to them to tell people how important English is and not everyone can get good life or successful in Canada but if you have good English and be positive it should be very well but tell them some truth...some things can happen that just because those people don't have good English they might be not happy. If you tell people the truth it won't stop their immigrating to Canada. Cause I know those people really want to came to Canada but if they know that it is hard to get job without good English so they will study hard and they will insist on immigrating but they will study hard. That will help them get into Canadian society. And if in Canada that something happen that you don't expected so just be positive and Canada has a lot of services and benefits you can get help a lot. Maybe it's the best country in the world.

One participant felt that local Chinese associations need to help facilitate newcomers' integration into the labour market by providing networking opportunities:

I'm originally from China. My suggestions is, at the very beginning I don't think the culture region is very important here because I think Canada is a multicultural country I should melt with people from other cultures. This is correct but if you want to renew a career I mean to find the right way to find a job here you cannot do it successful without the support from people from your own cultural region. Now I think the Chinese, like some of the organization for Chinese people is not strong enough they should be stronger. They should try to build up stronger networking to help newcomers to get a job, to get Canadian experience because Canadian experience is a big issue to many newcomers to renew their careers here.

Other participants felt that more networking opportunities need to be provided to potential immigrants not only for employment but also to assist them with any other settlement related issues.

In regard to access to information, several participants stressed that they experienced difficulties in accessing useful information from the internet. Many felt that there are many helpful websites but that those websites are not easily accessible nor are they very user-friendly.

I found some very useful information I didn't get before I arrived. I cannot find them on website something even I saw I didn't realise it's useful. Some things I had to figure it out all myself after arriving here like how to find a job here, how to renew my career or even to rent an apartment, to buy a car, to buy a house . I didn't find any organization that automatically give us all of those things. I think

for most new immigrants they need something like what I need so if every newcomer had short training, just let them know some necessary information they need to know maybe it would be better.

Some participants felt that it would be useful to have orientation courses prior to coming to Canada so that they could be better informed about what to expect upon arrival:

In China before we came to Canada we really want to know some information about Canada like What field/occupation Canada really needed? And how can we get the job. I mean did they need some certificate or diploma and what English level they needed. For some housing what price and how can we rent it. Things like that.. I mean before we immigrate to Canada we have to know more information for my case I didn't know that much. In Canada they have some programs for settlement but some Community centres have LINC class and workshops. I wish we have that before in Canada. What if Canada government gave that workshop in China so if we can learn that in China before we immigrate to Canada, once we got to Canada it's more quickly to get into the society, find job. It will very help us.

The above recommendations from the participants illustrate that there is a strong need for pre-migration assistance especially in the areas of building social networks and accessing information.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study of the pre-migration planning practices of Chinese immigrants reveal that pre-migration planning did play a role in the post-migration settlement of the participants by providing participants with realistic expectations of life in Canada. Despite the individual challenges that most of the participants experienced during their settlement, all participants had a positive overall impression of their settlement experience. It can be observed throughout the study that most of the participants had properly prepared for their migration and consequently were able to deal with the challenges that came with settlement. However, as the narratives

revealed, there is still a strong need for programs and services that cater to the settlement needs of immigrants prior to their migration. There are a number of observations and theoretical implications that can be made from this current study.

Firstly, the study reveals that recent Chinese immigrants rely on social support before their migration just as much as they do post-migration. The findings from this study support the social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1985) which asserts the important role that social networks play in the settlement of immigrants and refugees. There are three different types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding social capital is made up of ties that individuals share with individuals who are similar to them. Since individuals who share strong ties tend to have a closer relationship, the type of support that an individual receives will tend to be stronger as well. These types of relationships are important to have and maintain especially for new immigrants as they provide the emotional support that is typically needed during the settlement process. Bridging social capital is made up of ties with people who are different from us. In the case of immigrants, this will usually be ties formed with people outside one's ethnic/cultural group. Finally, linking social capital is made up of ties that individuals share with people from the same socioeconomic status (Kazemipur, 2004).

The participants in this study all had some form of bonding capital prior to migration and thus were able to gain support from these networks during the process of their migration and settlement. The support received from these networks alleviated emotional and psychological stress during settlement and, in turn, helped facilitate the settlement process. Several of the participants knew the value of bonding social capital and began developing their networks prior to migration to ensure that those networks

would be secured upon arrival. However, as the findings from this study reveal, most of the participants did not have any bridging or linking social capital on which to rely pre- or post-migration. So although they were able to gain initial settlement support from their bonding networks, the lack of bridging and linking capital prevented them from gaining help in longer term settlement needs such as those of employment and educational opportunities. It was clear from many of the narratives that the existence of some form of bridging or linking social capital could have provided the participants with vital information and possible job opportunities which would greatly help facilitate their transition into the labour market.

