SILENT VOICES:
HELP-SEEKING PATTERNS OF RECENT
IMMIGRANT CHINESE WOMEN FROM HONG KONG TO CANADA

by

Oye-Nam Christine Wong

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
Graduate Department of Adult Education, Community Development
and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Oye-Nam Christine Wong (1998)
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.
ABSTRACT
SILENT VOICES:
HELP-SEEKING PATTERNS OF RECENT
IMMIGRANT CHINESE WOMEN FROM HONG KONG TO CANADA

Doctor of Education, 1998
Oye-Nam Christine Wong

Graduate Department of Adult Education,
Community Psychology and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

This study explored patterns of help-seeking behaviour of the Chinese women who immigrated within the past seven years from Hong Kong. Twelve women immigrants volunteered to participate in the study and were interviewed in Cantonese. Interviews were transcribed and analysed for emerging themes.

Several major sources of mental stress were identified, including: coping with loss and loneliness, dealing with financial constraints, helping with children's adjustment concerns, searching for jobs, handling prejudice and discrimination, struggling with cultural and language differences, and negotiating necessary transportation. The results showed that these new immigrant women considered consulting a counsellor only when they were in acute crisis or their problems were getting out of hand, especially if their children had difficulties. Seeing from the Western perspective, this help-seeking behaviour is problematical because it is crisis management. However, when we consider these same patterns from the Chinese cultural viewpoint, we can see a guideline for assisting traditional Chinese to handle challenges. These participants were unable to handle these challenges due
to the following barriers. These included: lack of knowledge and information on the Western concept of mental health, lack of knowledge of English, cultural differences, user fees, and accessibility of services. The findings also strongly indicated that these participants preferred empathic counsellors who could speak their language and were informed about their culture. These barriers occurred in Toronto also due to the lack of resourceful community leaders with whom to consult and make appropriate referral to available resources. Participants found it extremely hard to trust a total stranger and preferred to have personal references about a counsellor before approaching him or her.

These results may have varied implications for the delivery of counselling services to immigrant women: education about mental health, mental stress and healthy coping strategies; information about available mental health services and their functions; communication in immigrants' native language; ethno-specific counselling services; funding under the universal health insurance plan, or through income-geared fees.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the twelve participants who shared their thoughts, opinions and feelings with me, without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the members of my committee, Dr. Peter Gamlin, Dr. Peter Waxer and Dr. Niva Piran, not only for their support and valuable advices, but also for their unique contributions to my understanding of multicultural counselling in the Canadian context. Dr. Waxer strongly encouraged me to undertake this study and Dr. Gamlin, through his course, inspired me to confidently generate ideas in this field. Dr. Piran showed tremendous enthusiasm and support in my area of research and professional growth. I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Barbara Burnaby and Dr. Naresh Issar for providing support and critique on this paper, to my evaluators Ms Kit-Ming Koo and Dr. Barbara Lai for their assistance with the evaluation of the emerging categories of this study, and to Ms. Martine Johnson and Ms Ann Powell for their editorial input.

I want to thank my thesis support groups: Peter Mallouh who also helped to validate my translation; Giuseppe Spezzano from whom I learned to deal with my cultural shock; Gabriele Bantz, Fatima Correia, Bonnie Fitzerman, Ingrid Gore, Mahvash Elmpak, Anna Mitsopulos, and Marigit Asselstine for their challenging ideas and assurance in this study and the sharing of fun, joy and frustrations which added colours to my student life.

I acknowledge my personal circle of Raymond Law, Gilbert Lee, Franklin Lee, Agnes Chan, Reina Yeung and Josephine Lam for their continuing technical and moral support.

I am forever indebted to my parents for instilling the strength and confidence I needed
to explore the world in my journey through life. I also thank my sister and brother, my niece and my nephews who have always been a source of joy. This thesis is dedicated to every one of you.
FOREWORD

Researcher's Background and Personal Beliefs

This research is a qualitative inquiry which has a major impact on the different components of the study, such as interviewing, transcribing, analysing and interpreting. Researchers' values, beliefs and experiences may therefore be interwoven with the description of participants’ stories and their interpretations. The explicit description of our experiences, values and beliefs may therefore contextualize the research study and clarify pre-existing biases.

My background

I was born and brought up in the British colony of Hong Kong which was handed back to The Peoples' Republic of China five months ago, July 1st 1997. Being a cosmopolitan society and an international financial city, Hong Kong has always been proud of its racial harmony and the rapid growth of its economy. As a result, the possibility of racial tension never came to my consciousness when I lived in Hong Kong. In addition, I was fortunate in that my skills were in great demand. I did not realize what life would be like when one is unemployed, underemployed or living in poverty.

Prior to leaving Hong Kong, we, potential emigrants, talked in farewell parties about possible hardships that we might encounter as immigrants in Canada such as job searching. We also learned about similar challenges from some visiting emigrants of Canada and other countries. The strongest themes were discrimination and lack of job opportunities. My experience as a student in Britain and a sojourner in other European and Asian countries was very pleasant and that gave me confidence to leave my homeland. My major motivation for
leaving Hong Kong was my long-term plan for further study. While Canada was recruiting immigrants, I was advised to apply for an independent immigrant visa (visa is offered based on a very strict point system such as skills, educational background, a good health record, a clear police record and plus other bonus points such as experience of living abroad) and I was accepted without any difficulties. I was inspired to come to Toronto by an article I read which discussed the needs of bilingual and bi-cultural mental health services. I felt free to go to anywhere since my parents and siblings had already settled abroad. What I missed in Hong Kong were a comfortable life style, cultural activities of high quality and good friends. And some of my friends were leaving Hong Kong as well.

My experience as an immigrant woman

I anticipated that life in Canada would not be easy though my friends had greater confidence in my making a successful transition to life in Canada. Nevertheless, I came with an open mind. When I came to Canada, the first thing I did was to look for career and personal counselling services. I did not know where to obtain the information but checked with acquaintances and professional organizations.

Like any new immigrant, I went through a path of uprooting and replanting. I shared similar experiences of loneliness, isolation, the challenges of seeking employment and being accepted to the Canadian society. I was somewhat aware of the nature of my struggle, but being busy with daily challenges, I did not stop to reflect about them. Conducting this research study, as well as my clinical work, have deepened my understanding of the toll which different social process took on my well being. A course in Multicultural Studies in the Canadian Context, and reading in this area, particularly the report on "Mental Health
Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees in Canada” (Canadian Task Force, 1988), have informed me more about the needs of mental health services of new immigrants.

Working as a counsellor in different communities, I have great interest in different organizational barriers to the provision of efficient mental health services to ethnic minorities. Being an immigrant, I am in an advantageous position to see the perspectives of both the dominant cultural values as well as those of different minorities (Nielsen, 1990). As a clinician, I have always been struggling with the issue of cultural constraints which motivated me to further my study on the appropriate application of counselling to ethnic minorities. For these reasons, I decided to conduct an exploratory study in the area of immigration and mental health services.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Abstract** ................................................................. i

**Acknowledgements** .................................................. iii

**Foreword** ............................................................... v

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION** ........................................................ 1

I. A. Introduction ....................................................... 1

I. B. Clinical Observations ............................................. 3

I. C. Purpose of the Study ............................................. 5

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW** ............................................... 6

II. A. Research Findings on the Needs of Mental Health Services for the Chinese ........................................... 6

II. B. The Chinese Perception of Mental Health ................... 11

   B.1. Psychophysiological View ..................................... 11

   B.2. Moralistic View ................................................ 11

   B.3. Religious View ................................................ 12

   B.4. Cosmological View ............................................ 12

II. C. Chinese Culture and Family Structure ....................... 13

   C.1. Family Hierarchy and Obligation ............................ 14

   C.2. Distribution of Power in the Chinese Family .......... 15

viii
II. C. 3. Family Collective Responsibility ................................................. 16
   C. 4. "Own-people" and "Outsiders" ...................................................... 17
   C. 5. Common Psychological Problems in the Chinese Family ..................... 18

II. D. The Constraints on the Applications
       of the Western Counselling Theory to Ethnic Chinese .......................... 22
   D. 1. The Concept of Normal Behaviour .................................................. 23
   D. 2. Nonverbal Communication .............................................................. 24
   D. 3. Individualism and Independence Versus Collectivism
         and Interdependence ............................................................... 25
   D. 4. Fragmentation by Academic Disciplines ......................................... 27
   D. 5. Dependence on Abstract Words ..................................................... 28
   D. 7. Linear Versus Circular Thinking .................................................... 30
   D. 8. Locus of Control: Internal Versus External ...................................... 31
   D. 9. Devaluation of History ...................................................................... 32
   D. 10. Individual Assertiveness in the Chinese Context ................................ 33

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 36

III. A. The Rationale of a Qualitative Approach ........................................... 36
III. B. Sample Size ..................................................................................... 40
III. C. Selection of Participants ................................................................... 40
       C. 1. Inclusion Criteria ........................................................................ 40
III. C. 2. Recruiting Method ................................................................. 42
III. D. Procedure of Data Collection ..................................................... 44
III. E. Data Analysis ................................................................. 46
   E. 1. Coding and Categorizing .................................................... 46
   E. 2. Conceptualizing Deeper Meanings ........................................... 48
   E. 3. Translation and Validation of the Language and Categories ............... 48
III. F. Trustworthiness ................................................................. 49
   F. 1. Credibility ........................................................................ 49
   F. 2. Transferability and Dependability ........................................... 50

CHAPTER FOUR .............................................................................

THE BACKGROUND OF HONG KONG AND THE PARTICIPANTS ............. 52

IV. A. The Background of Hong Kong .................................................. 52
   A. 1. Location ............................................................................. 52
   A. 2. Political Background .......................................................... 53
   A. 3. Education .......................................................................... 54
   A. 4. Socialization ...................................................................... 55
   A. 5. Economy ........................................................................... 56

IV. B. Introduction to Participants ......................................................... 59
   B.1. Teresa (C1) ........................................................................ 60
   B.2. Ming (C2) .......................................................................... 63
   B.3. Amy (C3) ........................................................................... 67
   B.4. Joy (C4) ............................................................................. 69

x
IV. B.5. Susan (C5) ............................................................... 71
    B.6. Polly (C6) ............................................................... 73
    B.7. Lynn (NC1) ............................................................. 75
    B.8. Lydia (NC2) ............................................................. 82
    B.9. Pam (NC3) ............................................................... 87
    B.10. Kay (NC4) ............................................................... 90
    B.11. Tina (NC5) ............................................................. 93
    B.12. Cathy (NC6) ............................................................. 95

CHAPTER FIVE
THE CHALLENGES THAT NEW IMMIGRANT WOMEN FROM HONG KONG FACED
AND THEIR COPING STRATEGIES ................................................. 99
V. A. Coping with Loss and Loneliness ....................................... 99
V. B. Tolerating the Stress of Job Search .................................... 104
V. C. Surviving with Financial Constraint .................................. 108
V. D. Dealing with Children’s Concerns ..................................... 110
V. E. Striving Against the Negative Impacts of Immigration on
      Family Relationships .................................................... 118
      E. 1. Efforts to Handle Delicate Spousal Relations .................. 118
      E. 2. Managing a Three-Generation Relationships .................. 121
      E. 3. Enduring the Stress of Split-Family Arrangement ............ 122
V. F. Struggling with Language Differences ................................ 125
V. G. Dancing with Cultural Dissimilarities and Tension ............... 130
CHAPTER SIX

PATTERNS OF HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR .................................................. 157

VI. A. Help Seeking Behaviour in Relation to Own Concerns .......................... 157

VI. B. The Reasons for Seeking or Not Seeking Counselling Assistance .......... 158

   B. 1. Lacking of Counselling Knowledge and Information .............................. 158

   B. 2. Counselling Is an Intangible Service and Is Not Part
        of the Chinese Culture .................................................................. 161

   B. 3. Language Barrier Is an Obstacle to Counselling
        Services .................................................................................. 162

   B. 4. Views of Stigma ........................................................................... 164

   B. 5. The Belief in Self-Reliance and the Issue of Privacy ......................... 167

   B. 6. Resolve Life Challenges in Religion .................................................. 168

   B. 7. Some Women Were Locked in Immobile Situations ............................. 170

xii
VI. B. 8. Some Women Do Not Want to Leave Work for Counselling Service .......... 170
VI. C. Motivation for Seeking Help for Emotional Distress .............................. 170
C. 1. Ventilation of Feelings with Family Members and Good Friends .......... 170
C. 2. Reaching Out to Their Support System Back Home
   for Emotional Support .................................................. 173
VI. D. Help-Seeking Behaviour in Relation to Children's Concern .................. 174
VI. E. Comparison of Views on Career Counselling and
   Psychological Counselling .................................................. 180
   E. 1. Views on Career Counselling Services .................................. 180
   E. 2. Views on Psychological Counselling Services .......................... 183
VI. F. Other Opinions ............................................................. 186
   F. 1. Both Career and Psychological Counselling Services Provided Directions to
   Clients ................................................................. 186
   F. 2. Not Knowing the Nature of the Services Was an Impediment to Services .. 186
VI. G. Views on Westerners' Use of Psychological Counselling Help-Seeking .... 187
   G. 1. Seeking Counselling Help Was Part of the Westerners' Culture ........... 187
   G. 2. Psychological Counselling Services Should Be for Big Problems ........... 188
   G. 3. Clients Should Also Work Hard ........................................ 189
   G. 4. Western Psychological Counselling Services Were the By-Products of an
   Individualistic Culture ...................................................... 190
VI. H. Preferred Ethno-Specific Counselling Services .................................. 191
VI. I. Qualities of a Helper ...................................................... 196
VI. J. Views on User Fees ................................................................. 199

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES DELIVERY ................................................................. 206

VII. A. Limitations of This Study .......................................................... 206

   A. 1. Small Samples ................................................................. 206

   A. 2. Samples Biases ................................................................. 206

   A. 3. Researcher's Assumption in Data Interpretation ....................... 207

   A. 4. The Inadequacy of Studying Traditional Chinese Women's Emotional Needs from the Western Counselling Perspective ...................... 208

   A. 5. Translation ................................................................. 209

   A. 6. The Impact of Racism on Help-Seeking Behaviour Was Not Investigated ................................................................. 209

VII. B. Study Implications ................................................................. 210

   B. 1. External Barriers to Psychological Counselling Services .................. 210

VII. C. Cultural Aspects of Not Seeking Outside Assistance ..................... 212

   C. 1. The Impact of the Concept of Interdependence in an Agrarian Culture 212

   C. 2. The Belief in Self-Reliance and the Tolerance of Hardship (Yen) ........... 213

   C. 3. Issues of Stigma, Privacy, and the View of the `Other' ..................... 215

   C. 4. The Role of Religion Substituted Secular Counselling Services in Times of Suffering ................................................................. 216

VII. D. Cultural Aspects of Seeking Professional Assistance ..................... 218

xv
Appendix C. Definition of Culture ........................................... 258

Appendix D. List of themes of Challenges and Help-Seeking Behaviour .... 261

LIST OF TABLES

1. Clinical Observations .............................................................. 4
2. Demographic Data of Users Group Pre-Immigration ..................... 264
3. Demographic Data of Users Group Pre-Immigration ..................... 265
4. Demographic Data of Users Group Post-Immigration .................... 266
5. Demographic Data of Non-Users Group Pre-Immigration ............... 267
6. Demographic Data of Non-Users Group Pre-Immigration ............... 268
7. Demographic Data of Non-Users Group Post-Immigration .............. 269

LIST OF FIGURES

A. Paradoxical Elements in Participants’ Perceptions and Beliefs about Seeking Help .............................................................. 270

B. Traditional Chinese Guideline for Handling Challenges ............... 271

C. Services Delivery as Suggested by the Participants ..................... 272
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1. A. Introduction

Help-seeking is an instinct in human behaviour. For example, if a child needs help, this child will go to his or her mother. It is also natural for the mother to help her child. However, when assistance is sought by an adult, there are always cultural rules or rituals governing the help-seeking behaviour. All these rules or rituals determine the nature of assistance and the relationship between the helpee and helper. Thus, patterns of help-seeking behaviour vary from society to society. For example, in the traditional Chinese culture, a middle-class woman who suffers insomnia would consult a herbalist or a spiritual leader; whereas an Anglo middle-class woman would consult her family physician or a church pastor. In the Afro-Arab culture, I came across a middle-class woman who would go to her mother or aunt before she reaches out to the most senior female member of the clan. If no one can help her, she would go to the head of the clan, usually a man, with the support of the husband or the father. By following these cultural rules, helpers and helpees seem to work comfortably in their own society. Due to migration, interaction between various cultural groups results in communication problems. Human behaviour of different ethnic groups has its own meanings, cultural values or rituals. The following examples will explain this difference.

To address psychological issues in the American sense, such as grieving, an upper-middle class Anglo-American woman would go to a psychotherapist; whereas an upper-middle class Chinese woman would react very differently. The help-seeking behaviours exhibited by the Chinese clients with psychological needs and their families vary according
to the concerns. For emotional needs such as grieving, the Chinese tend to seek support from family, friends and peers. Some do not seek help at all. Repression is usually employed (Samaritan Befrienders, 1981; Wong and Kwong, 1981; Wong, 1987). If a concern lasts for about half a year or so, some may go to fortune tellers or religious leaders. Some may also consult *feng-sui* (geomancy) practitioners who would give advice on reorientating furniture (Lin, Inui, Kleinman & Womack 1982).

When somatic problems are manifested, people commonly start with self-medication. Diet or life style would be modified. Then herbalists would be consulted (Lee, 1986; Lin, Inui, Kleinman & Womack, 1982 & Lin, 1981). During these processes, family members are very caring, concerned and supportive. They may also consult *feng-sui* (geomancy) practitioners. The mother or grandmother may make prayers and offerings to the gods in the temple. Some may invite a Taoist monk to exorcize the ghost from the patient or the house. The head of the family would draw upon the virtue of good conduct in the hope of correcting the patient's problem. Some may try one pathway after another. If the patient does not get better and feels more and more depressed, extended family or close friends of the family will be involved. Later, Western physicians are often consulted in the hope of quick recovery (Cheung & Lau, 1982; Lin & Lin, 1978; Lee, 1986).

If the patient is referred to a psychotherapist or a psychiatrist, the family and the patient are usually reluctant to admit their needs until they are exhausted with all other available resources and cannot cope. The degree to which they commit themselves in therapy or treatment depends on the seriousness of the problems (Lin & Lin, 1978 & Li, 1985). Some disturbed individuals do not seek any assistance or psychological support until they exhibit deviant behaviours such as attempting suicide or shoplifting. They then end up
in either a hospital or a social work services office (Lo, 1986). These phenomena have been reported in Vancouver, Toronto, Hong Kong and Singapore (Cheung, Lau, & Wong, 1984; Lee, 1986; Lin, Inui, Kleinman & Womack 1982; Lin & Lin, 1978; Lo, 1986; Tsoi, 1985). Since they tend not to use the Western mental health services, ethnic Chinese are perceived to be not in need of mental health services for their well-being. Yet, the writer's clinical observations and the research findings in the field show that ethnic Chinese do need mental health services and that their help-seeking behaviour is governed by their perceptions of mental health and culture.

I. B. Clinical Observations

The researcher's clinical observations, over a decade of work in mental health services in Hong Kong and Canada, is that the ethnic Chinese do need culturally and linguistically responsive mental health services. The writer has kept a record of all Chinese clients referred to a community agency within a period of twenty-two months in Canada from 1989 to 1991 (Wong, 1991). Records showed that all the clients were referred by agencies, such as schools, children’s aid societies, and occasionally by the police or family physicians. There were no self-referrals. With regard to the evolution of clients' problems, most of them were in crisis. The rest of them are in serious situations [See table 1].
Table 1. Numbers and percentages of the nature of cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/# of months</th>
<th># of new cases of ethnic Chinese</th>
<th># &amp; % of crisis cases</th>
<th># &amp; % of serious cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989 4 months</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 [37.5%]</td>
<td>5 [62.5%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 12 months</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7 [53.8%]</td>
<td>6 [46.2%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 6 months</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7 [70%]</td>
<td>3 [30%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 22 months</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17 [54.8%]</td>
<td>14 [45.2%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The data are provided with the consent of Markham Stouffville Family Life Centre

Due to the mandate of the service, all the identified clients were young people who are eighteen or under. With respect to the nature of the concerns, the identified clients' issues were often not the core of the problem. Rather, the identified clients reflected the needs of the families. Some were overdue issues which had been kept within the family for five to ten years. In the interviews, the parents or guardians said that they did not know what counselling or psychotherapy was. Neither did they know there was a service or an agency that provided such relevant services. Since they were referred by the authorities and were assured that the counsellor speaks their language and knows their culture, they decided to try and meet the counsellor in the hope that their problems could be solved. Some came because they did not have any other alternatives or exhausted other resources.

Based on these observations, the investigator believes that the Chinese immigrants do need counselling services. However, there are no available research findings to qualitatively explore the needs of Chinese clientele of mental health services. These lead to the decision to explore the needs and patterns of help-seeking behaviour of the Chinese women in this study.
I. C. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the needs of Chinese clientele of mental health services. Several areas are of specific interest in this inquiry. What kind of help do the clients need? In what form or setting would they feel comfortable receiving it? In what way are they ready to handle some issues here compared with their home country? What would facilitate accessibility to mental health services? How should the Western approach to counselling be adapted to suit Chinese clientele? It is hoped that exploring the answers to these questions will yield information which can be applied to delivery of services.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

II. A. Research Findings on the Needs of Mental Health Services for the Chinese

The following research findings also support that ethnic Chinese need more mental health services than they actually use. Much of the existing research on Chinese culture in North America is based on the studies of Chinese families residing in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. It is relevant to assume that Chinese-Canadians by and large respond in a fashion similar to Chinese-Americans. However, researchers in the past or present, tend to group together Chinese, Japanese and Korean families under the big umbrella of ‘the Asian family’, regardless of important differences in language, historical and economic development. Wherever possible, the subgroup is identified in this study.