The study also reveals that recent Chinese immigrants have difficulties locating and accessing information that is understandable and usable to them. The findings from the study support the concept of "information practices". The concept asserts that individuals locate and use information in various ways that meet their informational needs. As such, it is important to understand the "information practices" of immigrants as this will allow for the better provision in the creation and distribution of settlement-related information to immigrants (Caidi, 2008, 2010). Participants in this study obtained information from various sources (internet, books/magazines, social networks, videos, and immigration consultants). While some of the information obtained from these sources was highly useful in providing settlement-related information to the participants, others were deemed to be hard to understand as well as not of significant use. Although a few participants in the study did comment on the fact that there was a lack of settlement-related information, it should be noted that perhaps the issue is not that there is a lack of information but access to the information was not available. For example,

one of the participants who had very limited social capital, was neither aware of the settlement related websites nor of the programs and workshops available to him. This lack of information had significant impact on his settlement process. Furthermore, the study highlights the role that social capital plays as a source for obtaining such important information. Findings from the study suggest that the more social capital one has, the more sources of information one is able to obtain.

Finally, a significant finding that emerged from this study is the importance of providing immigrants with realistic expectations of life in Canada. As suggested by some of the participants, there is an urgent need for information that accurately reflects the current conditions of life in Canada in order for pre-migration expectations to properly coincide and aid with the post-migration experience. Realistic expectations allow immigrants to anticipate and prepare for the challenges that come with migration and enable them to minimize some of the emotional stress that many immigrants encounter during settlement. The study reveals that an important element of pre-migration planning involves anticipation of circumstances common to many immigrants and that this preparation enables a smoother post-migration settlement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada has a long history of providing settlement related services to immigrants. In recent years, many new resources have been developed to better aid newcomers in their settlement. Through funding provided by the government, several new websites (Before You Arrive, Ontario Immigration, My First Days and Come to Canada), as well as tool kits (e.g. Ontario Day to Day) have been created with useful general information that immigrants might need to know before choosing to migrate. The goal is to facilitate

the settlement process and adjustment of new immigrants. Although the websites are very informative, they are only helpful for those immigrants with a good understanding of English. With the exception of My First Days, all of the websites mentioned are in English only which can be problematic to potential or new immigrants who might be more comfortable or solely able to read and comprehend this type of information in their native language. Furthermore, there is often a lack of knowledge about the existence of these websites among potential immigrants.

As the findings from this study suggest, there is a need to create more awareness of the existing resources available to immigrants prior to their migration. It is not enough to have pamphlets and tool kits presented to immigrants upon their arrival at the airport as this does not give the immigrant enough time to thoroughly examine and understand the material at hand. It would be ideal if all websites designed for immigrants could be in the language of the immigrant. If financial constraints make it impossible to have the websites translated, then perhaps the language used in the website should be at a level that is more accessible to all. In addition, cooperation between Canada and other immigrant sending countries would increase and enhance the flow of information which would help facilitate settlement.

Additionally, we need to ensure that information distributed to immigrants is accurate, relevant and up-to-date. As revealed by participants in the study, information obtained from immigration consultants was often not helpful and, at times, was actually misleading. More stringent rules need to be in place to ensure that immigration consultants are licensed and regulated. Significant measures have been taken recently to ensure that all immigration consultants are licensed. As of June 30, 2011, the

Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council has been designated as the new regulatory body for immigration consultants. Although the new designation will allow for more accountability and transparency of immigration consultants, there is still a lack of information available to interested immigrants residing in foreign countries as there currently is a limited amount of information sharing between foreign governments and Canada on the issue of immigration consultants (ICCRC, 2011).

This study also highlights the need for classes and workshops to be provided to immigrants prior to their migration. Existing programs such as Pre-migration Orientation Aboard should be offered in all major source countries that Canada currently receives immigrants from. Classes and workshops should provide information that is relevant to immigrants, and up-to date. Pre-migration orientation would provide immigrants with more realistic expectations of life in Canada which may help facilitate the process of settlement.

Further studies on the impact of immigration on families is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of the issues that face many newcomer families as a unit and not just immigrants as solitary individuals. Future settlement related programs should be more family-friendly, as well as culturally sensitive in order to effectively meet the unique settlement needs of newcomers. The creation of more culturally and linguistically appropriate professional counseling and psychological support services for newcomers should also be considered both for the individual and the familial unit as a whole.