Researchers like D. W. Sue and Kirk (1975) used a quantitative approach to compare the use of counselling and psychiatric services on a large university campus over a four-year period for Asian-Americans and non-Asian students. Their findings indicate that Chinese and Japanese American students under-utilized the campus psychiatric service. In contrast, a significantly greater percentage of Asian Americans use the counselling service when compared with the non-Asian counterparts. In the particular group studied, about 50% of the clients were Chinese American females. D. W. Sue and Kirk concluded that the need for counselling services among Asian Americans is no lower than that of the general population. As well, the increased contact at the counselling centre of Asian students represents a large number of those who would usually be seen at psychiatric services. This conclusion is also
supported by Atkinson and Gim's (1989) findings which indicate that "[t]he more acculturated Asian-American students in this study were more likely than the less acculturated Asian-American students to recognize personal need for professional psychological help, to be tolerant of the stigma associated with psychological help, and to be open to discussing their problems with a psychologist" (p.211).

As well, historically, Sue & Sue (1985), Lorenzo and Adler (1984) have recounted how the ethnic Chinese population in North America has gone through different stages of discrimination and prejudice, emotional sufferings, and hardships in life (Li, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1985; Lorenzo and Adler, 1984; Cheung, 1985; Lorenzo and Adler, 1984; Sue and McKinney, 1975). Chinese were denied the rights of citizenship and ownership of land. Some of them were brutally assaulted and even murdered. During World War II, Japanese in the United States and Canada were locked in concentration camps. "... Asians in America have at one time or another been subjected to the most appalling forms of discrimination ever perpetrated against any immigrant group" (D. W. Sue, 1981, p.115). From the severity of mental problems reported (S. Sue, 1992a), one can infer that the needs for mental health services in the Chinese ethnic community could be more than shown (Cheung, 1985; Lorenzo and Adler, 1984; Sue and McKinney, 1975).

However, D. Sue (1981) points out that there is a general belief that ethnic Chinese, one of the largest Asian-American groups, show low prevalence of mental health problems. The findings of Sue and Sue (1974), Sue and Kirk (1975) and Sue and Mckinney (1975) show statistically low rates of psychiatric contact and hospitalization. Indeed, it might seem that Asian Americans are immune to the stress of prejudice and discrimination. However,
those findings do not seem convincing in light of the massive discrimination that Asians have experienced historically (Daniels, 1971; DeVos & Abbott, 1966; D. W. Sue & Frank, 1973; Sung, 1967).

In an analysis of current stereotypes, Sue and McKinney (1975) and Kitano (1969) found that Chinese and Japanese are considered good citizens, diligent and 'model minorities'. D. W. Sue (1981) and Sue and McKinney (1975), however, argue that though Chinese and Japanese have exhibited a great deal of success in educational, occupational, economic and social mobility, this myth of success does injustice to the many Asians in America who are suffering from poverty, unemployment and extreme personal distress. Their arguments are supported by the findings of Urban Associates [1974] analysed by D. W. Sue (1981). This analysis revealed that the higher median income of Asian Americans does not take into account the higher percentage of wage earners in Asian families compared with white families; an equal incidence of poverty despite the higher median income; lower rate of welfare than the general population; and a discrepancy between education and income. The Asian wage earners may have a higher level of education, yet their salaries are generally not commensurate with their training. Therefore, D. W. Sue, (1981) argued that "the stereotype and myth about Asians in America - that they represent model minorities and that they experience no great difficulties in society "must be dispelled" (p.115). He also found that Asian Americans view these stereotypes as having functional value for those who hold power in society. These cliches reassert the erroneous belief that minority members can succeed in a democratic society if they work hard enough. Further, D. W. Sue (1981) points out that the Asian American accomplishment story is a concept engendering conflicts; a story
is "used by the Establishment to pit one minority group against another by holding one group up as an example to the others" (p.117). This myth of success has denied many Asian American communities from receiving the necessary moral and financial support they deserved as a struggling minority with unique concerns. Thus, D. W. Sue (1981) proclaims that it is important for counsellors to look behind the success myth and to understand the Asian experience in America. Another positive stereotype is, according to Christensen (1987), that the Chinese have the ideal personality, a strong family bond and a sense of community which support those in need of help. Based on these stereotypes and research findings, it was concluded that Asian Americans have little psychopathological disturbance. Nevertheless, little empirical confirmation exists to support or negate this presumption (Christensen, 1987).

Sue and McKinney (1975) found that the only available data supporting the view that there are few psychological problems in the Chinese community, is the rate of use of mental health services by Asian Americans and the white Americans. They asserted that utilization rates were often used to compare the prevalence of psychopathology among groups. These research findings were based on the admission rate to mental health hospitals. For example, Kitano (1969) and Sue and McKinney (1975) pointed out "the first admissions to California state mental hospitals, Chinese and Japanese are rated from two to three times lower than whites, and from three to four times lower than blacks" (p.112). The low rate of first admissions to mental health hospitals for Chinese was also supported by the findings in Hawaii (Statistical Report, 1970 cited in Sue & McKinney, 1975), in Australia (Chiu & Tan, 1985) and corresponded to the Toronto experience in the Hong Fook Mental Health
Association, which is a grassroots voluntary agency dedicated to the promotion of mental health in the Chinese and Southeast Asian communities in Toronto (Chang, 1986). However, one could question the validity of using lower utilization rates as indicators of low rates of psychopathology among the Chinese. Based on the presenting issues and the cultural backgrounds of the clients, D. W. Sue and Kirk's findings (1975) indicated that Asian Americans may have greater need for academic, career and vocational counselling than other groups. The low rate of utilizing psychiatric facilities may have been affected by differences in culture, values, and hospital policies (Sue & McKinney 1975). This opinion was echoed by the study of Atkinson and Gim (1989). It showed that "a conflict exists between traditional cultural values of the three Asian-American groups (Chinese-, Japanese-, and Korean-) and the way in which psychological services are provided in the United Sates" (p.211). This seems to be in line with the 1990 annual report of the Markham Stouffville Family Life Centre -- Youth in Transition Programme. This report stated, "[b]ecause of our staffing (Chinese and South Asian counsellors), it appears that we are particularly well utilized by the Chinese and South Asian communities" (Markham Stouffville Family Life Centre, 1990, p.8)

The above arguments seemed to suggest that the Chinese people's willingness to use mental health facilities was affected by discrimination and the accessibility of the services. However, they seemed to discount the effect of various perceptions of mental health in the traditional Chinese culture which may also govern their help-seeking behaviour. These issues are now discussed briefly.
II. B. The Chinese Perception of Mental Health

Concerning the Chinese perception of mental health, Chinese people tend to regard psychological needs as psychiatric illness. They hold various beliefs regarding mental health, such as the psychophysiological, moralistic, religious, and cosmological views, which affect the utilization of mental health services.

II. B. 1. Psychophysiological View

In Chinese medicine, psychosomatic integration portrays the connection between psychological and physiological functions. Accordingly, each of the five major emotions is related to an internal organ: "Happiness is in the heart, anger is in the liver, worry is in the lung, fear is in the kidney, and desire is in the spleen" (Lin, 1981, p.385). The imbalance of emotions upsets the serviceable balance of these organs and vice versa. This traditional concept tends to emphasize the interactive relationship between mind and body. Psychological and physical processes are integrated in the maintenance of homeostasis (Cheung & Lau, 1982). Hence, moderation and inhibition of emotions are highly valued. Once physiological balance has been disturbed after psychological imbalance, physiological or medical intervention is employed instead of a psychological approach (Lin, 1981).

II. B. 2. Moralistic View

The moralistic view emphasizes that psychological needs or mental illness are a result of misconduct, for example, violating moral ethics or filial piety. These problems are also regarded as a punishment for deviating from the socially prescribed behaviour. The punitive
consequences could be brought about by the client or patient, or by his or her family, or even by ancestors in the present or former lives in a culture that believes in reincarnation. Thus, it is understandable that the Chinese have seen psychological problems and mental illness as linked with fear, shame and guilt (Lin & Lin, 1978). Usually, the head of the family will remind everybody of the virtue of good conduct in the hope of correcting the client's or patient's problems (Lee, 1986). This ritual is similar to the religious view.

II. B. 3. Religious View

According to the religious view, psychological problems and mental illness are caused by the rage of gods and ancestors. Similar to the moralistic view, these problems could be brought about by the client or patient, or his or her family members in either present or former lives (Lin & Lin, 1978). For the Buddhists, prayers and offerings would be given at temples in the hope of accumulating good deeds to please the gods. As for the Taoist, priests would be hired to exorcize the evil spirit which is believed to have possessed the client or patient (Lee, 1986).

II. B. 4. Cosmological View

The cosmological view stresses that psychological needs or mental illness is caused by environmental disturbances (T'ien, 1985). *Huangti Neijing Suwen* (Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine) (1967) records that *kuang* (a type of mental illness) could be manifested by oppressive air and caused by abnormality in the weather. Change of environment, or reorientating of furniture (*feung-sui* a form of geomancy) have often been
applied to solve emotional problems, interpersonal relations in the family or illness of any kind (Lin, 1981).

In order to understand those issues better, a more in-depth and systematic study of the Chinese perceptions of mental health is needed. Despite the fact that all these beliefs may be controversial, they are so pervasive that they affect the everyday life of the Chinese. Although this has been only a brief account of the general perceptions of mental health among the Chinese people, it seems to shed light on the following phenomena: Psychologically disturbed clients tend to present their somatic symptoms and consult traditional physicians; clients and family members find it hard to admit that they have emotional needs or mental problems; divination or feung-sui (geomancy) practitioners are often consulted by clients with psychological needs.

II. C. Chinese Culture and Family Structure

Family scholars view the family as the basic social group (Hsu, 1985). It is the group with which a person has the earliest, longest and closest contact. To a certain extent, it governs its members' experience and behaviour. "It can also be seen as the extracerebral part of the mind" (Minuchin, 1974, p.7). Ackerman (1958) and Jackson (1957) indicate that individual symptoms may be the manifestations of the family's dysfunction and can also be maintained by the family pattern of interaction.

In the Chinese social system, the family is very important in the individual's life (Hsu, 1985). It is the foundation of all social relations. As well, it is the centre of
educational, financial, political and recreational functions. Although the Chinese family in North America is changing, Devos and Abbot (1966) and S. Sue (1993) have found that it still retains many of the cultural values from the past. These cultural values are common characteristics of Chinese behaviour (Yang, 1995)

II. C. 1. Family Hierarchy and Obligation

The ancient traditional Chinese culture was very well-elaborated in Chow Dynasty (1130-721 B.C.). About 200 years after the downfall of Chow Dynasty, an eminent scholar, Confucius (551-479 B.C.), conceptualized that ancient culture and explicated it into six books and formed his main themes of teaching called Confucianism. It strongly influenced the Chinese culture from the Spring and Autumn Period (720-404 B.C.) and the Warring States (403-221 B.C.) to the mid-nineteenth century (Li, 1985; Wong & Kuo, 1981). Over those two thousand years, then cultural traditions have been deeply rooted in every individual in the Chinese family. Though China has gone through different stages of political upheaval, and the political ideologies or system have tried to weaken the traditional culture over the last forty years, the essence to traditional Chinese culture has been well preserved and carried forward. This trend seems to be consistent with Devos and Abbot's (1966) findings in overseas Chinese families.

The ethos of the authentic Confucius' teaching focussed on life. That was the achievement of both existence and spiritual life in everyday living or being by practising virtues (Man, 1989). For example, according to the Confucian paradigm, the role of the family members is rigidly defined. An individual is conceptualized as a relational being.
There are Five Cardinal Relations [Wu lun]: Those between sovereign and subject, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend. Among the five basic dyads, three belong to the family. In the family, each member is required to honour his or her role requirements; otherwise, his or her counterpart will not be obliged to honour his or her responsibility (King & Bond, 1985; Kong, 1985). The husband must be righteous and the wife should listen to him. Yet differences between them must be preserved. When a child fulfills his or her role as a filial child, the parents must be reasonable and caring or vice versa. Parents are also expected to offer the best of their teachings to their children. Therefore, parents deserve the children's respect and obedience. However, Confucius did not encourage blind obedience. Rather, he encouraged thoughtful disagreement. He once criticized one of his students: "Hui gives me no assistance. There is nothing I say in which he does not delight" (Legge, 1960, p.33). To give the father absolute authority was not Confucius' intention. Hu (1919) convincingly argues that this principle of filial piety is later complicated by Confucius' disciples especially Tseng Tzu in East Han dynasty (Hu, 1919). Tseng Tzu and his disciples encouraged blind obedience to the authority to please the Emperor. The Emperor reinforced this idea by setting rigid rules defining each individual's behaviour according to his or her roles. Gradually, it became the ideological basis of traditional Chinese family (King & Bond, 1985).

II. C. 2. Distribution of Power in the Chinese Family

In the traditional Chinese family system, the distribution of power is based on generation, age, and gender (Hsu, 1985). Accordingly, the eldest man of the top generation
often has the supreme power to make final decisions regarding important matters. There is an old saying, "[w]omen are supposed to obey their fathers before marriage, their husbands when married, their eldest sons after their husbands passed away" (Hsu, 1985, p.98). This clearly shows how a family is organized and how hierarchy is maintained. However, Chai (1964) argues that due to industrialization and modernization, the power structure of the Chinese family has moved from a patriarchal to an equalitarian relationship between parents. According to Hsu (1985), what is differentiated from that in the Western family is the manner in which the parental leadership is exercised. Parental power is usually administered in an authoritarian way. If there is discussion between parents and children, it generally follows that the parents lecture the children on appropriate reflection and behaviour. Children are expected to listen and behave accordingly. They may politely ask questions but should not challenge their parents as they do in some Western families (Hsu, 1985).

II. C. 3. Family Collective Responsibility

In contrast to the Westerners, the Chinese family tends to share ideas and behaviours but not emotion within the family (Hsu, 1985). The Chinese concept of family is inseparable from individual behaviour. This concept views the individual's behaviour as representing the collective qualities of the family including both virtues or faults of the ancestors. A serious way of criticizing people is to say, "there is a lack of virtue in your past eight generations of ancestors" (Hsu, 1985, p.99-100). If a family member accomplishes some outstanding attainment or exhibits virtuous behaviour, the whole family will gain face (Abbot, 1970; Sue & Sue, 1972). In light of this, Chinese people are taught to obey parents,
to respect elders, to show love and proper behaviour among siblings and to bring a good family name by extraordinary achievement in some aspect of life while they are small, be that academic or occupational success. In contrast, misbehaviour, such as juvenile delinquency, academic failure and mental disorder, reflect poorly upon the entire family. There is an old saying, "the children's misbehaviour is the fault of the father" (King & Bond, 1985, p.37). Another one is "the ugly things (of the family) should not go out of the family gate" (King & Bond, 1985, p.37). These two sayings underline the sense of joint responsibility and shared fate involved in family membership. Individuals learn that the consequences of their behaviours are significantly shared by the whole family.

As opposed to the Westerners, the Chinese people tend to view emotion as private and often do not share it with others (Abbots, 1970; King & Bond 1985). Affection and concern for each other are expressed through taking actual care of another's physical needs. If one has feelings that, if expressed, might disrupt family harmony, one is expected to restrain oneself. The individual can also obtain empathy and comfort through the understanding of the family members or significant others, only if she or he expresses her or his concerns indirectly to other members of the family. Thus, self-control and inhibition of strong feelings are highly valued in the Chinese culture (Abbot, 1970). Chinese people believe that "a family thrives and prospers where there is harmony" (King & Bond, 1985, p.34). This belief has become a principle in traditional Chinese wisdom.

II. C. 4 "Own-people" and "Outsiders"

Since family is the foundation of all social relations in the Chinese society, any social
gatherings follow the family network (Hsu, 1985). Invitations are sent off according to the nature of the meeting, the kin relationships between the host or hostess, and the recipient families. Traditionally, invitations would not extend to friends. Likewise, when individuals need help, they seek it within family or extended families. The Chinese believe that the family should take care of its own members. They feel that relatives are most trustworthy and dependable because of shared responsibilities. However, they often extend kin relationships to non-kin and form pseudo-kin ties. These non-kin relationships can be established by making sworn brothers or sworn sisters. Chinese people call it "dry relatives" which means no blood tie. Friends are introduced in kinship terms. For example, parents' friends would be addressed as uncles or aunts. People who have been made pseudo-kin are classified as own people while all strangers outsiders. In King & Bond's study (1985), they found that Chinese people in Hong Kong even carry this concept further and form a "work-tie", such as colleagues in the same organization or same profession. This "work-tie" is a common supportive network which people consult mostly for various reasons.

**II. C. 5. Common Psychological Problems in the Chinese Family**

Each family system has its own style. Every style may have certain functional assets. However, it may also involve certain dysfunctional problems. This also applies to the Chinese family system (Hsu, 1985; Lee, 1982). Some common psychological problems arising within the Chinese family are manifestations of the characteristics of the family structure. Examples are inadequate communication and value conflict between generations. These two issues seem to be the most common concerns in the counselling field.
II. C. 5.1. Inadequate Communication Under the influence of Confucian family collective responsibility, Chinese children are taught since their early age, to respect and obey their parents and seniors (Sue & Sue, 1972). Good parents and seniors such as grandparents, uncles and aunts are to give the best of their education or advice to their children or other junior members of the family (Ledge, 1960). According to what is recorded in the Analects, it is not indicated that Confucius and his disciples ever recognized the importance of verbally communicating emotions between parents and children or among adults. Nor did they ever encourage children to express their feelings to their parents. Therefore, other than vertical communication (giving advice), horizontal communication (sharing of feeling) between parents and children is not clearly spelt out. Even nowadays, an equalitarian relationship is emerging in the Chinese family. However, if there is a discussion between parents and children, parents tend to conclude it with a lecture on appropriate reflection and behaviour (Hsu, 1985). In light of this, Hsu (1985) assumes that most of the parent-child communication is on teaching or questioning and obedience or answer. Thus, children seldom talk spontaneously about their feelings to their parents. The outcome could be a lack of parental empathy for the children. Parents could find their children hard to understand. Children may feel emotionally distant from their parents. Very often, children prefer sharing their emotions with their peers or somebody who does not assume the authoritarian position. In Taiwan (Hsu, 1985) and Hong Kong, this is reflected in the success of telephone counselling services. Wong (1987) has done surveys in Hong Kong with student nurses who were eighteen years or older. The surveys consistently indicated that over 80% of the students preferred to share their emotions with a few good friends. To avoid parents' lectures
or put down, students would choose to consult the school counsellor or teachers on important issues. This phenomenon seems to coincide with the suggestions of Abbott (1970), Lee (1982) and Wu and Tseng (1985) that emotion is considered as a private issue in the Chinese culture. Among the immigrants in Canada, Lee (1982), Lee (1991) and Wong (1991) gathered from their interviews that communication problems seem to be severe between the less English-educated parents and their young children. At the initial stage of adjusting to a new country, these immigrant children gradually lose their mother tongue and do not pick up sufficient English to express themselves. Later, these children have acquired a good command of English and some parents, especially the mother, do not have adequate language to communicate with their children. They, therefore, do not have a common language to talk about emotions. Functional communication may become almost the only form of conversation between parents and children.

II. C. 5. ii Value Conflict Between Generations. Value conflict between generations is no monopoly of the Chinese family (Hsu, 1985). It happens in families from Western and non-Western cultural backgrounds. However, the intensity of conflict among immigrant families seems to be much stronger in families from high-context culture (appropriate behaviour is defined by the situation and the role of the individuals) than the low-context culture. For example, in the high-context culture like the Chinese family, the older generation still holds a more traditional view of the family while the younger generation has become more westernized (see also Beiser, et al 1995). In Taiwan and Mainland China, marriage is seen by the older generation as a family issue. (Well-educated
city dwellers in Mainland China may accept this concept less than their counterparts in the villages). The younger people see mate selection as primarily an individual choice. Some may still carry this concept to Canada. It is also common for parents to expect their adult children to take care of them in their old age, and therefore, they are very unhappy if their western-educated children lead an individual-oriented life (Hsu, 1985). Some may also blame their fate for having a lonely life in their old age. The Chinese believe that it is not a blessing to be abandoned by their children. Hsu mentioned the case of a mother who became depressed because she was not included as an essential part in her adult son's future planning (Hsu, 1985).

Another common generational value conflict among the new immigrants is parenting. As parents tend to keep the traditional values, they were worried that one day their children may become 'too westernized'. For example, parents expect their children to learn good English in school and yet speak Chinese at home, but young people who came to this country at a young age sometimes refuse to do so because they do not have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves. With respect to behaviour, parents are strongly against their children experiencing sex before marriage (researchers's clinical observations). Pre-marital sex is considered immoral. Children would question the reason why and some parents expect them to listen and obey. Since children have learnt some form of "democracy" in school, they challenge their parents. As a result, parents are usually angry and sad about their children's behaviour. Some even regret that they have brought their children to Canada where they have been badly influenced (researcher's clinical observations).

Living in a foreign country, issues about adjustment and cultural-value conflict are
inevitable, enhancing the need for mental health services. However, the mental health services derived from the Euro-American upper-middle class culture cannot be applied to the ethnic Chinese culture without constraints. To better apply Western counselling theory to the Chinese, it is necessary to identify the major constraints. Following are some of the examples.

II. D. The Constraints on the Applications of the Western Counselling Theory to Ethnic Chinese

As counselling and psychotherapy are derived from the upper-middle class Euro-American culture, Western counselling theory cannot be applied to the ethnic Chinese without constraints. A major investigator D. W. Sue (1981) proclaims that "the counselling profession must move quickly to challenge certain assumptions that permeate our training programs" (p.20). Ten years after D. W. Sue’s proclamation, counselling training programmes are still based on the same assumptions of Western counselling theory. What is considered normal in Western culture may be interpreted differently in Chinese culture. The different decoders of nonverbal messages may cause misunderstanding between the counsellor and the client. Also, Western counselling theory, excluding systemic family therapy theory, emphasizes individualism, independence and individual effort, whereas the "situation-centered" Chinese culture values the group, interdependence and situational

---

¹This section was the preliminary version of the paper Western Biases and Assumptions as Impediments in Counselling Traditional Chinese Clients. Canadian Journal of Counselling, 29(2), pp. 107-119.
factors. Western psychotherapy, excepting family therapy, often tends to devalue a client's support system and personal history in contrast to the Chinese tendency to seek help within that system, help-seeking behaviour being viewed as against the norm of privacy, which highlights the importance of Chinese culture, values and beliefs. The Western concept of assertiveness does not apply in the Chinese context, which places more values on modesty and harmony. Furthermore, the language, and the goals of counselling are very culturally bound (Sue, 1993), producing considerable tension when a Western approach is applied to ethnic Chinese. To better apply Western theory to Chinese clientele, it is necessary to identify the major cultural conflicts between the Euro-American and the Chinese cultures. Some examples follow.

II. D. 1. The Concept of Normal Behaviour

Pedersen (1987) notes that Western counselling theory assumes that people all share a common standard of "normal" behaviour regardless of their racial, cultural, social, economic and political backgrounds. "Normal" here is used in both the evaluative [good functioning] and the statistical sense. Further, he argues that "anything can be right or normal if judged by its own idiosyncratic standard" (p.17). He asserts, "what is considered normal behaviour will change according to the situation, the cultural background of a person or persons being judged, and the time during which a behaviour is being displayed or observed" (p.17). Thus the concepts of normality between the Euro-American and Chinese cultures are very different. This principle role of assessing normality in the process of counselling can be illustrated by the following example. According to the Chinese culture,
it is common and normal for an adult son or daughter to live with elderly parents even after he or she is married. The concept of "Filial piety" expresses the obligations children have to their parents throughout life (Chu & Sue, 1984). Indeed, living in a foreign country with limited language skills and mobility only further emphasizes the dependence these parents have on their children (Kwan & Wong, 1991b). It is, therefore, still common to find adult children living with their parents in both Hong Kong and Canada, although the proportion of nuclear families is increasing. However, in light of the Western emphasis on independence, this interdependence of members in an Asian extended family may be perceived by non-Asians as being unusual. Then, it would be dangerous to form a diagnostic impression of "normalcy" without exploring the cultural, socioeconomic and political backgrounds.

II. D. 2. Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal behaviour is a powerful aspect of the process of communication, consisting of speech signals of timing, pitch, and emphasis in particular, and other nonverbal signals independent of the speech contents. Nonverbal communication normally operates out of the awareness level of the encoder. It is difficult to manipulate or falsify. Thus, it has greater impact than words particularly in revealing emotions (Wolfgang 1979).

In counselling, diagnosis relies a great deal on nonverbal cues. For example: "nonverbal signs of depression include poor eye contact, with depressed clients tending to gaze down and away from the therapist, down-turned mouth, head angled down and an absence of hand movement" (Waxer, 1984, p.230). However, these nonverbal signs could
result in seriously inaccurate diagnostic impressions of Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Thai and other Asian clients. In these cultures, it is considered impolite to gaze at others. Eye contact tends to be short. When an individual's head is angled down, it is a show of respect for people of authority. Sometimes, it is due to shyness or embarrassment. Chinese people rarely use excessive gestures as this behaviour is considered improper, particularly between males and females. Thus, a Western counsellor may fail to recognize the degree of distress conveyed by Chinese clients due to their more restrained style.

Likewise, the findings of Kwan & Wong (1991a), Wolfgang & Wolofsky (1991) show that Chinese people especially females, have greater difficulties in accurately decoding disapproval and other negative behaviours. Therefore, in intercultural counselling, not only must counsellors be aware that nonverbal behaviour is culturally and socially bound, but that their own nonverbal behaviour might be misinterpreted by the Chinese clients. It is clear that the study of nonverbal communication, specifically among the Chinese, must be placed within a cross-cultural context. Herring (1990) also suggested that "counsellors may also be better prepared to understand cross-cultural conflict if it should occur" (p. 175).

II. D. 3. Individualism and Independence Versus Collectivism and Interdependence

Despite the fact that both the Westerners and the Chinese assume that individuals are the basic building blocks of society, Western counselling theory seems generally to presume that counselling is primarily focussed on the development of individuals (Pedersen, 1987). Western counsellors, excepting family therapists, who are few, tend to neglect the development of the family, organizations and society. The commonly used jargon for the
measurement of successful counselling such as self-awareness, self-fulfilment, self-discovery and self-direction show an individual emphasis. Western counsellors tend to pay more attention to the welfare of the individual as opposed to a family or a group in which the individual has a role and responsibility. The values of obligation and duty to family seem to be downplayed (Usher, 1989). From this perspective, the goal of counselling is to achieve personal independence rather than interdependence. However, the Chinese virtues of interdependence and collectivity suggest that Chinese culture does not share the same values projected in Western models of counselling.

In addition, as the structure and role of the family in Chinese society is significant, the Chinese extended family has "comparatively clear role differentiation and structure" (Tsui & Schultz, 1988, p.137). The tendency to emphasize interdependence and collectivity is to consolidate the importance of the Chinese family unit. The Chinese would therefore, place the welfare of the family before the individual. The importance of the individual is determined by his or her role in the family structure. Individuals desiring independence and self-sufficiency are perceived as being too self-centred. In this respect, the goal of counselling for Chinese clients focuses on interdependence and harmonious relations. Thus, it is very hard for the Chinese clients to confront issues with any of their family members. For example, sharing family obligations is a virtue in the Chinese family. However, if a client presents his family obligations as an issue for counselling, it would be unrealistic to apply the Western concept of individualism to this client by expecting him to totally abandon the idea of family obligations. If the client accepted this value, he might not be accepted by the family. Therefore, seeking a compromise between his family obligations and respect for
personal needs seems to be most appropriate. Certainly, it is a "delicate balance ... between the [client's] growing sense of independence and the ongoing traditional family-and cultural-role expectations" (Boehnlein, 1987, p.526). In this respect, Minuchin's structural systemic family therapy may be applicable (Minuchin, 1974).

II. D. 4. Fragmentation by Academic Disciplines

Traditional counselling approaches tend to ignore other academic disciplines that may also speak to problems and issues of humanity, such as sociology, anthropology, theology and medicine (Pedersen, 1987). Since, clients' problems are not usually confined to the disciplines of psychology or counselling, too often counsellors view their clients' problems from a too limited perspective. Pedersen (1987) has pointed out that it is important for counsellors to step outside the boundaries of their own discipline "to examine the problem or issue from the client's cultural perspective" (P.19).

In the same vein, Boehnlein (1987) echoes that "[a]lthough physical and psychological distress is experienced individually, it often arises from and is resolved, in a social context" (p.520). Further, he addresses the role of the healer within a social context whereby this individual seeks to reestablish an equilibrium between the person and his or her environment. From his medical anthropological perspective, Boehnlein (1987) states "in all cultures, the healing process occurs through a system of symbols and rituals, verbal and nonverbal, which are confined in the traditional belief systems of that culture and performed by individuals whose role as healer is sanctioned by the society" (p.521). Appropriately, Boehnlein (1987) believes that a comprehensive diagnosis and subsequent therapy can only be achieved by
placing the client within his or her cultural context and framework.

For the Chinese, psychological issues may also be expressed in religious or philosophical terms. By appreciating the client’s concerns and problems from his or her cultural or religious perspective, the counsellor would be able to begin building the trust and rapport necessary for constructive counselling. Moreover, it is also important for counsellors to work with other professionals such as physicians, psychiatrists and dietitians for issues like psychosomatic illness, acute depression and eating disorder (Kwan & Wong, 1991b). Asian Americans have often manifested their psychological problems in somatic symptoms like hypertension and insomnia (Kleinman, 1977; Lorenzo & Adler, 1984). Further, psychological distress could also affect the client’s interpersonal and generational conflicts (Christensen, 1987; Kleinman, 1977; Kwong & Wong, 1980) which may lead to counselling issues. In brief, it seems to suggest that the Chinese have different ways of expressing their psychological concerns.

II. D. 5. Dependence on Abstract Words

Traditional counselling theory is based on standard English and Western counsellors operating in a low-context culture (behaviour is not strictly determined by the role of an individual within the cultural context). These counsellors use abstract words in their theoretical formulations and practice. They assume that these abstractions are understood by others in the same way as they are intended (Pedersen, 1987). Therapists need to keep in mind that such abstractions may lose their meaning or be mistaken when used outside of the
Western cultural context. Abstract words such as acceptance, congruence and unconditional positive regard are very difficult for Chinese people to understand. Some Chinese individuals may be offended if these abstract words are translated literally only into Chinese without considering the cultural nuances. For instance, incongruence could be mistaken as pretentious which has strong negative connotation in the Chinese culture. Acceptance is always mistaken as agreement. When counselling is conducted in Chinese, there is much difficulty translating counselling concepts. However, by going beyond the Western cultural capsule and translating the idea of counselling within an appropriate Chinese culture and philosophy, the counsellor could reduce misunderstanding and promote positivity in the counselling process.

II. D. 6. Neglect of Client's Support Systems

In Western society, counselling has become a formal and professional service. This formal counselling process has been likened to a "purchase of friendship" whereby the natural supporting systems are eroded and substituted (Pedersen, 1987). According to Pedersen (1987), many counsellors downplay the role of family and peers in providing support to a troubled individual and tend to emphasize their professional services. However, formal counselling is foreign in the Chinese culture, and it is a less preferred method of handling issues. Pedersen (1987) also indicates that it is important to incorporate the client's natural support system into a treatment plan. This idea acknowledges the significant role of family which is just appropriate within Chinese culture.
II. D. 7. Linear Versus Circular Thinking

Linear thinking is another assumption in counselling. This type of thinking is characterized by its emphasis on cause and effect relationships and measurement of constructs (Pedersen, 1987). Specifically, linear thinking embraces the notion that for every cause there is an effect and every effect is tied to a cause. Therefore, by analysing behaviour in these small and basic relationships, attempts can be made to measure these constructs. Conversely, the Chinese concept of effect may not be measurable from a linear scale. Rather, Chinese people tend to perceive the notion of effect as being linked to fate or destiny. Circular thinkers see "ups" and "downs" in their lives as being attributed to *ming*, fate or destiny (Chang, 1963, p.48). In fact, the influence of Taoism has also contributed to circular thinking. The Taoist concepts of *Yin* and *Yang* suggest that cause and effect are part of an undifferentiated reality where neither *cause* nor *effect* could be separated from one another. Hence, some Chinese client may not believe that therapy will help solve his or her problems which they perceive as being part of their fate in life. When *Yin* (bad luck, sadness..) passes away, *Yang* (good luck, happiness..) will come. They take turns in the life process. Therefore, there is no need to fight against their fate. They will never win. These two schools of thought have been so deep-rooted in the Chinese culture that they are a part of the everyday life of the individual. It is necessary to emphasize that not all Chinese are Taoists or Buddhists. A culturally fluent counsellor should be able to recognize his or her client's frame of reference in this matter. Given the tendency for circular thinking among Chinese clients, the counsellor has to avoid limiting his or her psychotherapy to a linear approach only.
II. D. 8. Locus of Control: Internal Versus External

In counselling, the focus is on changing the individual to fit the system rather than questioning the possibility of changing the system ([Pedersen, 1987). The "individualistic" Western middle class culture emphasizes the uniqueness, independence and self-reliance of each individual. It places a high premium on one's own efforts. In contrast, the "situation-centered" Chinese culture places importance on the group, tradition, social role-expectations and harmony with the universe. Success depends on the situation and luck in addition to individual efforts. Thus, the more traditional cultural oriented Chinese tend to elevate the external scores, whereas, Euro-Americans score highly on internal orientation (Hsieh, Shybut & Lotsof, 1969).

Early research on generalized expectancies of locus of control has suggested that ethnic group members score significantly higher on the external end of the continuum (Hsieh, Shybut, & Lotsof, 1969; Levenson, 1974; Strickland, 1973; Tulkin, 1968; Wolfgang, 1973). D. W. Sue (1981) has argued further that different cultural groups, women and lower-class people seem to have learnt that control operates differently in their lives as opposed to how it operates for society at large. Thus, in the counselling situation, it is very common for Chinese clients to feel helpless especially when confronted with employment or other problems of a bureaucratic nature. The Western culturally encapsulated counsellor may interpret these clients as being apathetic, procrastinating, lazy, depressed or anxious about trying to confront the issue. Excluding the different cultural and social experiences of individuals may lead to highly inappropriate and destructive applications in counselling. Though changing the system is not a simple task, by questioning the system it would be
possible to better understand and appreciate the individual [Kwan & Wong, 1991b]. In a multicultural and multiracial society like Toronto in Canada, being an advocate could be one of the important roles of a cross-cultural counsellor where misunderstandings could occur.

II. D. 9. Devaluation of History

Pedersen (1987) states that counsellors are more likely to focus on the immediate events that caused a crisis. The relevance of history for a better understanding of contemporary events tends to be ignored. If clients start talking about their past or their culture, the counsellor may likely stop listening and endeavour to focus on the current issues which they assume are more salient. However, some historical background knowledge may be relevant. By exploring those elements which the client perceives as being important, the counsellor can access a wealth of significant information (Kwan & Wong, 1991b).

When counselling Chinese-Canadians, it is essential to know their past history. For example, Canadian-born Chinese, and Chinese from Taiwan, Mainland China, Hong Kong, or from Vietnam via Hong Kong (implies the possibility of traumatic war and refugee camp experiences), would have very different values and belief systems from one another despite their exposure to traditional Chinese culture. This information is often freely expressed once rapport is gained in the client-counsellor relationship. Some ethnic Chinese clients may be reluctant to provide this information, so it is vital to explain to the client why a personal history is conducive to an effective therapy (Kwan & Wong, 1991b).
II. D. 10. Individual Assertiveness in the Chinese Context

Kwan and Wong (1991b) on reviewing the prevalent literature on assertiveness, conclude that the trait of assertiveness, in the Western sense, is not generally encouraged in the Chinese culture. Assertiveness, as defined in North America, reflects the competitive and aggressive nature of the American social-economic system. These traits are in contrast to the Chinese virtues of modesty and gentleness. The importance of these traits in Chinese culture is reflected in the proper upbringing of children. The responsibility of this education lies on the family, especially the parents. Therefore, improper behaviour of individuals reflects poorly on the family. And discipline of children is performed as a means of achieving proper behaviour. As a result, Chinese people tend to be conscientious in matters concerning their behaviour in public. This behaviour may be perceived by North American individuals as lacking in assertiveness. For example, expressing honest but unpleasant feelings directly to the concerned person who may not like to hear it, is perceived as improper by the Chinese but assertive by North Americans.

Chu and Sue (1984) suggest that Asians may tend to lack a sense of self-validation when compared to people raised in more individualistic Western societies. This concern for the collective also fosters, in the Chinese, a courtesy towards authority and the maintenance of the hierarchy and status (Johnson, Marsella & Johnson, 1974). Chinese people believe that this deference towards others extends to the practice of verbal devaluation of the self and family (Johnson et al., 1974; Toupin, 1980). Being an issue of good manners and modesty, it may not necessarily indicate a sense of devaluation of self. This practice of good manners and modesty attempts to promote harmony between individuals by eliminating potentially
threatening interactions between people. Toupin [1980] states that the rejection of verbal aggression, direct expression of one's feelings, and confrontations all serve to confirm collectivity and harmony. The Chinese word wor encompasses the notion of group harmony by rejecting any emotion or behaviour that may place one above others (Toupin, 1980).

However, in Western counselling with its emphasis on verbalization and confrontation of internal and interpersonal conflict, it can be very stressful for the Chinese client, especially group therapy (Toupin, 1980; Tsui & Schultz, 1988). Because of their socialization, the ethnic Chinese have a different style of verbal communications. Chu and Sue (1984) state "Asians tend not to interrupt another or push to make their point.... In a group of very verbose, articulate, and aggressive non-Asians, the Asian member may be hesitant to speak up" (Chu & Sue, 1984, p. 30). Chu and Sue (1984) suggest the counsellor take a more active role in psychotherapy. The reason being, Chinese clients perceive the counsellor as being a person of expertise and authority (Exun & Lau, 1988; Wexer, 1989) and therefore, expect some direction in the counselling process.

In group therapy, Toupin (1980) asserts that group therapy for an Asian client is especially traumatic because "to share one's problems with one person was shameful (Shameful has two meanings in Chinese. In a context that does not involve a serious immoral issue, it usually means embarrassment) enough; to share with a group was overwhelming" (p.85). Further, Toupin (1980) states that the therapist must appreciate the acute anxieties the Asian client feels for just being in therapy. With a group of strangers, the Chinese clients may have difficulties verbalizing inner problems and thoughts. It is expected that a great deal of adjustment and practice is needed for the clients as well as the counsellor.
To sum up, the research findings seem to suggest that Western counselling goals and methods appear to be in conflict with Chinese cultural values (S. Sue, 1993; Tsoi, 1985; Uba, 1982). The assumption that ethnic Chinese do not need mental health services is based on questionable relevance that is rates of utilization of services. There appears to be no thorough research on the ethnic Chinese help-seeking behaviour based on mental health consumers and non users. For the aforementioned reasons, the researcher decided to include the Chinese non-consumers of counselling services with the clients in a qualitative study to explore the reasons why they use or do not use the mental health facilities.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

III. A. The Rationale of a Qualitative Approach

The approach used in this study is based on the qualitative naturalistic inquiry paradigm developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The advantage of the qualitative approach is that it allows the researcher to go to the field to understand what is happening with certain people (Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) and Seidman (1991) stated that it permits the investigator to learn about participants' experiences, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, their interactions with the powerful social and organizational forces, their responses to their experiences, particularly to their problems in a unique situation in greater depth. This is appropriate to the purpose of this cultural study. As well, through direct contact with the participants, possible miscommunication can be avoided. Furthermore, the interviews add details and meanings at a very personal level for which the quantitative approach is not designed. Traditional quantitative research methodology is more "appropriate in answering research questions posed by academic experimental psychologists and laboratory social psychologists, it is often quite inappropriate in answering questions posed by developmental, applied social, industrial, and clinical psychologists whose interests are focussing increasingly more on issues relative to naturalistic settings; typically, specific populations are being studied over time..." (Byrne, 1996, p.77).

Byrne (1996) also asserted that the traditional quantitative research was not designed for the study of phenomena in real settings because it emphasizes accurate measurements. In addition, the quantitative method focuses on the objectivity of the subject studied whereas
qualitative technique places emphasis on the human mind -- the thoughts, feelings and value beliefs (Smith, 1983) of the participants which are exactly the intention of this study. Further, statistical results converge on the majority and are too generalized in that they conceal the voices of the minority and the nuances of the outcome.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the values and beliefs which govern the help-seeking behaviour of the new immigrant women in the context of a pluralistic society - a purpose that statistics may be incapable of capturing (Byrne, 1996; Patton, 1990). However, through the qualitative method, the detailed and descriptive data acquired could reveal the deeper meaning of each participant's help-seeking behaviour. The qualitative approach also allows the complexity of the phenomenon to emerge in contrast to confirming or rejecting the hypothesis in the quantitative approach (Patton, 1990). Berg [1989] echoed that qualitative research is most concerned with how individuals make sense and meanings of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles and so forth. The intention of this study is also to examine the type of assistance that makes sense to the participants, and the meanings of their coping strategies. Though their objectives of help-seeking are similar, each individual may have her unique path, time frame, preference of help and reasons for seeking assistance for various concerns. These choices of help and the timing of seeking help are usually governed by her values (Cheung, 1991; Sue, 1993; Waxer, 1996), beliefs, attitudes and perception (Mau & Jepsen, 1990), by her concerns, by the availability of assistance and by the availability of relevant resources.

Another major advantage of qualitative naturalistic inquiry is neutrality. Patton (1980) points out that the researcher is not able to manipulate the research setting and
therefore the qualitative designs themselves are naturalistic in this approach. Guba (1978) in an extensive review of naturalistic inquiry in educational evaluation also holds that naturalistic inquiry minimizes researcher's manipulation of the study setting. Thus, he defines naturalistic inquiry as a "discovery-oriented" approach. It permits a researcher to approach fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis which would not reveal unexpected information (Patton, 1990). One of the purposes of selecting the qualitative approach is to discover the unexpected reasons for the under-utilization of counselling services by the Chinese community.

Moreover, in this study neutrality helps eliminate the possible subjectivity of the researcher as an insider (emic) -- a member of the contemporary Chinese immigrant women community; and a clinical observer, an outsider (etic) who is also on the side of the service providers. An advantage of cross-cultural investigation by an insider (emic) is cultural fluency in meaningful cultural interpretation and insight. The disadvantage is that there may be a subjective bias. An outsider may be more objective but the cultural meaning may suffer (Tseng et al, 1995). However, the researcher of this study is a clinical member of the service providers. She has both the perspectives of the service providers (etic) and of the Chinese community (emic). In addition, the investigator has an extensive contact with the world outside the Chinese community. Her cosmopolitan exposure to various countries in Asia, Europe and North America, cross-cultural orientation, and the neutral characteristic of this qualitative approach balance the etic (outsider) and emic (insider) perspectives in this study.