Finally, there is a strong demand for partnerships between scholars, local and national organizations, and governments to assist and support immigrants in developing

their social capital. The partnerships would allow for both bridging and linking social capital to develop and, as a result, provide immigrants with the necessary ties that are required for a successful settlement process.

CONCLUSION

Previous research on immigration and settlement studies has largely neglected the essential role that pre-migration planning and preparation plays in immigrant settlement. However, with the increasing number of immigrants entering Canada each year, it is imperative to understand its importance in order to better assist future immigrants. This study has attempted to demonstrate, through the analysis of pre-migration practices of a small number of Chinese immigrants, the necessity of being properly prepared for migration to another country. The findings from the study highlight the value of social capital, not only in providing support both before and after migration, but also as a means to accessing numerous resources that aid newcomers in their settlement.

Despite the dearth of research on this issue, the present study has revealed that a connection exists between pre-migration planning and post-migration settlement. As scholars and all levels of government continue to work towards improving the settlement outcomes of immigrants, it is important to recognize that support should not begin post-migration. Proper pre-migration preparation can alleviate some of the stress that comes with migration and contribute to successful settlement.

The process of migration is very difficult, especially if one has to adjust to a new living environment without appropriate support from the receiving country. Providing migrants with proper pre-migration tools, such as accurate and relevant information and

social support networks, will allow for more realistic expectations of life in Canada and, subsequently, more successful settlement.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study attempted to take a first step in examining the pre-migration planning practices of recent Chinese immigrants. However, there are some limitations to this study. Firstly, this study focused only on the unique experiences of six Chinese immigrants. Thus, the findings from this study are limited only to the experiences of this particular group. Secondly, due to the researcher's limited Cantonese and Mandarin abilities, and time and financial constraints, all recruitment and interviews were conducted in English only. Hence, only participants who were comfortable with the English language were able to participate in the study. As a result, all interested participants were from the skilled immigrant category since they are required to have a good working command of English in order to be eligible to enter the country through the skilled immigrant category.

Future research should attempt to include participants from different ethnic groups, including those who may not have such a good functional grasp of the English language. The inclusion of immigrants from different ethnic groups as well as different levels of English proficiency in research is vital to understanding their settlement in Canada. It is only through the inclusion of all immigrants that researchers and policy makers can further their understanding of the various problems that immigrants encounter and how best to address their specific settlement needs. Additionally, future studies should be longitudinal in nature, beginning with interviews with immigrants prior to their migration with follow up interviews after they've arrived. This will allow for a

better analysis of the role that pre-migration planning plays throughout the settlement process, at various stages and how perceptions change throughout the settlement process. Another future area of research could be a comparison of effective practices between different immigrant receiving countries in terms of providing potential immigrants with access to pre-migration information and assistance.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Background Information

1. When did you immigrate to Canada?
2. Under what category did you immigrate to Canada?
3. Why did you choose to immigrate to Canada?
4. Did you know anyone in Canada before you immigrated?

Questions pertaining to pre-migration planning

5. How did you plan for your migration?
6. What sources of information did you use, if any, to gain information about Canada?
7. Did the sources of information help you with your settlement?
8. In what ways did the sources help/didn't help with settlement?
9. What were your expectations of Canada?
10. Did you visit Canada prior to immigrating here?

Questions pertaining to post-migration settlement

11. What do you think was the most difficult barrier for you in settling in Canada?
12. Did you have any support when you first arrived in Canada?
13. What do you think have helped you settle?
14. What do you think would have helped you settle?
15. What advice would you give someone from your country who is thinking of migrating to Canada?
16. What is your overall impression about your settlement experience?

Appendix B Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Sex	Marital Status	Country of Origin	Year of Arrival	Immigration Category	Education	Previous Career	Current Career	Years of Professional Experience
1	M	Married	People's Republic of China	2007	Skilled	Bachelor	Project manager	College Student	10+
2	M	Divorced	People's Republic of China	2007	Skilled	Bachelor	Engineer	Refrigeration Operator	10+
3	F	Married	People's Republic of China	2008	Skilled	Bachelor	Banker	College Student	5+
4	M	Married	People's Republic of China	2008	Skilled	Masters	Senior Engineer	Research Assistant	10+
5	F	Married	Taiwan	2009	Skilled	Bachelor	Customer Service Specialist	College Student	7+
6	M	Married	Taiwan	2008	Skilled	Bachelor	Project Manager	College Student	10+

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