Further, an open-ended interview hinders the investigator from imposing her predetermined assumptions about the choice of assistance. Patton (1980) argues that an open-
ended approach permits unanticipated outcomes to emerge. The researcher is able to find out what is there rather than "validating, confirming, or rejecting a pre-ordinate hypothesis" (p.61) about the Chinese immigrant women’s help-seeking behaviour. This qualitative approach maintains the richness of the participants' lived experiences, thoughts and feelings. It also reveals the cultural nuances of the help-seeking behaviour without the prior manipulations of, for example, a questionnaire. It serves the purpose of this study which is to understand naturally occurring phenomena in the patterns of help seeking, especially with regard to seeking professional counselling services among the ethnic Chinese immigrant women.

While allowing the themes and categories to emerge naturally from the data, the grounded theory approach also facilitates the researcher's systematically identifying the thematic concepts directed towards the development of a theoretical framework of this study. At the same time, this study grounds the description on the data. Consequently, whatever emerges by itself is the findings of the study (Gaber & Strauss, 1967).

To sum, an inquiry paradigm is a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. It tells what is important to some special individuals (Patton, 1990). It is assumed that a psychological principle may apply to every individual, to a larger number of individuals, to a few individuals or to one individual. Thus, this information may provide solid grounds for intercultural counselling services implementations.
III. B. Sample Size

In qualitative studies, the sample size is determined by the purpose of the inquiry, the credibility of the data, time frame and the availability of resources (Patton, 1990). Other researchers such as Glaber and Strauss in 1967, Glaber in 1978, Lincoln and Guba in 1985 suggested the sample size be decided when the information is saturated. Usually, the information is saturated at about five to ten participants. For all these reasons, a purposive sampling method was employed and marked by counselling services users and non-users. A sample of six ex-user group and six non-user group was adopted. The sample size was terminated at six for each group when the analysis of the data revealed they were repetitious at the fifth to sixth participants.

III. C. Selection of Participants

III. C. 1. Inclusion Criteria

The study aimed to include Cantonese landed immigrant women [see Chapter Four, IV A. 5 a, b & c. for definition] from Hong Kong who had lived in Canada for at least three years. The initial thought was to include both men and women in the study. Unfortunately, most of the immigrant men were unavailable often due to their returning to work or business in Hong Kong. In addition, many traditional Chinese men did not want to reveal their very private thoughts and feelings to a stranger, the researcher. As a result, this study was confined to immigrant women.

In order to solicit the lived experiences of new immigrant women in Canada, the investigator did not select those who had been in this country for more than ten years because
the study focussed on the experience of new immigrants. Following ten years in Canada, it may be difficult to recall the initial stage of adjustment. A stay of three to eight years is still quite recent and, at the same time, is long enough to experience and reflect about various coping mechanisms. It should be mentioned, however, that due to unemployment and of closure of businesses, some immigrants returned to Hong Kong after staying in Canada for the required three years to qualify for citizenship. Nevertheless, the researcher was able to recruit twelve available participants who had been in this country for about three to eight years when they were interviewed. Among the participants, half of them had used counselling services related to their children’s concerns. Another half did not use any mental health services at all.

Eight participants were in the age range of 36 to 45 years old. Three were in the range of 46 to 55 and one was under 35 years old (Tables 2 & 5). Regarding their marital status, nine women were married with children, two were single and one was divorced without children (Tables 2 & 5). Four women had lived in this country for about six and a half years, three women for about five and a half years, two more than four years, another two more than three years and one for eight and a half years (Tables 4 & 7). Four families had split family arrangements at different stages of living in Canada. These families happened to be the consumers of child mental health services. The other two consumers of child mental health services had intact family arrangements, and also reported marital relationship stress after immigration. In the non-consumer group, only three women were married and all of them had intact family arrangements while the rest of the three participants were leading a single life style (Tables 4 & 7).
In terms of educational background, all of them completed secondary education. Six of them had obtained a certificate in business and secretarial training. One had a postgraduate diploma in chartered secretarial education in Britain. One had a university degree equivalent qualification before she obtained a post-graduate diploma in advertising from Britain. One had a post-graduated education in Nursing in Britain. One had teacher training education. Two home makers did not study further after graduating from secondary school (Tables 2 & 5).

Regarding socio-economic status, all of these women belonged to middle-to-high income category in their country of origin. Eight came under the category of independent /professional programme. Four of them came as investor immigrants. However, in Canada, their income met the criteria on the low income category. There was a significant discrepancy in their annual income between pre-and-post immigration. Particularly among the high income group, the average range of annual income in Canada was lower by about half compared with their annual income back home. One woman reported a total loss of her husband's business (Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 6 & 7).

III. C. 2. Recruiting Method

Information was sent to various social services and counselling agencies including the one where the researcher works, and to colleagues who served Cantonese women. The explanation brochures were followed-up with telephone calls to the workers in those agencies. It is of note that many potential participants did not feel comfortable talking about their experiences to a stranger. Most of the participants were recruited by snowball
sampling. Many participants referred other participants. Several of the participants had their children seen at the agencies where the researcher works. Potential participants were only included in the study if that treatment was terminated for at least one year prior to the onset of the study.

The researcher made initial telephone calls in Cantonese to explain in detail the purpose of the study, the rights of the participants and the procedures of informed consent and withdrawal from the study to the potential participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were emphasized. Prospective participants were made to understand that they do not have to decide on participation during the first meeting with the researcher. They were told that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time even after signing the form. If they withdrew, their information would be disposed of immediately. In addition, the participants were told that they could choose the setting and time for interview. The verbatim record would be transcribed and they would check it before data analysis. Further clarifications might be needed when the categories are translated into English. The researcher also asked those who had studied in England if they felt comfortable validating the English script. They all indicated their difficulties in handling academic English.

During the first visit, the investigator reminded the prospective participants again that they did not have to agree to take part until they thoroughly understood their rights and the purpose of the study and felt comfortable to offer their experiences. Then the researcher presented to the prospective participant the consent form in which the background of the researcher, the purpose of study and the rights of the participants were detailed both in Cantonese and English. After reading the informed consent statement, all of the prospective
participants agreed to take part in the study, expressed their pride in being selected for the study, and signed the form.

**III. D. Procedure of Data Collection**

Prior to data collection, an ethic review protocol of the research was reviewed and approved by the ethical review committee. A semi-structured interview schedule in both Cantonese and English (Appendix A) were developed to cover the positive and negative experiences of being immigrant women and their help-seeking behaviour in Canada. The interview schedule was reviewed by a bi-lingual (Cantonese and English) fellow graduate student. The five members of my thesis group who were involved in cross-cultural and cross-language psychology research also commented on the interview schedule. In addition, I also discussed them with my supervisor. The guidelines were then shown to a few Chinese immigrant women from Hong Kong in the community to solicit their reactions to it. Based on these exposures, it was concluded that the interview schedule was adequate for collecting the information needed for this study.

A pilot study of two immigrant women who were in Canada for four years was conducted in a face-to-face interview in Cantonese. The results indicated that the help-seeking behaviour was easier to report than the underlying values and beliefs. As well, the results revealed that concepts explored in the semi-structured interview schedule seemed too foreign to the Chinese culture. The interview guidelines were accordingly modified to be more sensitive to the Chinese culture. Further, in order to explore the implicit beliefs which underlined the participants' help-seeking behaviour, other areas such as their pre-and-post-
immigration lives, their beliefs and views on Westerners' counselling, their opinions and feelings of using career services, their descriptions of qualities of a preferred counsellor, and coping strategies that sustained them in dealing with adversity were explored. At an early stage of interviewing, participants' reasons for immigration was not explored. However, most participants reported their reasons for immigration in explaining their determination to endure the hardship they faced. The researcher, therefore, went back to the first participants to clarify their reasons for emigration to Canada.

Most of the participants chose to be interviewed in their homes in the evenings or weekend mornings. Only three of them preferred to be interviewed in the researcher's office. The interview started with a very informal conversation. The researcher gradually facilitated a discussion about life in Canada. The interviewer did not follow the sequence of the semi-structured interview schedule but asked the questions in a way that respected the interviewee. Questions were mainly asked to clarify particular aims.

The interview with each participant lasted for about two to four hours. For interviews which lasted more than two hours, the researcher set additional interview time. After each visit, the interviewer kept a journal where she described impressions, thoughts and feelings related to the interview. The interview was taped and transcribed in Cantonese. Clarifications were made over the phone when necessary. While transcribing, the researcher marked down the imagery, thoughts, insights, themes, or implicit meanings which emerged. Participants were given the transcripts to check for accuracy. Some of the participants liked the researcher to read the transcripts to them and some liked the researcher to drop off the transcripts for them to read by themselves. The researcher accommodated each of their
preferences. Participants were encouraged to alter the transcripts so they would affirm what they wanted to say. Overall, the transcripts were accurately transcribed with only minor adjustments.

III. E. Data Analysis

Prior to data analysis, the uniqueness of each individual was depicted by reviewing the immigration story of each participant. This allowed the researcher to better understand the pre-and-post immigration lives of the participants and the beliefs which guided their help-seeking behaviour. The analysis involved deriving detailed themes from the narratives (Seidman, 1991). The data did not show significant differences in help-seeking behaviour for emotional distress between the two groups of consumers and non consumers. Rather there were many overlapping in help-seeking, views on Western counselling, perceptions of psychological and career counselling, and descriptions of the qualities of a preferred counsellor. For these reasons, the data analysis was conducted as a group instead of two separate groups.

III. E. 1. Coding and Categorizing

In order to keep the nuances of the data, they were analysed in Cantonese, the native language of the participants and the researcher. The researcher read the data several times and the memo recorded during and after each interview. When the researcher felt that the tone of voice was important to determine the nuances and meaning of the story, she re-listened to the tape. As well, the researcher checked her research journal for ideas which
emerged during the interview and transcribing the data. The focus of the analysis was to look for patterns and themes which emerged from the narratives. Similarities and differences between individuals were explored. Attention was paid to their demographic characteristics. The researcher started with the non-users group since she was less informed through her work with their experiences. An open coding method was applied (Glaber & Strauss, 1967). This allowed for adding themes, as revealed in the transcripts of the various participants. As well, categories and sub-categories were arranged and re-arranged in the best fit as the process went along.

The researcher began with the longest and the most complex narration. She read the transcripts several times until some themes emerged. During this process of coding, a constant comparative method was employed. Colours were used to code the initial themes on the text, and key descriptors and figures were used to organize the themes, and check their interrelationships and hierarchical ordering. Comparative analysis facilitated systematically organizing the data to allow for a better description of the phenomenon under study (Glaber & Strauss, 1967). Several lower-level themes were relevant to a few major themes. For example, financial constraint caused stress. Therefore, the sub-category of financial constraint did not only support the category of Survival with Financial Constraint but also another category of Views on User Fees. As another example, seeking assistance for their children's concern from the religious sector supported the category of Help-Seeking Behaviour in Dealing with Children's Concerns and also that of Finding Meanings to Live For in Time of Hardship. Thus, those data appear in more than one section of the text. After all the sub-categories and themes were extracted, they were grouped into a few central
themes. During the process of grouping, the wording of the categories was modified as necessary.

III. E. 2. Conceptualizing Deeper Meanings

The central themes and patterns were descriptive and made common sense. The researcher then continued the process of integrating the data by putting aside the raw and categorized data for a couple of weeks, enabling her to put the data into perspective. She, then, revisited and immersed herself in the data for several days in order to explore ways to conceptualize the deeper meaning of the data. The emerged concepts revealed the role of Chinese philosophies in coping with hardships. These include the belief in self-reliance and tolerance of hardship yen (includes kindness, forgiveness and generosity), destiny and the trust of authority. These meanings were also supported by other studies of the help-seeking of Chinese people in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

III. E. 3. Translation and Validation of the Language and Categories

As the transcripts were in Cantonese, it involved translation. To maintain the cultural nuances of the data, the themes were derived in the Cantonese text before they were translated into English. A colleague, whose native language is English and had experience in qualitative research in psychology, read and edited the translation. To validate the translation, a bi-lingual and bi-cultural counsellor who works closely with immigrants from Hong Kong, and is also experienced in translation, and a bi-lingual and bi-cultural researcher who had experience in qualitative studies in immigrant women from Hong Kong, read the
transcripts and translated themes. Transcripts of four participants were randomly selected. Each evaluator was given a set of Cantonese transcripts and English categories of two participants. They read the Chinese scripts for themes and categories. Then they read the English version to check whether the themes, categories and nuances in the Cantonese version were reflected in the English one. These two evaluators were able to identify the themes and categories of the data in the Chinese script and those data were reflected in the English version.

III. F. Trustworthiness

The value of a research study using a qualitative approach relies on credibility which means the extent to which the findings are true to the experience of the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985), use the term "trustworthiness" to describe this criterion. Trustworthiness also involves the degree of transferability and dependability. Transferability looks at the extent to which the findings are transferable to others in other or similar contexts. Dependability examines the degree to which the sources of information and the background knowledge of the investigator in the area in which he or she studies are reliable. As well, it represents the extent to which the findings can be affirmed by its investigation.

III. F. 1. Credibility

In order to enhance the credibility of this research, I invited each participant to check and alter her transcript so it described her experiences. Further, I read each transcript over and over again until I felt thoroughly immersed in the data for meanings, themes and
categories. When the categories were formed I checked with the participants to see if they were relevant to them. They affirmed the list of themes and categories. Even if in some situations, some of the categories did not reflect their own experience like "Immobility", they still reflected the experience of other immigrants they knew. In addition, I include extensive citations of the participants' narratives, so they could "speak for themselves." The quotations also allowed the reader to compare my interpretations and perspective with those of the participants.

With respect to translation, the analysis was conducted in Cantonese which helped keep the meaning of different cultural nuances. To ascertain the credibility of the translation, I involved two bi-lingual and bi-cultural evaluators who are experienced in translation and who worked closely with immigrant women from Hong Kong. To validate my English language, a psychologist whose first language is English and has experience in qualitative research, edited the English translation. My thesis group further questioned and challenged my thoughts. Thus, this study has involved a collaborative approach rather than an individualistic process.

III. F. 2. Transferability and Dependability

The issue of transferability involves questions like: "Are these experiences true to other groups of Chinese immigrant women in Toronto or other cities, or even other overseas Chinese women? Are the findings of the help-seeking behaviour applicable to another group of Chinese women, or Chinese men, or to another age group of Chinese people?". These questions can only be answered in further investigations. However, help-seeking behaviour
is not governed by culture \textit{per se} but also the help seeker’s perceptions of his or her concerns, the availability of assistance in his or her own unique milieu, the structure of the mental health system and services delivery and their choices of help.

To further verify the dependability of the interpretation of the data and the translation of the categories, qualitative researchers such as Glaber and Strauss (1967) suggested the approach of triangulation. This technique involves the evaluation of the data by a few other investigators. In this study, categories were checked with the participants. Besides, two bilingual and bi-cultural evaluators validated not only the interpretation of the data, but also the translation of categories. An English speaking evaluator affirmed the English language. The extensive quotations of the data allow the reader to make his or her judgement on this issue of dependability.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE BACKGROUND OF HONG KONG AND THE PARTICIPANTS

IV. A. The Background of Hong Kong

This study is focussed on the experiences of immigrant women from Hong Kong, both native born and naturalized citizens. Most of the women who participated in the study were motivated directly and indirectly to leave Hong Kong by the change of government that was due in 1997. To help contextualize their stories of migration, a brief background is provided about the geographical, political, educational and social and economic aspects of Hong Kong.

IV. A. 1. Location

Hong Kong is located in the subtropical zone of the south-eastern tip of Mainland China, surrounded by the South China Sea. This city is composed of about three hundred small islands, the largest one named Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the "leased" ¹ New Territories, returned on June 30, 1997, connecting with China's Southern border at the North. Together, they comprise 1100 square kilometres with a population of 6.3 million (Hong Kong Information Services, 1997). The relationship between Hong Kong and China is based on economic ties as well as on shared history and ethnicity. Every day, the water that the people of Hong Kong use is supplied from the Pearl River running from South China.

¹ After the defeat of Opium War in 1847, China again was forced by Britain to "lease" the New Territories to it but payment was not involved under the treaty in about 1898.
IV. A. 2. Political Background

Hong Kong was ceded to Britain, following the defeat of China in the Opium War, imposed by an unfair treaty from the British in 1847 (Kwok, 1980). At that time the area consisted of small fishing and farming villages, and market places with a few hundred inhabitants. Over time, the population of Hong Kong increased, with ninety-eight (98%) percent of the inhabitants remaining ethnically Chinese primarily from Mainland China. The remaining two percent are mostly expatriates (cited in Canadian First Multicultural Television, 1997). Over the last fifty years, there were three major influxes of refugees. When the Communist Government took over China in 1949, many refugees flooded into Hong Kong. In the sixties, another huge wave of refugees to Hong Kong was stimulated by famine and cultural revolution in China (cited in Canadian First Multicultural Television, 1997). In 1979, China did not stop Chinese citizens from entering the border of Hong Kong for three days as a way to handle the serious refugee problem. The Hong Kong Government had to issue temporary identity cards to them. Since the Joint Declaration was signed between China and Britain in 1982, many mainland Chinese have been sent to join various organisations to "study" the Hong Kong way of running businesses in addition to those who were approved to come as immigrants. However, every now and then, both legal and illegal immigrants arrived in Hong Kong. The social order in Hong Kong was reinforced by the British laws that allowed many forms of freedom without democracy. The citizens enjoyed freedom of speech, association and movement, but there was no universal suffrage until about 1992.

As Hong Kong has been part of the Kwongtong Province in which Cantonese is the
official language, Cantonese is naturally the everyday language of the majority of inhabitants. In addition, there are other languages spoken such as Fukenese, Hakka, Mandarin, Taishan, and Shanghainese. Fortunately, the original written characters are the same among all the Chinese languages, except for the simplified script introduced by China in the last few decades which has not yet been adopted in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, being a British Colony, the English language had been the only official language since the beginning of the British rule until the middle of the 1970s when a successful student movement aroused greater awareness of the Chinese ethnic identity. Consequently, both Cantonese and English are official languages. Yet, to the majority of the people in Hong Kong, English is a business language of the privileged and a "classroom" second language of students. That means the English language is insufficient for everyday life.

IV. A. 3. Education

The educational system in Hong Kong is centralized. The director of the Department of Education was always appointed by Britain. The curriculum and syllabus were planned by the Department, which also set criteria for admission to secondary school and for graduation. All Grade 11 students in Hong Kong have to take a standardized examination (also see Bond, 1991). Therefore, school priorities consisted of following the syllabus and helping students gain admittance into post-secondary education (Wong, 1991).

The teaching style is "content-teaching" in which the teacher is expected to explain the curriculum materials. Students are expected to adopt a "model-learning" style by which they absorb the substantive content of educational materials. To ensure student success,
teachers assign a lot of homework in all courses. Many students are overwhelmed by the large work load (Bond, 1991; Wong, 1991). Most evenings and weekends are devoted to homework. Recreation is considered a low priority for young people (Bond, 1991).

Both teachers and students are under considerable pressure to teach and to study respectively for the final examination (Wong, 1991). Parents also motivate their children to achieve academically (Bond, 1991; Ho, 1991; Ho and Kang, 1984) because social advancement is possible through higher education (also see Bond, 1991).

**IV. A. 4. Socialization**

It is widely known that the family is a major social unit in traditional Chinese communities. Extended family members are usually invited to birthday parties, weddings, special occasions and funerals. Likewise, assistance is also sought or offered within the familial circle. In Hong Kong this kind of social interaction has gradually extended from familial ties to friends who were met in school or at work or through other social interactions. There are many high school and university alumni associations. Thus, the social network is enlarged. These kinds of social circles function as a very important mechanism for socializing, information exchange, business networking, job hunting and even as sources of money (Hwang, 1983a cited in Bond and Hwang, 1991). Members of this "modern network" also seek or offer assistance according to the rules of "correct behaviour" li. As Hong Kong is a very small city, it allows the members of the family and other social networks to have more frequent social interactions which strengthen relationships and provide significant support systems. These phenomena can be better understood in the
context of a collective cultural perspective which is relationally oriented (Hwang, 1983a cited in Bond and Hwang, 1991).

IV. A. 5. Economy

Over 150 years Hong Kong has evolved from a fishing and farming village to a trading exporter, to an industrial and commercial city and presently to an international financial centre and a service-based economy. From the fifties to the early seventies of this century, when China was internationally isolated, Hong Kong played an important re-exporting role connecting China with the outside world. It was said that Hong Kong was a "living room" for China in the days when Chinese merchandise was exported from Hong Kong. With the blessing of geographic and political advantages, together with the lowest tax system in the world, the economy bloomed rapidly, particularly in the late seventies. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was $25,000 in 1996 which is greater than that in USA (Hong Kong Information Services, 1997). As a result, a large, affluent and well-educated middle class emerged. This class also attracted many overseas countries to recruit immigrants from Hong Kong. Among the middle class, there were many who easily qualified to migrate overseas to destinations including Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and the United States of America. Among them, Canada was the most preferred host country and Australia the second. It was estimated that ten per cent (about 600,000 out of six million) of the population were qualified to leave Hong Kong and emigrate overseas (Skeldon, 1994). According to Statistics Canada (1996), about 155,704 immigrants came to Canada between
1986-92. The participants of this study were all members of this group. The majority of the participants came under the category of independent immigrants. Some were investor immigrants and one was under the programme of entrepreneurs. These terms are detailed in the following sections.

IV. A. 5. a. Independent Immigrant. The term independent immigrant is defined by the criteria of admission of the Canada Immigration Act of 1976 [Thompson, 1989]. The admissibility of independent applicants is based on a point system. Points are assessed based on the applicant's training and education, occupational skills, knowledge of English and French, employment opportunities, arranged employment, and personal qualities such as adaptability, resourcefulness, motivation and initiative. Independent immigrants have to meet at least 50 points out of 100. Immigration officials have the flexibility to weigh certain areas greater than others. For example, any prospective immigrant may be automatically awarded 25 points if he or she intends to set up a business in Canada and is judged to have the "financial resources to do so with reasonable chance of success" [quoted from Information Sheet: Canada Immigration 1973]. This clause has greatly benefited both Canada and the wealthy Chinese entrepreneurs who relocated their business in Toronto from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other parts of the world [Thompson, 1989].

IV. A. 5. b. Investor Immigrant. An investor immigrant visa is granted based on the fulfilment of the criteria of investor immigration admission. Points are given according to the principal applicant's education, specific vocational preparation, experience in his or
her trade, occupational demand, age, English or French skill and personal suitability. Based on these factors, the applicant is required to obtain 70 points out of a possible 97 points. The unique requirements for investor applicant include: (a) He or she must have a traceable personal net worth of $500,000 by his or her own endeavour; (b) He or she must be "prepared to make an invocable investment of at least $250,000, $350,000, or $500,000 for at least five years in business, private investment syndicate, or government managed capital venture fund" (Segal, 1994, p. 46). (c). The investment must result in the creation of or continuation of employment for at least one or more Canadians, and (d) the applicant must have sufficient fund to support himself or herself and family members in Canada.

IV. A. 5. c. Entrepreneur Immigrant. An entrepreneur immigrant category is strictly defined by the criteria of admission to Canada in 1981. Entrepreneur immigrant visa is granted when the applicant has fulfilled the requirements of entrepreneur immigration category. The basic requirements are similar to those of the investors' programme except that no experience is required. The applicant is required to obtain only 25 points out of a maximum of 87 points. The special requirements for an entrepreneur applicant include: the intention, the ability to invest and actively participate in the management of the business or commercial enterprise in Canada with his or her traceable financial sources, and a "solid, verifiable business track record of owning his or her own business and financial resources sufficient to carry out a range of activities..." (Segal, 1994, p. 32-33). According to Segal (1994), there is "no definition of substantial investment but practice seems to indicate that a minimum investment in excess of $150,000 or purchasing an interest no smaller than
perhaps 25% of a large company would meet the requirement" (p. 31-32). The investment must make significant contributions to the economy of Canada and create one or more jobs for Canadians excluding family members. In addition, the admitted entrepreneur must establish or purchase a business within two years after landing in Canada and report to the business immigration office which monitors the "entrepreneurial and family business immigrants to confirm compliance with the law" (Segal, 1994, p.33). Failure to do so within two years after arrival will possibly result in the rescinding of permanent resident status and the order of removal of the entrepreneur and the family from Canada. The concerned entrepreneur could appeal such revocation to the Immigration and Refugee Board (Segal, 1994).

VI. B. Introduction to Participants

Before discussing patterns of help-seeking behaviour of the participants, in this study, I have decided to introduce each participant by sketching her story to give the readers a sense of each individual's unique biography. The portraits of their lives reflect not only their culture, but also their values, world views and ways of handling challenges. This may assist the reader to further comprehend the participants' help seeking behaviour.

Each participant offered varied amounts of information about her lived experience in Canada. Some participants offered very detailed descriptions of their lives and thoughts while some provided a concise description. This may reflect the differences in their personalities, communication styles, perceptions of the importance of their lives and their assumptions or perceptions of the importance of this research study to them and to the
researcher. The length of each participant's story varies accordingly.

In order to differentiate each participant's data, all the participants are given a fictitious name which is common among the Chinese from Hong Kong. The letter "C" indicates that the participants had received counselling in relation to their children's concerns. "NC" symbolizes that the individuals had never received counselling at all at the time of the interview. The numbers 1 to 6 show the order of the interview in this study.

**IV. B. 1. Teresa (Cl)**

**IV. B. 1. a. Background and reasons for immigration.** Teresa, a woman in her forties, came to Canada with her husband and two children under the category of professional immigrants in 1989. They were the only members of their extended families to immigrate to Canada. Teresa had no close friends in Canada but her husband had some friends who came at the same period of time. The reason why they chose to leave Hong Kong was to give their children an alternative in case the government changes unfavourably following the 1997 takeover.

After graduating from secondary school, Teresa was trained to be a secretary and entered the field of business. Gradually, she moved up to become a general manager of a big firm. Her husband was in the media business. Both of them were well established and had a very comfortable life in Hong Kong. Sometimes they could afford a vacation overseas.

**IV. B. 1. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** At the time of the interview, Teresa and her children had been living in this country for three years and ten months. After settling in
her new home, Teresa registered with an English as a Second Language class to polish up her English language skills. Afterwards, she enrolled in a co-op course in which she learned word processing, business English, resume writing and job searching skills. While her internship supervisor was considering a more appropriate position for her, Teresa was offered a temporary position in a servicing company. Having had many rejections from employers due to lacking Canadian experience, she gave up the internship position which did not guarantee a job.

At work, Teresa tried her best to adapt to the Canadian culture and "do as the Romans do". She said,

"at work, I did not dress in the same fashion as I used to as an administrator. In Canada, my colleagues dressed in casual clothes such as jeans and runners. I, therefore, changed my wardrobe to fit into the culture.

However in her attitude towards work, Teresa upheld her usual work ethic and worked as hard as she had in Hong Kong. Her talent, hard working attitude and reliability were appreciated and Teresa was offered a permanent position. As well, she survived the turbulence of re-structuring of the company. While Teresa could be proud of herself as a versatile and hard working immigrant woman, she had to endure her co-workers' resentful attitude and discrimination. Teresa recalled a co-worker's hateful remark,

'I don't understand why you Chinese work that hard!' What people in general did not like was that employers would compare our work attitude with theirs. What they saw was I needed a job. They did not see responsibility as equally important to me.

Teresa still remembered that her colleagues always made comments publicly against people from Hong Kong. "They assumed that we had a lot of money and would take over Canada."

Teresa had to handle not only her stressful adjustment to the work place but also the
children's adjustment concerns. In addition, she was virtually a "single mother" since her husband returned to Hong Kong to resume duty for another year. Being a "single mother" in Canada, she called her husband, mother and siblings for emotional support. As well, she took her children to a Catholic church as they attended a Catholic school. Teresa, though a Buddhist, was very involved in the church activities for the sake of her children. Through the church, Teresa enlarged her social circle as well.

The second child, being young, adjusted to a new environment easily. However, the first child's adjustment was complicated by her adolescent changes which caused some tension between Teresa and her daughter. Her mother-in-law put the blame on immigrating to Canada which, to Teresa, seemed to imply that it was her fault because she initiated it. Her feelings about her daughter were complicated by the fact that she got a very low paid job and her husband had not gotten one yet. The situation made her wonder if immigration was the right choice. Fortunately, her husband later joined the family and shared part of the parenting responsibilities. It took them several months to deal with the adolescent daughter's problems through professional counselling.

In my last interview for this study, Teresa told me that her daughter was very motivated to study. As a result, she was admitted to a college and had been doing very well. The second child became very "Canadian". Teresa reported:

With my daughter, I made a big mistake in my parenting style by planning for her and telling her what to do in every aspect of her life. With this younger one, I could use the Canadian parenting style to guide him to be responsible for himself.

Teresa's husband worked for a while here. For many reasons, he went back to Hong Kong for another job. Later he set up an international business back home. Teresa stated
that their mutual trust made her and her husband feel comfortable having a split family.

IV. B. 2. Ming (C2)

IV. B. 2. a. Background and reasons for immigration Ming, a woman in her fifties, is the oldest and earliest immigrant among the twelve participants. She came with her husband and children in 1984 as her husband was an investor immigrant. Ming reported that she has no relatives or close friends in Canada at all. All her family members are still in Hong Kong. Thinking back, Ming says that she did not know the reason why they migrated. When they proceeded to immigrate to Canada, the fear of political changes in Hong Kong in 1997 was an open issue but migration was not as popular as in the late 1980's. Business in Canada has not out-performed Hong Kong at all. A small part of the motivation for migration might be for the children's education and their future.

In retrospect, Ming seemed to miss the life in Hong Kong. Before she married, Ming was a clerical staff member at a school. After marriage, she happily devoted all her time to taking care of her family and assisting her husband with his business. The routine in Hong Kong was that in the morning, Ming drove her husband to the factory and then went back home to take care of the family. Around six o'clock in the evening, Ming and her husband visited the department stores which carried their products to see how business was. At the same time, they socialized with retailers and staff members. In those days, Ming and her husband had a lot of discussions about the business. Ming was proud of the fact that she could offer good suggestions. Though she financially depended on her husband's business, Ming was so much involved in it that she felt she was part of the team. From the display of
souvenirs from various countries such as France and Australia, one can easily tell that Ming and husband had many exposures to other cultures. Ming felt that they had a very good life in Hong Kong.

IV. B. 2. b. Life as an immigrant woman. Ming and family had been living in this country for about eight years and eight months when I interviewed her. During those years, Ming recalled that she had gone through much turmoil. That included moving eight times in two years. Four moves were caused by the developers' delay in closing their houses. Two others were caused by fire. In addition, she was deceived by a white couple, customers with a bad cheque, and lost five thousand dollars when her husband was on a business trip. Besides, like most new immigrants, she suffered in adjusting to the harsh winters, particularly the severest snowstorm in forty years during her first winter.

Ming speaks some English but she finds it hard to express herself when the ideas become complex. When others speak fast, she cannot follow. She went to an ESL class when her children were in school and she had a car for her use, which was important for transportation because of the suburban location of her home. However, as her three children entered university at various campuses and had different schedules, the three of them shared two cars to go to university. Like many Chinese women, Ming believed that it was justified for her husband and children to take cars for business and classes. For her own socializing and convenience, Ming did not think that it would be reasonable to ask for even a used car for herself. As she stated:

We already have three cars for five of us in a one income family.... If I had a car myself, life would be very different. I could even go to work....
However, there is nothing I can do here without transportation... Further, due to my limitations in the English language, my social circle is confined to the Chinese community.

Therefore, to Ming, being an immigrant woman meant language barrier and social isolation. Ming was certainly aware that she has lost her identity as a socially active wife of a successful businessman. Consequently, she has lost her social and economic status. This situation further pushed Ming to be a financial, social and emotional dependent on her husband. If Ming wanted to leave the house she would have to go with her husband when he went to meet his customers. Her language limitations deterred her from getting involved in the business activities and left with her a sense of uselessness. Sometimes, she would rather wait for her husband in the car. Her feeling of incapability was so strong that Ming proclaimed:

I do not want to be that dependent (on a man). I do not want to be a traditional woman. I want to work and make some pocket money for myself.

She was in tears several times when she reported how her communication with her husband has broke down gradually since they came to Canada. As the economy has been slow, business has not been good. Her introverted husband has become very quiet and impatient. He kept her uninformed about his business because nothing was worth mentioning. Being very involved and active in the business in the past back home, Ming had a tendency to want to know how he was doing. If there was nothing worth mentioning, from his perspective, he would not say a word. In addition, her father considered her not fulfilling her role as a traditional wife without realizing that her husband did not want her assistance. Furthermore, her Canadian educated children grew independent and subscribed to the North American individualistic culture. They demanded more freedom and did not want to relate to her and
her husband in the same manner as traditional Chinese children do. Her daughter, in particular, did not want to tell anybody in the family about her unhappiness. As a mother, Ming felt that she was obliged to understand her but there was no way she could get close to her. Her siblings in Hong Kong thought that she was having a good life here. However, Ming's loneliness was beyond words. Not only was her environment contributing to her loneliness but as well she was a victim of cultural conflict. She was caught between the traditional patriarchy collective (symbolized by her father and husband) and current North American individualistic cultures (represented by her children). Ming clearly pointed out:

The problem with our generation is that we take all the pressure from our previous and next generations... As children... [w]e follow our parents' values and beliefs as our principle guide for life. As parents, we put up with whatever pressures come from our children.

She was reflecting silently and tearfully when asked how she took care of herself. "I think my thoughts have been changed from the traditional one." She wanted to be independent. However, her dependent environment did not seem to allow her to do so and Ming sighed, "[t]hat left with me a feeling of paradox." Health wise, Ming had developed chronic back pain caused by unknown factors. In a recent [two years since the interview] telephone contact to ask about her reasons for immigration, Ming changed her tone of voice and stated further:

What I am thinking now is to take advantage of every happy moment and enjoy it. Don't look back at all. Life is out of your control. There is no point in worrying about anything.

Concerning her children, the first one has got a job in her field of interest. The

---

2 According to the traditional Chinese culture, the virtue of womanhood is to obey the father as a daughter, the husband as a wife, and the son in her elderly days.
second one works in a financial institution and also runs her own side business after her professional training. The youngest one is still in university.

**IV. B. 3. Amy (C3)**

**IV. B. 3. a. Background and reasons for immigration.** Amy is a woman in her early forties. She was an administrative assistant to a high school principal and her husband was an administrator in another high school. She came to Canada with her husband and two children in 1989 as an investor, mainly due to the fear of the Chinese government take-over of Hong Kong in 1997. Her family was the first one among the relatives to leave the colony. Her husband, being the only son, did not feel comfortable leaving his mother on her own. They, therefore, planned to have a split family only temporarily. Her husband returned to resume his duty to his mother after staying in Canada for a month. Every year, he visited the family a few times. Once every two years, Amy and children went back for summer vacations. At the time of being interviewed, Amy's sister and family were also proceeding through the immigration process. She felt very supported knowing that at least one of her relatives was coming over.

**IV. B. 3. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** In Canada, Amy is a full time home maker and a part-time cashier at a fast food store. Being a "single mother" in a new country means dealing with all the matters and the high level of stress caused by unfortunate incidents such as burglary and car accidents. Amy reported that on the day when her husband left Canada, she felt as if it was the end of the world. In a new country with so many cultural
and language barriers, she felt very insecure and incompetent. In addition, when she came back from the airport, she realized that her house had been burgled and many precious belongings were gone. It was an absolute shock to her. Fortunately, she had some friends who were able to help. They accompanied her to report to the police and went through other procedures. Since that time, the feeling of insecurity was exacerbated and caused considerable sleep problems. Amy found it helpful to vent her feelings to her small group of friends who supported each other. "For very private matters", she would "either phone or write" to her husband. As they could not talk in great detail over the phone, gradually Amy noticed that "there are more differences in their point of views. In the past, a lot of things went without saying." Nevertheless, Amy stated:

Though we have separated for about four years, it does not manifest negative effects on our relationship. Rather we feel that we need each other even more...Our relationship is affirmed.

Amy attributed this affirmation of their relationship to their mutual trust and their appreciations of each other's hard life miles apart.

Regarding Amy's two children, the younger one had less difficulty in adjusting to school and picked up English faster as he had just started his schooling when he came. The older one had some language barriers and cultural shock. Luckily, the school was quick enough to intervene by referring her to a Chinese speaking counsellor who assisted her in going through the tough stage of transition of life in Canada. Compared to other new immigrants of her age who did not have much assistance initially, Amy's daughter has made a very successful adjustment to her new country. In our last telephone contact for data clarification, three years after the interview, Amy reported that her older daughter is at
college pursuing her favourite field of study and the younger one is in elementary school.

**IV. B. 4. Joy (C4)**

**IV. B. 4. a. Background and reasons for immigration.** Joy, a woman in her forties, came to Canada under the category of entrepreneur immigrants in 1989. Joy's eighty year old father still lived in Hong Kong while most of her siblings and their families had settled in Europe and the USA. Her cousin-in-law came with her as a university student and stayed with her. Joy was pleased that her cousin-in-law helped her with translation when needed. The reasons why Joy and her husband chose to immigrate to Canada were mainly stimulated by the change of government in 1997 and a business partner had already made a plan for business in this country. They were invited to join him. The children's education was also another reason.

In Hong Kong Joy was a home maker and was very involved in the children's education. When the children came back from school, Joy supervised their homework. As she had a maid to help her with chores and cooking, Joy could spend some time working as a volunteer in the parents' association of her children's school. Her husband was in the hospitality business. He looked after the business while Joy looked after the family. She enjoyed her lifestyle very much and sometimes they vacationed overseas such as Europe and the USA.

**IV. B. 4. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** Joy and the children had been living in this country for about four years and eleven months when I interviewed her. Joy's experience
During her first month was like a vacation. She liked the spacious living environment, school atmosphere and facilities. Homework was minimum. That meant she did not need to supervise her children as much as she used to back home.

However, Joy also shared the frustrations which most of the immigrants had. The first challenge was the language barrier. Joy stated,

I always believed that I spoke English. We used to have a live in Filipino maid back home. We communicated in English very well....To my surprise, as soon as I got out of the plane at the airport, I realized that I did not understand what the other people were talking about.... In addition, I was not able to express myself as much as I wished. Immediately, I felt inferior [to others].

Gradually, I felt lost. I became less open. ... I followed the people in the shops instead of asking where the cashier was. .... I was afraid to answer phone calls because the English speaking callers spoke so fast that I couldn't follow.

After organizing her home, she enrolled with an English as a Second Language class which was full. She then realized that unlike children's classes, she had to register well in advance. She had no choice but to wait for the Winter term which meant she had to drive in snowy weather for which she was not ready. Fortunately, her husband was around and he registered for an advanced class to keep her company.

Due to the recession, her husband and partner's business failed totally. Joy's worries were not only concerning money and their immigration status, but also whether her husband could stay here and be able to support the family. If not, with such a language barrier, Joy was very worried about how she would be able to take good care of the two children's schooling in a new country. Back home, she had kept close contact with the school.

I consulted the school social worker about my children's development and academic performance. I had absolutely no problems in expressing myself
at all. In Canada... I don't even have enough vocabulary to describe my everyday activities.

Unfortunately, her husband had no choice but to return to Hong Kong for his business and visited them a few times a year. To Joy, "[t]hat was the most detrimental experience after migration."

In our last contact, two years after the interview, Joy reported that her husband was still leading an "astronaut's" life style [flying between Canada and Hong Kong frequently]. Over those years, Joy completed her pre-university courses and took up a first year course in social science at a university as a part-time mature student. Joy seemed to enjoy her student life though juggling between home and study was challenging. Concerning her children, her first child took up a non-academic programme with special assistance at a college. Her second child has been studying very successfully. Joy anticipated that the younger child would have a good opportunity to get into university the following year. Her cousin-in-law graduated from a university and got a good job in Hong Kong.

**IV. B. 5. Susan (C5)**

**IV. B. 5. a. Background and reasons for immigration.** Susan, a woman in her mid-forties, came to Canada with her husband and two children as investor immigrants in 1988. They were the first family among all the relatives to leave the British colony. Susan initiated immigration due to several factors. The major one was her fear of the change of government in 1997. As well, she wanted her husband "to leave his alcoholic and mentally troubled family", and his "gambling associates." She did not want her children to grow up in such "an unhealthy environment". She chose Canada for her host country because Canada is "a
democratic country" and offers "an open educational system". She wanted her children to have a good education. Furthermore, Susan found her level of "work stress was so high that she could not take it any further." Therefore, a desire to change her environment was another stimulus to immigration.

Back home, Susan was a junior high school teacher and her husband was in business. Not only had they had a very comfortable life, they could also afford trips overseas for vacations.

**IV. B. 5. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** At the time of being interviewed, Susan and family had been living in Canada for about six and a half years. During those years, Susan was very happy that she was able to go back to high school to complete her diploma as a mature student. In addition, Susan took courses in business English and accounting. Gradually, she realized, as she stated:

> Being a member of minority and a new immigrant woman, no matter how good my English is, it is not as fluent as the English Canadians. That would put me in a disadvantaged position as far as job searching is concerned.

She therefore took advantage of her husband's experience in business and set up her own boutique.

What struck me most was Susan's precise critique of the patriarchal traditional Chinese culture which places women as second class citizens. It is not surprising to see how Susan was trying to liberate herself from potential political and traditional cultural oppression as well as possible racism and to reclaim her own autonomy in Canada. That has been reflected by the manner in which Susan planned to come to Canada, equipped herself
with language and business skills and set up her own business. Further, she asserted her right as a wife and would not allow her short tempered husband to assault her though her husband might not have the intention to do so. She never spent a second on complaining about her marital relationship. Instead, she focussed her energy on assisting her children to work towards independence. Autonomy seemed to be her goal in life and her expectation of her children. When her son was not motivated to study, she was very worried that "he would not be an independent grown-up." Susan consistently and perseveringly sought appropriate help for her son until her message was heard and he was referred to a psychological counsellor.

In our last telephone contact to ask about the reasons for immigration, Susan reported that her first child was graduating from a renowned university in 1997. Her son was very motivated to study at a college and had an outstanding performance. He also helped out in her shop during weekends. Her husband had become interested in religion and was going to church on Sundays.

**IV. B. 6. Polly (C6)**

**IV. B. 6. a. Background and reasons for immigration.** Polly, in her early forties, came to Canada as a professional immigrant in 1991 with her husband and two children who were ten and seven years old. Most of her family members were still in Hong Kong except her youngest sister who came as a student more than ten years ago. In Hong Kong, Polly went for secretarial training subsequent to her secondary school education, and then worked as a secretary for over ten years. Her husband had a well-paying job, too. Being a two income family, they had a very comfortable life in Hong Kong, and could afford an
occasional overseas vacation. Polly immigrated to Canada because of the change of
government in which she had no confidence, due in 1997, and the attraction of the creative
Canadian educational system for her children.

**IV. B. 6. b. Life as a new immigrant woman.** At the time of being interviewed,
Polly had been living in Canada for about three years and ten months. After the first month
of arrival, Polly's husband went back to Hong Kong to continue his work for another year
before he came back to Canada for good. Being a "single mother" in a new country with
children who had an adjustment problem, Polly stated:

> I didn't know what to do and felt helpless.... It was a very distressful
> transition.

Before Polly obtained her driver's licence, she felt very immobile. While her children
were at school, Polly was stuck alone at home:

> I felt very bored at home... One day I took a walk in the neighbourhood after
> lunch... So I met a few people there.

Among them, there was a helpful woman who was the mother of one of her daughter's
friends. They seemed to be on the same wave length. Gradually, they became closer and that
woman took her shopping and they went to an English as a Second Language (ESL) class
together.

> Later, ...I also met a group of new immigrants in the ESL class... After we got to
> know each other better, we vented our frustrations and unhappiness.

Like many career women, Polly registered with several head hunting companies and
went through many tests including typing, listening comprehension, written English, maths
and conversation. She was promised information about jobs. However, "[s]o far, (after three
years and ten months), I haven't heard from them at all.” During that period, Polly took a Labour Market Language Training course. Through networking, she and her husband each got a very low paying job. "The money we make here can only be enough to pay for our groceries”. However, "[w]e are afraid of hearing the word ‘layoff’.

Given the fact that making a living is still a concern for Polly and her husband, they were pleased that the children were doing well in school. One child was even selected for a gifted art programme.

IV. B. 7. a. Lynn (NC1)

IV. B. 7. b. Background and reasons for immigration. Lynn, an advertising data analyst in her forties, came to Canada in 1988 with her husband and two daughters under the category of professional immigrant. Lynn's mother-in-law joined her a couple of years later. Her sister-in-law and family also immigrated to Canada and her brother-in-law and family immigrated to Australia where his professional skills were better recognised. Lynn's family of origin is still in Hong Kong. Some of Lynn's close friends and families immigrated to Canada around the same time as she did. The motivation for migration was stimulated by the anticipated change of government in Hong Kong in 1997. Lynn and her husband chose Canada as their host country because Canada offered a more creative and relaxed educational system and a stable society for their children.

After obtaining a degree in Communication, Lynn furthered her studies in advertising in Britain for one and a half years. Subsequently, she worked as an advertising researcher for six months before she returned to Hong Kong and continued working in the field of
advertising. Her last job before migration was a Community Officer affiliate with a very high profile corporation which was a very demanding but very well-paid position. Lynn's husband was a chief editor of a high profile newspaper in Hong Kong. Both of them had a very busy and comfortable life back home. Like many of the successful middle-class families, Lynn and her husband could afford a live-in domestic maid and an occasional vacation overseas. They enjoyed their successful careers and a comfortable lifestyle.

IV. B. 7. b. Life as an immigrant woman. When I interviewed Lynn, she and her family had been living in Canada for about five years. In retrospect, Lynn and family had gone through a lot of changes. In the interview, Lynn devoted most of the time to different aspects of her children's adjustment concern, how she assisted them to make a successful transition, and her awareness of life in Canada.

Over all, Lynn was pleased with the less strict and less competitive educational system and the good changes in her children's life. Lynn recounted,

[a]s my children are more relaxed, they are more open and happier. They joke which they never did before. They reach out to make friends as opposed to being too quiet or uptight. The younger one even sings a lot.

They are very creative in their writings. They seem to let themselves unfold. This is the biggest reward of coming to Canada.

However, this did not come easily. Since Lynn and her husband were less busy compared to their lifestyle in Hong Kong, they were more involved with their children. Lynn stated that, "I instil my values to my children through discussions". For example,

Our financial constraints help the children establish a healthy concept of money. ... I encourage them to save good things for garage sales or donate them to charitable organizations ... I took them to visit those agencies and
hopefully they have an understanding of poverty. They now have learned how to spend money wisely.

Lynn was keenly aware of the cultural differences between her home and host countries. She tried to learn more about the Canadian culture by watching English Canadian television programmes instead of Chinese language shows. She also paid for one-hour weekly private conversational English lessons for about nine months and found it helpful. When the school complained that her children were too quiet and had very low self-esteem, Lynn sent each child to her tutor to practise conversational English for forty-five minutes weekly in order to build up their self-confidence. Because of financial burdens, she withdrew from her own lessons.

In the following year, the younger child obtained an A and the oldest one was awarded an English as a Second Language towards Excellence.

Lynn was not only concerned about her children's academic performance but also their social skill development. Lynn stated,

[a]nother way to help my shy daughters to break through their barrier to socialization and raise their self-esteem was to send them to learn the popular Canadian activities such as swimming, skiing and skating.

It was very hard to persuade my children to learn [those sports] which they hated so much. My husband and I were very sad about the girls' reactions. As I knew that all these skills would empower my children to relate to their peers, I was very willing to pay a few thousand dollars for them from my tight budget.

[My children] negotiated with me that I should not impose my values on them...I empathized with them and also opened a channel for them to express [their complaints]. After two years of training, school friends asked them to go skiing or skating. They confidently enjoyed those skills. They then realized how useful those activities are and...thanked us...

Before Lynn had time to deal with her own cultural conflict as a new immigrant
woman, she had to deal with her relationship with her adolescent daughters in relation to cultural issues. Lynn recalled,

...as an adult, I face the impact of migration and great cultural-value conflicts. Whereas my children naturally pick up Canadian cultural-values right away or pick whichever suits their best interests from both cultural values.

Everyday after work, I have a new challenge. ....[My children] will ask for things which their friends have. ...[If] the demands are unreasonable, the art of turning down a teenager... who has great mood fluctuations...is a great challenge.

For example, my thirteen year old girl wanted a razor to shave her face, arms and legs. As we all know, our skin is not so hairy that it needs to be shaved. Once she starts, she has to shave herself for the rest of her life..... She did not listen to my or my Canadian-born friend’s explanations ... [because] in her school, everybody does it. Another example is they told me how much their friends were paid for helping chores and I didn't pay them for any at all. For me, my cultural belief is that they are part of the family and they should share family responsibilities. And parents pay for their expenses unconditionally. In Western culture, children are supposed to move out and live on their own when they reach eighteen years old. But, Chinese parents support their children until they are able to be independent. Why do parents have to pay extra money for helping with the chores? Who pays for parents' domestic responsibilities? ... I have to explain to them the differences between two cultural belief systems.

In addition to the challenge on her role as an immigrant mother, Lynn was also frank about the impact of migration on her roles as a career woman, a wife and a daughter-in-law when asked. As a career woman, Lynn found her social identity has been changed.

Back home, my job was to reach out to the community where everybody knew me. Yet, in Canada, nobody knows me in the community nor even in my company. It was hard to take.

I work in a mainstream advertising company. This was one of the jobs which I used to do in Hong Kong. However, there are some differences. For example, I do not see clients but do only desk work in Canada, whereas I did both in Hong Kong.
In terms of socializing among colleagues,

[e]verybody packs a lunch as opposed to occasionally dining in restaurant together. After work, everybody goes home as opposed to going to a social gathering among colleagues [sometimes]. It has been a great change for me. Compare this with my husband who takes up the same profession and works in a Chinese company, he hasn't had much changes. Concerning dining habits, he and his colleagues still go out together three meals a day as if they were still living in Hong Kong. As well, there are many social gatherings among themselves. I believe that he may not realize how much my life has been changed.

The change of lifestyle at work in a new country also changed Lynn's perception of her role at home. As she pointed it out,

Back home, we had a domestic maid and none of us had to do a lot of chores... However, in Canada, I have to do all the domestic work and assign some chores to the children. My husband does not do any at all. Occasionally, he might offer a helping hand which to him represents a great favour. But compared with many Western men, he does very little. The children have noticed that and pointed it out sometimes, and he might do some. My base line is I don't iron clothes. He has to do it himself. His mother does not like to see her son iron clothes for everybody and she does it.

Regarding socio-economic status, the higher Canadian tax rate and job market discrimination against immigrants demote many middle-class immigrants' to a lower socio-economic class. All my participants were among those unfortunate ones. However, Lynn was the only participant among the twelve of them who described in detail what it was like when her socio-economic status was lowered. Lynn also described how this change of economic condition brought about variations of monetary concepts and hospitality style as a hostess, and her role as a mother as mentioned in her parenting style. Lynn narrated,

[a]s the savings were going down, I was very upset. Though both my husband and I got a job, the money we bring home is very little. It can only cover the monthly expenses. If I wanted something extra like skating and
skiing lessons for my daughters... or a vacation..., I have to rely on my savings.

When we first arrived, I still had some money. When relatives came from Hong Kong, it was our custom to offer hospitality by dining out and going sight seeing with them. Wah! I then realized how much we spent.

Compared with the hospitality style in Hong Kong, spending one hundred dollars in a restaurant is nothing whereas in Canada it is a lot of money. It takes some time to save up a hundred dollars. When I think through it, I am aware of the huge difference in the concept of money and budgeting between my home country and this new host country.

Consequently, I booked tours for relatives or friends. Mostly, I picked them up from the airport and once and for all, I invited them to a restaurant for a meal, or we had a barbecue in the backyard, or dined at home.

I am flexible. I always ... enjoy cooking and cook good dishes, too. Even though we dine at home, my children are happy.... Children pick their dishes and I assist them to learn cooking from a cookbook. I cook Chinese dishes for the adults... Children learn both Chinese and Western cooking too.

Making the transition to a new life and taking care of the children in a new country was challenging. Like some immigrant women, Lynn has to take care of her mother-in-law in Canada, while in Hong Kong middle-class families could pay for their seniors to live in a separate apartment. This has forced her family, like other Chinese families in Canada, to become an extended family living in one dwelling. Lynn has to bridge the cultural-value gap between her mother-in-law and her children. Lynn explained,

"[a]s my mother-in-law lives with us [for the first time], I have to keep the traditional Chinese cultural values particularly in our interaction with my mother-in-law, or when grandmother is involved in our family activities and the choice of food....Children do not have the background to appreciate the traditional Chinese cultural values. I, therefore, have to find a middle ground between the two generations. It is stressful to handle those situations.

Furthermore, Lynn is intelligent enough to support her mother-in-law in socializing with other seniors in order to keep her happy. She said,
In order to encourage my mother-in-law to socialize with other seniors ... I am more than pleased to take her to her friend's place on my way to work and pick her up after work. ... she will be happy and enjoy meeting others as opposed to staying at home by herself all day long.

[My mother-in-law] sometimes would report miserable stories such as that of Mrs. Cheung [a pseudonym] who has been kicked out of the house and lives in public housing. Or Mr. and Mrs. Lee's [also a pseudonym] son stole all their money and kicked them out. They did not have English language skills and didn't know what to do.... That showed that seniors like [my mother-in-law] would consider herself lucky that we do treat her nicely. She might be more cautious and not show her traditional authoritarian role\(^3\) as a mother-in-law. In this respect, our relationship is improved.

Like many women, Lynn's personal needs seem to be placed at the bottom of family priorities. Much time and energy was spent on taking care of the family, adjusting to the day to day life, and handling relationships. Similar to many immigrants, coming to Canada meant a loss of socio-economic status, social identity and a comfortable lifestyle for Lynn. Fortunately, she was able to find something rewarding for herself in Canada. She reported with so much satisfaction,

I enjoy translating slang and writing a slang column with my colleague for a Chinese newspaper. I did not send it to my husband's publisher. I did not want people to assume that the publication was due to my husband's association with it. I wanted to see it published because it deserves it. The idea was inspired by my experience of learning spoken English. There is very little money that I can make from it. But what satisfied me spiritually is using my creativity.

\(^3\) For thousands of years in the Chinese folk history, mother and daughter-in-law's relationship has been a delicate issue in traditional Chinese families due to the hierarchical structure of socialization. Furthermore, because the traditional Chinese family operates on patriarchal cultural values, daughters-in-law are often considered as "outsiders" and are at the bottom of the hierarchical family structure until they reach old age. The tense relationship has been so prevalent that it is reflected even in our everyday saying such as "miserable daughter-in-law will become a dictator to her daughter-in-law in her senior days." It indicates that the cycle of abuse runs in a family.
Perhaps, a well-adjusted immigrant like Lynn is someone who is sensitive to other cultures and enjoys them and is creative enough to bridge the gap between them. Cultural translation seems to be very symbolic to Lynn's life in Canada. Whether she is at home, at work and even at leisure, Lynn inevitably dances between cultures.

**IV. B. 8. Lydia (NC2)**

**IV. B. 8. a. Background and reasons for immigration**  Lydia, a secretary and an information co-ordinator in her early forties, came to Canada with her husband and children in 1988 as a professional immigrant. They were the first family among all their relatives in Canada. Lydia and husband did not have close friends here but had some ex-colleagues.

The major stimulus to immigration was the political changes in Hong Kong due in 1997. Lydia explained,

> [o]ver those years, we witnessed and, through the media heard how unstable the Chinese government was. I read a lot about how people suffered in China. Therefore, I believed that it would be very likely that government policy would change accordingly. There would be no freedoms such as free speech.

When Hong Kong is turned over to China, my children will be in their teens. It is the best stage of their life. I do not want my children to live in such a controlling society. Coming to Canada would facilitate a more stable environment for studying. If Hong Kong is good in the future and if they want to go back, they have a choice. Whereas if we had not left Hong Kong, they would not have a choice at all.

Lydia attributed her wish to protect her children’s teenage years from possible trouble to her painful experience of her loss of her mother, and later her father in her teens. She was taken care of by her eldest sister, uncle and aunt.

After her secondary education, Lydia went for a secretarial training course.
Subsequently, she worked as a secretary in various settings including the higher education sector, for eighteen years before migration. Her husband also had a good job in the same organization and was well established. They could afford a live-in maid who took care of the family and cooked. As well, sometimes they would vacation overseas. She reported that they liked the comfortable life "back home".

**IV. B. 8. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** At the time when I interviewed Lydia, she and her family had been living in this country for five years and three months. For Lydia, her new life in Canada was "always on the go". She illustrated this phrase with examples of her busy life taking care of the children and domestic work, working hard and keeping her job, fighting against jealousy and discrimination at her work place and supporting her husband to go through his most depressed period due to the transition. As she reported, " I got up at 6:00 am and went to bed at 2 to 3:00 am."

In retrospect, the process of transition of adjustment to life in Canada almost cost Lydia and husband their marriage and their son's health. Lydia recalled,

In order to settle down to a new environment, I thought I needed a house and a car. Most important of all was a job.

[So], I sent my daughter to school and my three year old son to daycare. Then, I registered myself with job hunting agencies and entered the job searching path.

However, my son did not like to go to daycare. He cried day and night.

Since going to daycare, he got nightmares every night and I did not understand the reason why.

Later, he was very sick. Very often, he woke up with fear. It took him a few months to recover from them.
...I was very worried and could not sleep at night. I sat near his bed at night and prayed for him. .... I gave up my hope of looking for a job to take care of him.

Only after spending a few months with him taking him back and forth from daycare, I realized that he did not like the dark curtains covering the windows during afternoon nap. Even now, he is still afraid of the dark.

Then, I understood that a little child like him also needed a transitional period to adjust to a new environment, especially since he was the only Chinese boy without English language skills.

Lydia, having been a working mother in Hong Kong, took care of her children full-time for the first time since the children's birth. She realized that she did not understand her children who had been taken care of by either relatives or a live in maid in Hong Kong.

Lydia took her son's illness in a positive perspective. She said,

[s]o his illness became a blessing in our mother-child relationship. Had he not had health problems, I would not have been with him and my daughter full-time and established this close relationship which I treasure very much.

When Lydia's son went to Kindergarten, she thought, "he did not need me that much" and took a job. Unfortunately, bad luck came in pair. “To get a job has never been easy.” Her husband did not work in his profession but had to take a job as an unskilled labourer in a factory. He was very upset and felt useless. He felt inferior to others and withdrew socially.

As a result of his inferiority complex, he became very impatient with the children. He always complained about the children's noise and untidiness of the home. There were many arguments over those issues.

For me, children come first and chores... can be done when children are in bed. My husband wants me to do both at the same time... our ex-domestic maid found it hard to put up with his demands [too].

..one day I told him, 'I am very hurt and I cannot take it any more.'
... he was [also] jealous of me. He would say 'do you think you are superior just because you have a job?'....It was hard to put up with his temper. Deep down, I knew it was his manner of expressing his frustrations.

Lydia requested a friend to help her husband but it did not work out because her husband did not appear to be an approachable person.

...our relationship was so bad that we wanted to divorce.

I told him for the first time how much pressure I had put up with... From 6:00 am till 2-3:00 am,... I am working every minute. How can I carry on with a life like that...If you treat me nicely, there is a good reason for me to suffer. But you do not...

Lydia knew very well that "the conflicting relationship was [not] caused by [themselves but] external stressors such as work stress and finances." Neither of them wanted to divorce and in the end they compromised.

While Lydia was trying to handle her marital relationship with her husband at home, there was discrimination at work. Lydia started narrating her job hunting journey:

I had eighteen years of secretarial experience and yet what I was told was I did not have work experience. You know the hidden message was ‘I had no Canadian experience’.

Like many immigrants, Lydia knew so well that success demanded perseverance. She was prepared to work hard in a host country. Her efficiency invited appreciation from her supervisors but jealousy from co-workers. Lydia was mature and strong enough to take that. However, one of her supervisors whom she described as "sexist and racist" upset her so much that she wanted to resign though she needed a job badly. The experience was so vivid that Lydia recalled,

[m]y supervisor treated me badly and had no manners at all...Also he blamed me for
his mistakes.

In addition, that supervisor set up a situation for Lydia to make mistakes and than publicly insulted her. A male colleague commented that

... I was a good person and he did not understand the reason why [the supervisor] treated me so badly. It was possible because I was a woman.... However, he did not treat the white women in such a manner only me. I was the only visible minority woman under this supervisor.

Lydia further explained that she confronted her supervisor because she had principles. She admitted her mistakes if she made any but she would not allow others to criticize her unfairly.

At last, Lydia joined a big firm with the title Information Co-ordinator.

The supervisor said that I had great potential for that position and there would be better prospects for advancement.... They sent me to study the English language and interpersonal skills.

After handling more than three people's workload in a well-organized manner all by herself for quite a while, her supervisor noticed that the amount of work was so heavy that she hired three people to assist Lydia.

In our last contact, two years after the interview, Lydia reported that she settled in the position very well. Her husband ran his servicing business and he seemed to enjoy it, though, his income has been unstable. Their marital relationship had greatly improved. The children were happy in school. They were now taking occasional short vacations in the States.
IV. B. 9. Pam (NC3)

IV. B. 9. a. Background and reasons for immigration. Pam was a secretary, a broadcasting programme hostess and producer in her late forties. She came to Canada in 1988 as a professional immigrant. Her oldest sister and family have been living in this country for many years. Her mother and some of her siblings were still in Hong Kong. Most important of all, her ex-boyfriend was also in Hong Kong with the understanding that he would join her very soon. However, this never happened.

Pam was the first generation born in Hong Kong to an immigrant family from China. As Pam reported,

[m]y parents left China when the Communist Government took over.... From my parents' perspective, Hong Kong was a temporary home.... As 1997 is approaching and I had an opportunity to leave, I would not hesitate to take it.... Though nobody will know what will happen after 1997.... At least I have a choice if I leave Hong Kong.

Pam had a very extensive business administration and secretarial training in both Hong Kong and Britain. With her broad education, she worked in various business settings including a television broadcasting corporation and a sales and marketing firm. She was goal driven and was very successful in her career. She reported that she focussed only on work. Her last job before migration was a Regional Vice-Manager for Asia in her company with an annual income between forty-two to sixty thousand Canadian dollars. Like many people in Hong Kong, Pam travelled widely.

Pam described herself as a very independent person at work but a dependent one at home.

Being the youngest one, my sisters would answer my questions. When I got a problem, my parents would take care of it.
There she had no need to do chores.

**IV. B. 9. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** At the time when I interviewed Pam, she had been living in this country for about six and a half years. Pam liked to use her Buddhist circular philosophy: "where there was a loss, there must be a gain", was her summary of life in Canada. In retrospect, "[t]here were distressful and good experiences since I came to Canada", Pam started narrating her journey.

The most significant episode among the painful ones was the termination of a relationship. Pam stated rationally,

I did not regret my immigrating to Canada although it appeared to cost a relationship. It was just a coincidence that things happened at the same time.

Only a few months after my coming to Canada, that relationship which was cultivated for several years could be reversed. I had to believe that I trusted the wrong person; or otherwise, how could the relationship be that vulnerable? When we started, we were not young but mature adults who could be parents of a few children.

When you thought that was the right person, you would believe your judgement. That was also confirmed by my experience with him. We seemed to be compatible with each other and were well-accepted by our families. Naturally, we spent time together .... It was also reasonable to think that certain years after, we would get married. However, human beings are unpredictable.

That loss was traumatic to me. ..that hope of a trustworthy person to belong to had vanished all of a sudden. It was grieved with tears. That feeling was related to my age.

I was in despair and agony.

Mother knew me well... She came ... to support me ...until I recovered from grief and depression, then she returned home.

If I had not come to Canada, maybe nothing like that would have happened at all. But nobody could guarantee what would happen after marriage. One day, we might have to depart temporarily. If the relationship broke up at that
time, it would have been too late for regret. Therefore, I have no regret for the loss of this relationship. It just happened at the time that I felt delicate [in the course of my adjustment to a new life in Canada].

Pam believed that when she lost one thing she would gain something else. She reported that there were many good experiences since she came to Canada.

Upon coming to this country, I was referred to a specialist who found out that I was allergic to certain types of food which affected my skin for years.

Most important of all,

...I found myself. Both the past and the present jobs were my choices. In the past, I... achieved my objective of work. But I found it hard to control my life... I was too busy... I felt tired..... I took up this [less demanding] job because I wanted to live a simple lifestyle.

Deep down, I still hoped that after establishing my network, I would take up a sales and marketing job. ... reluctantly, I took this secretarial position. I felt that I was moving backward.... I felt strange that people [who knew my past] tended to associate me with a good profession and I only worked as a support staff.... When I heard that, feelings of vanity occurred..... However, once I started with the job, I accepted it very well and I am happy with it. I do not know if you would consider this as a good change. To me, it was a psychological struggle. After fighting for a while, I realized that it was the right choice.

[So]...I changed my lifestyle totally... I take my job lightly. Then, I spend my leisure on what I like to do.... Working as a part-time voluntary hostess at a community broadcasting corporation was what I never dreamed of.

[When] I gathered that this radio corporation recruited trainees, I gave myself a trial. Being an ethnic minority radio company, the financial situation was not good at the initial stage. I liked to practise what I learned so I accepted this voluntary position. .... Yet, I... took [this] job seriously.

In Canada, I became more independent.... [When I came], I did not drive nor did I know how to cook. Most of the time, I lived on canned food. Subsequent to the broken relationship [with my boyfriend], I realized that I could not wait for someone to take care of me but be independent. I decided to get a driver's licence and to learn cooking. I trained myself to face the everyday challenges independently.... This experience of independence made me happy... [and I am pleased with] the right choice that I made since I came
to Canada.

**IV. B. 10. Kay (NC4)**

**IV. B. 10. a. Background and reasons for immigration.** Kay, a secretary in her early thirties, came with her husband and a child as a professional immigrant in 1988. Around that time, her older brother had been in Canada for about eight years. He sponsored his parents and the youngest brother to come to Canada around the same time as Kay. The fear of the take over in 1997 motivated her to try to adjust to life in Canada and she planned to go back to Hong Kong once she obtained her citizenship. However, the terror aroused from the Tiananmen Square Massacre on June 4, 1989 in Beijing encouraged her to stay in Canada. Before Kay and husband decided to choose Canada as a host country, they came to visit her brother and family so as to know more about life in the country. Kay's brother suggested they rent his attic apartment when they arrived. Their parents and a teenage brother would stay with them as they had a big five-room house. Her sister-in-law did not express a different opinion. Kay and her husband were pleased with the brother's suggestions. They thought things were well arranged and they decided to come to Canada to see whether they could make a good adjustment to life.

Kay reminisced that she enjoyed her work as a secretary for the Hong Kong government while her husband was a secondary school teacher. Three years after marriage, Kay felt settled in and was contented with her family life. If she had a choice, she would not want to leave her comfortable life in Hong Kong.

**IV. B. 10. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** Kay had been living in this country for
about six and a half years when she was interviewed. Re-uprooting and re-planting from
neighbourhood to neighbourhood and dealing with discrimination seemed to be the dominant
themes in describing her life in Canada over those years. In retrospect, Kay said that she did
not expect an easy life at all as a new immigrant. However, she did not anticipate as much
hardship as she did go through.

First of all, when they arrived at her brother's home, she noticed that her sister-in-
law's brother's belongings were placed in the living room of the attic apartment which was
promised to her. That meant she and family could only use one room. As well, to her
understanding, there had never been a conflict between her parents and her sister-in-law.
However, in her observation, her parents had to put up with their daughter-in-law's
disrespectful attitude. Kay was not comfortable with the atmosphere. Three months after
their arrival, they moved out.

Through her sister-in-law's brother, who was a real estate agent, and knowing very
little about the community neighbourhood, Kay and husband bought a house in a suburb
which was too far away from work for both of them. Furthermore, they could not rely on the
infrequent public transit in winter, yet they could not afford two cars. Kay was denied
employment when prospective employers heard where she lived.

Like many immigrants, Kay was denied a job because of her accent. She was
underpaid and underemployed in a few jobs. She was also deceived by having extra work
imposed, such as taking care of the garbage and watering the plants, in addition to long hours
without pay. Kay recalled,

I was very angry with that deceptive arrangement. Sometimes, when I was
carrying a big bucket of water [to water the plants], I felt like crying. I felt
that my dignity was robbed and I worked like a servant.

Moreover, Kay was also terribly discriminated against by co-workers because of her minority group membership though her employer liked her very much.

All those negative experiences reinforced her ambivalent feelings about staying in Canada for good. Kay stated that her first impression of Canada was: it was a great democratic country. The living environment was spacious. However, she did not feel at home at all. She realized that this was not a place for her. During her first year, she was still thinking of going back to Hong Kong at some point. This idea was totally suppressed on her first anniversary of living in Canada. It was the 4th of June, 1989 when she followed a television news journal. She was extremely terrified by what she saw on the screen. She could not believe that tanks and soldiers were sent to annihilate the peaceful pro-democracy students and civilians assembling at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Kay sighed helplessly, "[d]ue to the terror aroused from the Tiananmen Square Massacre ....I decided to stay [in Canada] though at the same time, I had strongly felt that this was not a place for me since my arrival.

Fortunately, every cloud has a silver lining. Kay eventually settled in another company and enjoyed her secretarial work better. She also moved to a neighbourhood which was close to her office. Her husband was completing his professional training in computers and her child adjusted to the school system very well. Spiritually, Kay said "the best reward" of immigration was a clarification of her religious belief. "I learned more about being a [practising] Christian". As a result, she has a group of supportive religious friends whom the whole family enjoys.
IV. B. 11. Tina (NC5)

IV. B. 11. a. Background and reasons for immigration. Tina, a nurse in her late thirties, came to Canada in 1989 as a professional immigrant by herself. All her family members are still in Hong Kong. The main reason why she wanted to leave Hong Kong was "due to the failure of her marriage". The other reason was she had not been practising what she was trained for in Britain. Being a senior nurse meant being a generalist and she did not have a chance to practise her speciality. Nor did she have the motivation to go back to the bottom of the hierarchy to keep up with her skills in a hospital. However, Tina did not want to lose them. Therefore, she believed that the best way to facilitate her personal and professional growth was to change her environment. Thus, Tina decided to give up her other aspects of her comfortable lifestyle and start a new life in Canada.

IV. B. 11. b. Life as an immigrant woman. At the time of being interviewed, Tina had been living in Canada for five years and five months. As soon as Tina arrived, she looked for a job. Thinking back, Tina said,

I was lucky that I came before the economic recession. I was offered a full-time position plus moving expenses from Hong Kong. Besides, within walking distance, there was a staff accommodation suite for which I could rent. All those conveniences saved me many troubles that new immigrants may have encountered. Therefore, I settled in very quickly. Moreover, I passed the Ontario Nursing Registration Examination smoothly.

Like many new immigrants, Tina also had her stressful experience. Her first year in Canada was the most unhappy period of time. She lost her support system and familiar home environment. Though she had some friends here, "everybody was busy with life". Sometimes, "[i]t was hard to find someone to talk to". She was so depressed that she...
sometimes felt like crying. ... I wrote a lot of letters and called friends. I also thought of talking to my family.

At that time, she had a boyfriend who seldom called her. Tina called him a lot and had a hard time reaching him. She thought over the pros and cons of keeping or leaving the relationship. In the end, she was so disappointed that she gave up the relationship.

To combat her loneliness and depression, Tina visited friends and took up sports and exercises to release her unhappy emotions. After one year, "I went back home for a visit in order to alleviate my homesickness."

Dealing with adjustment concerns is hard enough for any immigrant. However, protecting one's basic human rights can be even harder. Unfortunately, racism is part of everyday life for minority members working in mainstream organizations. Tina was not immune from this oppression. She was so angry and upset and she wanted to stand up for her rights. However, she didn't feel that she had any options. She felt victimised and helpless.

By the time Tina was interviewed, she was a newly wed. She reported that her most joyful experience was finding a partner, an Irish Canadian. She never thought of intermarriage before she met her husband. Gradually, she realized that "the only difference is culture which governs their behaviours and expressions. Once these differences are understood, it is very easy to get along with each other." Thus, Tina's experience of intermarriage is very positive.

Due to restructuring in both Tina and her husband's organizations, her husband got a job in another province. Tina joined him a few months after he left. By coming to Canada, Tina lost what she was supposed to have back home. However, by giving it up and starting
her new life from scratch, she gained what she did not anticipate. However, though she made gains in Canada, the difficulties did take an emotional toll.

**IV. B. 12. Cathy (NC6)**

**IV. B. 12. a. Background and reasons for immigration.** Cathy, a secretary in her late thirties, came to Canada by herself as a professional immigrant in 1988. She was the first one of the family to leave Hong Kong. Cathy reported that

...the idea of migrating was initiated by a friend. We applied together and my friend was rejected because of a health concern. As I was accepted, I gave myself a trial. I set a budget for my living here. If I could not get a job and used up my savings, or if I did not like Canada, I could go back and get a job again.

The change of government due in 1997 was not a conscious stimulus to immigration though I didn't like what the government did to the civilians. My motivation for immigration was due to my playful attitude towards life.

After I got my citizenship, I went back to Hong Kong for two months. I thought over seriously where I should settle down. During those two months,... I found it hard to re-adjust to it again. So, I decided to stay in Canada.

Back in Hong Kong, Cathy worked as a secretary in an international firm trading with China. It was a very busy position. Her focus was work only. She worked from eight to eight or sometimes to nine in the evenings. Together with her project bonuses, she made good money. During holidays, she sometimes joined a vacation tour to spend a few days in another country.

**IV. B. 12. b. Life as an immigrant woman.** By the time I interviewed Cathy, she had been living in Canada for about six and a half years by herself in an apartment. Over
those years, Cathy's life was preoccupied with seeking emotional support, dealing with health concerns and handling burglary and theft. Cathy recalled,

[t]o cope with homesickness, I had close telephone contact with my family. .... Every two years I also went back for a visit and my mother visited me every two years as well.

In Hong Kong, I focussed on work only. Coming to Canada, I began to understand more about interpersonal relations [she laughed]. This was due to the fact that I have to deal with people.

In Canada, I was lonely and wanted to meet people. Being new here, I was somewhat careful about where to meet people. I expected people in the church in general to be nicer and I agreed to go when I was invited.

Later, I came to terms with Christianity and got very much involved with the church.

....I have more contacts with immigrants from Hong Kong. Naturally, we supported each other.

Regarding looking for a job, Cathy considered herself lucky that she did not search for jobs in the same way as many immigrants did. Through her sister, she came to know an immigrant woman who worked in a social services agency and looked for a secretary at that time. She applied and got it. She found that

[people are nicer [in the social services field] than those I met in the commercial field in Hong Kong.

Her relationship with her supervisor has been more a friendship than colleagueship. As Cathy reported,

My supervisor takes care of my everyday living very well.... I was invited to join the family dinner for traditional occasions... or family outings. All those made me feel part of the family.

When I was sick,... she called me a few times a day to make sure I was alright and picked up groceries for me.
The quality of our relationship is open and egalitarian... Both of us talked about our worries and concerns.

However, there were also stressful experiences. Cathy was very frustrated and seemed to be puzzled. She said,

I did not understand the reason why my health has been a concern since I came to Canada. I have low blood pressure, a thyroid problem and constant dizziness.... I talked to my supervisor and the conclusion was I may have been overworked and was already burned out in Hong Kong as I worked [long hours] everyday. I did not feel the problem until I was less busy in Canada.

I passed out many times. .... The doctor suspected that I might have a tumour which was not scanned. I had gone through a lot of testsings.... [the diagnosis was not confirmed.]... I was very depressed after hearing the diagnosis.

Unfortunately, more bad luck followed.

...the other stressful experience was that my car, which was brand new, was broken into five times in various parking lots including my residential one..... My neighbour's car next to mine is the same model and as new as mine. However, nothing happened to that one, only mine..... Someone seemed to know that I am not a regular driver..... For this reason, I thought I was watched. Right away, I felt very insecure and it took me some time to overcome that feeling.

Her bad luck continued.

While my health was getting worse, my car was stolen from my residential parking lot. I was under so much stress and was very depressed.

The way I coped with life was through prayer only.

Fortunately, her car was found eventually. Two years after the initial interview, Cathy was still working in the same agency. She reported that her brother and family came to Canada under the category of professional immigrant. Her parents then asked her to sponsor them to come over. They have been living with her and seemed to adjust to the life
in Canada well. Cathy felt much support from family. Her health was much improved. Though there was still a small chance that she might have a tumour, she carried on with her life and hoped for the best.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHALLENGES THAT NEW IMMIGRANT WOMEN FROM HONG KONG FACED AND THEIR COPING STRATEGIES

The present inquiry focussed on mental health needs of immigrant women and not on the process of immigration. However, participants could only refer to their mental health needs in the context of the challenges which they faced. These involved such things as the loss of support system, job searching, financial constraints and family relationships. Indirectly, they also indicated their difficulties with cultural and language differences. Themes related to coping strategies are interwoven with themes related to challenges inherent to the process of emigration.

V. A. Coping with Loss and Loneliness

Immigration meant loss and loneliness to many of the participants. It is not surprising that the theme of loss and loneliness spontaneously emerged in this study. Participants did not report their feelings about the anticipated losses of good jobs or well-established businesses. However, many of them reported their moment to moment struggles in coping with loss and loneliness in a strange country. Their grief for the loss of familiar living environments, support systems and even relationships was the hardest feeling to be dealt with, and was a high price to pay for immigration to Canada.

Tina had her most painful experience:

During my first year in Canada, it was the most unhappy year. First, being away from family and familiar home environment, I lost my support system...Though I have friends here, everybody was busy with their life. It was hard to find someone to talk to. Therefore, I was so depressed that I
sometimes felt like crying.

I like writing letters so I wrote a lot of letters and called friends. I also thought of talking to my family. Back then, I had a boyfriend in Hong Kong. I also called him a lot. However, he was a very busy man whom I had a hard time to reach. He seldom called me either. This affected my relationship so much that I had to give it up. It was not an easy decision. It took me sometime to think over the pros and cons before I made such a resolution.

Still, I tried to visit friends or do some sports or exercise to release my depression. After one year, I went back home for a visit in order to soothe my home-sickness.

Pam was another unfortunate one:

At home, being the youngest one, my sisters would answer my questions. When I got a problem, my parents would take care of it. In Canada, I did everything all by myself.

Some time after my coming to Canada, my family told me that my boyfriend who was supposed to join me later, made excuses for not joining them on special occasions. Subsequently, he was seen going out with another woman. It was extremely hard for me to take that. I kept everything within myself as this is my manner of handling problems. I did not go out to visit friends.

I did not want to reach out and I knew what I was thinking about. So, when I got home, I listened to music and sat inertly in front of the TV shows. I contacted friends as little as possible. I was concerned that my unhappiness might spill over and offend others. People would not like that. Thus, I rather enclosed myself behind the walls. During that period of time, I was in despair and agony. If I had a well-trained counsellor to assist me to go through that process, I might have felt less distress and would not need to escape a lot of things (which she did not want to specify).

Mother was so kind that she visited me at that time so I had her shoulder to lean on. ... Mother knew me very well. ... She supported me in putting some effort into getting through the grief, until I felt better, I reached out to meet people, did something that I liked to do, and became a volunteer. She knew that I had already recovered from grief and depression and then she returned home because she still liked Hong Kong better. On the way to the airport, she encouraged me and I promised myself to restore my normal lifestyle.

Initially, I even dared not take driving lessons. Due to the termination of the
relationship, I realized that I could not wait for someone to take care of me but be independent. I did not drive nor did I know how to cook. Most of the time I lived on canned food. ... I decided to get a driver’s license and to learn cooking. I trained myself to face the everyday challenges independently.

In Cathy’s report, she focussed on her coping strategies instead of her stressful experiences:

I was lonely and wanted to meet people. Being new here, I was somewhat careful about where to meet people. I expected people in the church in general to be nicer and I agreed to go whenever I was invited.

Another way of coping with loneliness was to attend evening courses.

To cope with homesickness, I had close telephone contacts with my family. On average, we called each other three times a month. Every two years I also went back for a visit and my mother visited me every two years as well.

The feeling of loneliness and loss was not confined to single immigrant women. It also happened to those who came with their families like Polly:

When I first came, I felt very bored at home while my children were at school and adults were at work. One day I took a walk in the neighbourhood after lunch. I noticed a few Chinese families in the area. When I saw them, I said hello to them and we exchanged a few words. So I met a few people there. Once I took my daughter to her friend’s place and I met the mother. Since then, we have talked with each other over the phone.

I also felt lonely sometimes. I socialized with the mothers of my children’s classmates. Later, when I went to an ESL class, I also met a group of new immigrants in the class. There were Japanese and Middle East people. We sometimes had discounted afternoon tea in the restaurant or had a potluck party. After we got to know each other better, we vented our frustrations and unhappiness. As well, we shared our recipes and experiences in life.

When my husband was not in Canada, I called my oldest sister back home....She encouraged me to be patient with the situation. ...She reminded me of my purpose of migration. She always consoled me like that.

I sometimes wept while I was talking to my family over the phone. Verbalizing about my life here to my family will help me vent my unhappy feelings.
Amy and her husband also had a split-family arrangement:

When my husband left me with two children...I felt very isolated, loss, and have nobody to depend on. The situation left me with a feeling of intimidation.

I don't keep stress within myself. I talk to a few close friends whom I met back home. For the new acquaintances, if we share the same beliefs, I also talk to them. ...Sometimes, people would say their experiences were worse than mine. We seemed to be comparing who had the worst luck with each other. [She laughed]. I felt relieved a little bit after talking it out.

Teresa's experience as a new immigrant woman was:

As I uprooted from Hong Kong, I left my family members and good friends with whom we knew each other for decades. As an adult, it is not easy to establish such relationship with new acquaintances in a short period of time. You would not share your intimate thoughts and feelings with your acquaintances (as it is not considered appropriate). I usually called my mother. For the unhappy things I just kept them within myself. If I have to talk to someone, I prefer talking to family members. As a Chinese saying goes "An ugly thing should not go out of the family gate."

As we Chinese are not used to talking to strangers about our personal concerns, I kept everything within. Particularly during the first year of immigration when my husband had to go back to his job for another year. I was here with my two children. I took them to a Catholic church though I am a Buddhist. I went to the Catholic church because in Hong Kong my children attended a Catholic school. In the church, there were Bible study groups for children and adults, respectively. That was the only place for me to enlarge my small social circle.

In my daughter's case, she ran away to stay with friends. I only talked to parents who experienced similar problems to mine. Hopefully, I could get some advice on how to handle the situation. Or, I could also reflect on my mistakes by talking to them. We might not have any solution, as long as we empathized with each other, we felt better. However, I would not talk to people who did not have similar experiences to mine or who treated me with a strange attitude.

Seeking emotional support from home seemed to be a common and a natural response to loss and loneliness for many of these immigrant women. Teresa was one of
them:

I need someone to support me and empathize with my concerns. I wouldn't talk to someone who would impose a judgement on me. I talked to my mother about my worries for my children over the phone. She was very supportive to me and encouraged me to be tolerant further (until she had improved in her behaviour). I felt I had so much moral support from mother.

Susan also did not have support from Canada but back home:

I didn't have any moral support at all in Canada. I could only talk to my mother over the phone about my worries for my son, or write to my siblings or friends whoever cared about him. They wrote back to console me.

However, Ming coped in silence with her loneliness and loss:

It was hard for us. But we coped in silence with the situations....Yes, I thought of my family back home. But what was the point of thinking of them. It would only make me feel sad and miss them more.

I did not tell them about my sorrows. What is the point of telling my eighty year old father about my troubles. I did not know what to say. I did not write or phone them. I only phoned them on special occasions such as New Year or birthdays. Perhaps, I am avoiding telling them about things such as my child's psychological concerns. What is the point of telling all those (misfortunes) and letting them feel sad for me?

In Canada, I do not have any relatives or close friends. I did not have anybody to talk to about all those unfortunate incidents.

Joy had a different way of coping by throwing all her attentions to study:

ESL classes did not give me too much pressure. The positive effect was that I threw my energy into studying so that I didn't have time to worry. Also, living in a big house, there are so many chores keeping me busy from worrying about anything.

Loss and loneliness were common phenomena among these immigrant women.

However, they all had different coping strategies varying from participating in soothing activities, calling home for emotional support to diverting their focus from their challenges.
No matter how they coped with their situations, they could temporarily relieve themselves from stress.

V. B. Tolerating the Stress of Job Search

After loneliness and loss, job search was considered as one of the most stressful experiences that they had as immigrant women. Teresa had this story:

The Federal government recruited us as professional immigrants because of our skills. However, when we arrived, we did not find employment at first because we did not have Canadian work experiences and our native language is not English.

Through a co-op course, I was introduced to a big chain drug store. The interviewer was surprised by my broad experiences. He advised me not to do word processing but interior design which was my profession. I was pleased with the advice. ...However, it did not guarantee a job after placement.

Having been rejected by many employers for not having Canadian work experience, ... I took up a temporary position in an insurance company instead. That meant I had to change my career.

I worked very hard and made sure that my work was acceptable. It was a 9 am - 5 pm job but it was 9 am - 8 pm for me. ...When I was offered a permanent position, I took both spoken and written English courses in the evening.

Polly found that job searching was one of those most stressful experiences:

The other stressful experience was we couldn't make a living because we couldn't get a job here.

She received no responses about her applications:

I was very upset about the ways of looking for a job. Responding to advertisements was a waste of time. Nobody would call back. When I called to ask, the answer was the position was filled. ... My sister also helped me to gather information from Human Resources Department and filled in application forms. I had to take many tests, such as typing, listening comprehension, written English, Math and conversation. My sister also
advised me to register with head hunting agencies. Again, I sat for the same
type of examination from early morning to four o'clock in the afternoon. I
was told that there would be temporary jobs soon. So far, (after 3 and a half
years) I haven't heard anything from them.

She had no choice but registered for a training course as a way to network:

I took a course on labour market language training not because of the small
subsidiaries but networking. The course included resume writing and
computer word processing with which I was familiar. But because it was part
of the programme, I had to follow through. ...I took the class very seriously
because I wanted to look for a job.

In the end, she and her husband got jobs but were very low-paid:

At present, both my husband and I are underemployed. We still took the
jobs. Because the most important concern is to make a living. However, if
the economy is that slow continuously, I don't know whether I will be laid off
or not. Though the jobs are low paid, ... my husband and I are afraid of
hearing the word "layoff".

Polly hoped that the skills of immigrants will be put to good-use by the Canadian society:

Those who were accepted as immigrants were those professionals with ten
to twenty years of experience. I hope the government would not waste these
valuable professionals. Rather, I hope more jobs will be created for them.
If my husband is on laid off, he'll have to leave us and go back to work in
Hong Kong so as to support the family.

Being a member of an ethnic minority and looking for a job in time of recession, the
search path appeared to be rugged. In this process, Kay was no exception and had gone
through many ups and downs:

There is no job security. One could be laid off anytime which made me feel
very insecure.

When employers heard where I lived, they did not want to hire me. ....
Because of my accent, employers did not want to hire me for a receptionist's
position plus I did not speak French. I was also aware that I had very limited
options.

My first job was a full-time clerical position with an annual salary of $13,000
as opposed to day wages. I knew I was underpaid. After one week, I realized that it was not just a clerical position. I had to answer customers' telephone calls as well. This involved a lot of shipping and commercial knowledge which I did not have. I knew little about commerce since I used to work for the government in Hong Kong. It was very hard for me to adjust to that position. Yet I was very afraid of losing it. Nevertheless, I quit after two weeks.

Then, I was offered a job in a video shop, the annual salary was $13,500 for my clerical work and nothing extra. I managed the job well and liked the people there. However, I found something tricky. First of all, everyday I had to stay back for another half an hour without pay in order to keep in contact with another office on the West coast.

Secondly, it was not in our agreement to do all the extra work without pay such as preparing water for everybody to make tea or coffee 20 minutes before everybody came in, carrying big buckets of water to all the plants in the office and taking care of the garbage. I was very angry with that deceptive arrangement. Sometimes, I felt like crying when I was carrying a big bucket of water. I felt that my dignity was robbed and I worked like a servant. I was not satisfied with such a deceptive arrangement.

Besides, it was pretty far away from where I lived. I had to make more than one transit each journey and pay seven dollars a day.

From an acquaintance, I knew about a position and applied. To my surprise, after only a five minute interview, I was offered an annual salary $4,500 higher. That was $18,000. It may take many years of increment for the former company to match up with that payment. Of course I took it. Later, I found that the company wanted to hire a Chinese-Canadian because they found the previous staff member was industrious.

When the job market was small, competition was even fiercer. Lydia had her story:

I had eighteen years of secretarial experience and yet what I was told was I did not have work experience. You know the hidden message was "I had no Canadian experience". In the end, a church friend introduced me to her company and I got the job.

I should have been happy with my first job but I was not. My predecessor made me very disheartened. ... She was afraid of losing her position to me because I had more skills and my senior supervisor liked me very much. ... She tricked me and related to seniors without dignity. What she did was just like "kissing the seniors' ass". Everybody saw that and did not appreciate her
"manners".

One day, I went out for lunch with her alone and told her how I felt about her behaviour. She said, "You don't know how I feel when I want to buy a pork chop for my daughter and I have to stop and think if I have enough money for it." I appreciated her financial difficulties but I told her that I would rather lose the job than behave like her.

Further, my husband did not get back into his profession and worked as an unskilled labourer.

Due to financial constraint, Lydia had to put up with the unpleasant environment for the time being.

Pam knew that she would not get back to her position as a regional vice-manager in sales and marketing. Instead, she took up a very simple job:

The nature of my full-time job was the same as my first job after school. I took up this job because I wanted to live a simple lifestyle.

My last job in Hong Kong was sales and marketing which requires a very good local connection. Being a stranger in Canada, I was aware that I had to try a few times harder to do the job well. Plus another reason (She did not want to specify), I decided to keep my promise i.e. looked for a secretarial or an administrative assistant position. I thought it would be easier to pick it up. Deep down, I still hoped that after establishing my network, I would take up a sales and marketing job. So, reluctantly, I took up this secretarial position.

I felt that I was moving backward. Many people who knew about my past said that I did not have to be a secretary. When I heard that, feelings of vanity were rekindled. As well, I felt strange when people tended to associate me with a good profession and I only worked as a support staff. ... it was a psychological struggle.

I took up a job which is below my ability level and therefore, there was no job satisfaction. It was a busy job but not demanding. So I felt relaxed .... I only worked within my working hours. If this happened in the past, I would not enjoy it at all. I can take it because I like to spend my energy on something else.

[As] I take my job lightly, ... I spend my leisure on what I like to do. That
is a voluntary hostess position at a community radio station. ... This is the happiest jobs I have ever found in Canada. .... Working as a hostess at a radio station was what I never dreamed of. When the opportunity came, I took it. If I were still in Hong Kong, I doubt this would happen to me.

Susan was a high school teacher back home. She was insightful enough about the possible problem in job hunting to find an alternative for herself:

I realized that as a minority member and a new immigrant, no matter how good my English is, it is not as fluent as the English Canadians. That put me in a disadvantaged position as far as job searching is concerned. Therefore, though I was a teacher, I decided to take advantage of my husband's experience and set up my own business. As a result, we both set up our own business.

In many immigrants' experience, their business went bankrupted or were forced to close down after three years because of the slow economy or not knowing the custom of doing business in Canada. For me, once I decided to do it, I was very determined to make it successful.

Immigration meant loss of emotional and survival supports to these immigrant women. They were keenly aware of their surviving needs and pursued them flexibly. Their coping strategies unveiled their versatility. They tended to obtain emotional support back home on one hand, and went after any survival means in their adopted country.

**V. C. Surviving with Financial Constraint**

Individuals from any cultural and socio-economic background would find it difficult to tell a stranger that they have financial problems. Perhaps, it might be even harder for those who had never worried about money to acknowledge that they were facing financial constraints. However, in this study, the participants voluntarily and honestly revealed their worries about their financial status. Lynn was very frank about her feelings in this regard:

As the savings are going down, I was very upset. Though both my husband
and I got a job, the money we bring home is very little. It can only cover the monthly expenses. If I want something extra, I have to rely on my savings.

Due to financial constraint, Lydia had to put up with her supervisor's verbal abuse:

My supervisor treated me badly. ... I tried to put up with him because ... if I did not work, there would be no income at all.

Teresa would not have changed her career if not because of financial pressure:

If my financial situations were better, I would not have taken up this job. It was because the co-op work in the drug store was closely related to what I did. If I were employed by the drug store after placement, I could have had a better future. The drawback was there was no guarantee for a job in the future, whereas in the insurance company it was a job though a temporary, position. There was a high possibility for future employment.

Polly had her worries to tell:

The... most stressful experience was that we can't make a living... We can't live on our saving for long because we don't have much savings... Even though both of us are working, our incomes can't allow us to pay for both our mortgage and car loan. The money that we make here can only be enough to pay for our groceries. ... We are worried one day we may be laid off. ... If my husband is laid off, he has to leave us and go back to work in Hong Kong so as to support the family.

Kay accepted a few very low paid jobs and put up with an extremely unfriendly work environment because:

I had financial constraints. For instance, we do not have sufficient savings to support my husband to go back to college for some training. Yet he needed the training for the job market in Canada.

The worry of money was not only the privilege of the employees but as well as the affluent families. Joy had a different story:

In 1991, when the business was very slow, I had many apprehensions. It was not only money that I was worried about but also the effects that the failure of our business would bring about, including: Would our immigration status be disqualified? How could my husband stay in Canada without work? How
could he get over the loss? And many others.

Immigration meant survival for these immigrant women. The first existential need was financial. They seemed to be content when they had their basic necessities met. Emotional needs, which were not life threatening appeared to be secondary. However, children's concerns were seen as first priority.

V. D. Dealing with Children's Concerns

Before immigration, many participants believed that children would adjust to a new environment faster than adults. They hardly paid attention to the challenges of cultural and language gaps which children had to face everyday. Many of them did not realize how important these differences were for their children until they acted out their frustrations. Teresa was one of those parents who had gone through a lot of frustrations and had this reflection:

When we came, our daughter was 14 years old. My daughter was used to school regulations in Hong Kong where she was a strict "A" student. In Canada, because of language difficulties, she did not have a sense of achievement. Gradually, she lost her self-confidence and her self-esteem was very low. As school regulations are very relaxed here, she could skip class without punishment. She had too much freedom and she apparently did not know how to handle it. Gradually, she was lost in the "ocean" of freedom.

Now, Teresa had so much empathy for young people's cultural shock:

In my view, as young immigrants, they experienced more cultural conflicts than we adults, perhaps. For example, there is no clear value or moral education guidelines. I did not find any guidelines (in her school). As long as she did not hurt others, she could do whatever she wanted to, including free sex though I think my daughter is not at that stage yet. Children do not even know what they are doing.

Back home, the school would reinforce the concept of respect for others and
value/moral education. Parents found it easier to reinforce this value at home. In Canada, children only demanded their rights without being responsible for themselves. As a parent, I found it hard to (go against the trend of the prevalent youth culture).

In retrospect, Teresa seemed to regret so much and wondered whether she made a right decision for her family:

We thought by coming to Canada, they would receive a good education. Therefore, we would rather sacrifice what we had established in our careers and a comfortable life. However, we feel that, as a result of our sacrifice, we spoiled our daughter's future.

With so many mixed feelings, Teresa needed some moral support. Unfortunately she did not have any in Canada but she talked to parents who experienced similar problems:

I talked to some parents who experienced similar problems to mine. We found that our children used to follow our structured schedule when they were younger. As they grew older and lived in a different society, we could not use the same parenting style with them. But we had already made a mistake which could not be reversed.

In reconsideration, Teresa came to realize another aspect of children's adjustment process:

Coming to Canada, everything in their environment was new except their parents. As well, their well-being depended on how well their parents adjusted to this society. If their parents were able to make a better transition to the Canadian life, these children might be able to adjust to it better. If their parents had difficulties in this transitional period, or if one parent had to work back home and left the other here, their adjustment process might be even harder.

Though Teresa did not report directly how difficult it was for her to adjust to a strange country as a "single" mother, she realized with much regret that her difficulties in the transition might have contributed to her daughter's adaptation problems:

Thinking back, I also shared part of the responsibilities of my daughter's problem. She was a girl guide in Hong Kong. Due to my discomfort with long distance drive particularly on the highways, I did not send her to Girl Guide activities. I regret that I had deprived my daughter from doing what
she was familiar with.

Like any adults, young immigrants also lost their support systems in school. They had greater language barriers such as not understanding what the teacher was talking about or how to socialize with schoolmates. The manner of teaching, learning, and the expectations of students were very different from their old schools back home. They did not have a frame of reference. They were utterly lost in a new culture.

From the newspaper, Teresa learned that her daughter was not alone:

I also learned from the newspapers that groups of young immigrants did not realize how to conduct their rights and responsibilities properly. They seemed to demand too much right and freedoms and parents could not do much about it. It is difficult to draw a line between discipline and abuse as defined by the Canadian law here. Some lost their direction. Some loitered in shopping malls, bowling alleys or karaoke restaurants. They would be school drop-outs. Without schooling and academic skills, they will be big burdens for the society in the future.

Having had such awareness of young people's difficulties in making a transition to life in Canada, Teresa became more patient with her daughter while she was guiding her to acquire a life skill for herself:

I tried to ignore my daughter when she did not get what she wanted and had a temper tantrum. What I expected of her was either to go to school or to get a job. For her, it was hard to focus on her studies and too hard for her to work. She can't stay idle everyday.

Susan also noticed that, in a less structured study atmosphere, her son did not work as hard as he used to before immigrating to Canada:

The [atmosphere of] study is so relaxed that my son did not work as hard as he should. Furthermore, he did not listen [to me]. This was my agony in Canada.

Being a teacher herself back home, she certainly had her opinions about her son's academic development:

I thought, if my son carried on with this attitude, he would become worse and
wouldn't be an independent grown-up.

Susan was so hopeful that the teachers would understand her concerns about her son:

I took advantage of all the teacher-parent meetings to meet his teachers and tried to understand his school performance. Teachers explained very clearly about my son's work. However, they were so nice and polite that they only pointed out his strengths not his weaknesses.

In my observation, my son was non-cooperative and did not work up to his ability. His peers were like that, too. I kept on discussing this concern with his teachers who did not think that my child had a problem at all.

Susan did not give up. She was very persistent in searching for ways to help her son. She talked to her husband and her physician who had different opinions. She tried to arrange social activities with well-behaved teenagers for her son. For example, she encouraged her son to go to church with her neighbour's son and she went with the mother though she was not a Christian. However, her son dropped out. Susan was so frustrated that she consulted her son's guidance teacher:

In the end, I consulted the guidance teacher who examined his records and agreed with me that my son needed counselling and made a referral for him.

In a very different manner, Polly's children acted out their frustrations during the transitional period of adjustment:

When we first arrived, my children didn't quite understand English. They did not know what to do in school. In addition, there were not many Chinese children in their school at that time. They were lonely and isolated. They were very frustrated. When they came back, they acted out their frustrations. I didn't know what to do and felt helpless, particularly, my husband was in Hong Kong. I had no immediate family with whom I could discuss children's concern. It was a very distressful transition for me.

Soon after the children were used to their new school, Polly bought a new house in another area in which there were no school bus services. As Polly had not yet obtained her
driver's license, she sent her children to the school in the neighbourhood thinking that she would eventually settle in her new home. To her surprise, the children were reluctant to change school but she had no choice:

In the new school, I noticed my son wasn't happy. Gradually, he became very sad when he had to go to school. In his work, he wrote how unhappy he was and how he was not understood in this school. His grade dropped from A to C. He requested to go back to his old school. I didn't know if it would help him or not because I did not understand the reason why he was unhappy in this new school. So, I didn't know what to do.

Naturally, Polly consulted the teacher:

The teacher said that his work was not up to the standard. My son said that the teacher treated him unfairly. Later, he didn't speak to the teacher.

Polly went through so much frustration and talked to many different people before the ESL teacher suggested she bring her son to see a Chinese speaking counsellor at a community mental health agency for help with his selective mutism. In the end, the counsellor's recommendation was that he should go back to his old school. Polly noticed positive changes on her son:

After returning to his old school, he was very happy and was very motivated to learn. Within a month, he got 5 A's and he was awarded Student of the Month. I was very surprised to see all those changes after returning to his old school. Lately, he was selected for an art programme for gifted students.... I didn't realize a change of environment would have such an impact on him.

Lydia was another parent who did not know what her son needed for the transition until he recovered from illness:

Since going to daycare, my son got nightmares every night and cried a lot. I did not understand the reason why.

He did not like to go to daycare.... Later, he had chicken pox. ... Subsequent to moving to this house, he had diarrhea for a few months and became very
thin. Then, he even had diarrhoea. He tried many different kinds of antibiotics but they did not work on him. Also, he had a high fever, up to 105 F.

At that time, Lydia's husband had not returned to his profession but worked as a labourer in a factory. Lydia was not only worried about her son's health but also about money and needed a job badly to keep the family going. However, she had no choice but to stay home to take care of her son:

I was very worried and could not sleep at night. I sat near his bed at night and prayed for him. In the end, the medicine worked for him. It took him a few months to recover.

After he had recovered, ... I found out that he did not like the dark curtain covering the windows during afternoon nap. Even now, he is still afraid of the dark

Lydia sounded regretful when she realized that unknowingly she had disregarded her child's need:

Then I realized that a little child like him also needed a transitional period to adjust to a new environment, especially since he was the only Chinese boy without English language skills in the group. Initially I focussed on adults only.... The most important thing of all was to get a job. I thought someone looking after him in daycare would be fine. Unintentionally, I overlooked his needs as a child.

Nevertheless, she seemed proud of herself for staying home and taking care of her son despite financial constraints. She was satisfied with their close relationship which she established under a difficult situation:

So his illness became a blessing in our mother-child relationship. Had he not had health problems, I would not have spent full-time with him and my daughter and established this close relationship which I treasure very much.

Lynn seemed to be the most pro-active parent among all the participants. She anticipated the language and cultural gaps which her daughters had to overcome:
I was aware of the differences between Chinese and Canadian culture and tried to learn more about the Canadian one. What I did was not to subscribe to Chinese TV programmes but to Canadian ones.

When the school complained that my children were too quiet and passive. I sent them to a private tutor to learn spoken English so as to build up their self-confidence.

Lynn was also aware of the fact that she needed to understand her daughters’ difficulties in school:

I keep close contact with school teachers trying to understand teens' culture and trends. I realize that I should try to understand their difficulties in studying in order to prevent them from dropping out of school.

Socially, Lynn was insightful enough to see her children's need of Canadian social skills:

I was keenly aware that my shy children need to learn some social skills through activities. ... to help them break through their barriers was to send them to learn the Canadian popular activities such as swimming, ski and skate. I explained to my children the reasons why before I took a step to help them.

However, they hated it so much. ...I listened to their complaints and was sympathetic to them. I knew that it was the only way to encourage the two shy girls to build up their social confidence. Before the school took them out to ski, they had already learned the skill. When the new term started, they were more sociable.

However, all these effort did not stop Lynn from handling other adjustment concerns that her children brought home:

Everyday after work, I have a new challenge. As soon as I arrive home, the children will have a lot of demands. They will ask for things which their friends have. First of all, I have to listen to them. Secondly, I have to scrutinize whether the demands are reasonable. If it is reasonable, I will let them have. Otherwise, the art of turning down a teenager is a great challenge. The girls have hit adolescence and have great mood fluctuations. Both of my daughters and myself are not comfortable with such situations. Besides, as an adult, I face the impact of migration and great cultural-value conflicts. My
children naturally pick up Canadian cultural-values right away or pick whichever suits their best interests from both cultural values.

In Ming’s situation, it was not clear if her daughter’s psychological concerns were related to her own adjustment difficulties or to her marital disharmony at the time of immigration. In any case, it was a psychological burden for Ming:

I knew my daughter’s psychological concern needs professional help. (The details are privileged). But I do not know how to go about it. On my part, I tried my best to accommodate her demands. However, her response seemed to be hateful and she did not want to talk at all.

When she was undergoing counselling, she would relate with us. At one point she expressed that if the family relationships were harmonious, she would recover from it. In fact, we (she and husband) do not quarrel. If we are not happy, we keep it within.

In the process of adjustment, these young immigrants’ experiences of cultural and language difficulties were beyond words. Perhaps neither the children nor their parents realized the severity of their problems. When they acted out behaviourally such as by throwing temper tantrum, skipping classes, running away from home or when their grades dropped significantly, their problems were not necessary recognized right away, like Polly’s child who chose to be mute as a cry for help. Lydia’s little boy’s fear of the dark in daycare might have been somatized, and he became sick as a defence mechanism. However, neither the teacher nor the parent realized what was happening to their children, partly because they did not have any reference point leading them to the appropriate assistance. In addition, the parents themselves experienced a cultural shock as well. If the same problems had happened back home, parents would usually infer that these children were not co-operative but rebellious. As a result, they tried to resolve the problems by disciplining the children. Not until the problems were exacerbated, did they realize that these were unusual situations that
needed professional assistance.

Unfortunately, there were also other relationship concerns to handle in their day to day lives.

V. E. Striving Against the Negative Impacts of Immigration on Family Relationships

V. E. 1. Efforts to Handle Delicate Spousal Relations

In addition to worries about children's concerns, there were spousal relationship problems resulting from immigration. As Joy concluded:

In establishing a new home in a country, stress and unexpected conflicts may be aroused. Consequently, negative emotions may be generated. I don't know whether it needs counselling assistance or not. But I think they need to know how to handle it wisely.

Lydia's experience was a good example. Lydia and her husband's tense relationship revealed the hardship of their struggle with so many problems in getting employment and finance to support the family in a strange country:

At one point, our marital relationship was so bad that we wanted to divorce.

My husband was very impatient with me and the children.... He always complained about the children's noise and untidiness of the home despite the fact that I tidied up the home everyday when children were in bed.

...he was [also] jealous of me. He would say 'do you think you are superior just because you have a job?'...It was hard to put up with his temper.

...one day I told him, "I am very hurt and I cannot take it any more."

At that time, he was a factory worker and he felt inferior to others. ... That might be due to his unhappiness with his underemployment

I was aware of the factors contributing to the problems. We were under so much financial constraint and frustration at work. Our perceptions of the problems were naturally different [due to our gender differences].

Lydia did not want to give up the relationship without trying her best to maintain it:
Both of us sensed something wrong was going on. ... Finally, I initiated talking about it. ... I pointed out the reasons why we did not want to separate because the conflicting relationship was caused by external stressors such as work stress and finances. I told him for the first time the amount of pressure I had to put up with at home and at work. If he treated me nicely, there was a good reason for me to suffer... otherwise we better off lead separate lives. If we do not want to separate, we have to work out our relationship.

Lydia's persistence and both their efforts and trust in each other saved their marriage:

For so long we talked about our problems and worked out the relationship all by ourselves because we did not want to separate. Now, we are all right.

Lydia appeared to be proud of their satisfactory handling of this big challenge.

Ming was less fortunate because her husband had changed and coped in silence with his worries about the slow business. He did not even want to talk to his wife and he was impatient with her out of his frustrations. Ming lamented:

Before migration, he spoke more and I was very involved in the business. Every evening, we visited together those department stores which carried our products to see how business was like in the shops.

However, in Canada

"due to language barriers, I am not involved in the business at all. As a result, I have the tendency of wanting to know how he is doing."

Unfortunately, her husband behaved differently:

If there is nothing worth mentioning, from his perspective, he won't say a word.

I understand that life is a lot harder here. I wanted to spend more time with ... my husband hoping that I could keep him company and support him because he is running his business at home all by himself. ... My belief is if we had good communication, however hard life may be, we could still support each other well. But he does not see it this way. ... He would not talk to me about his ideas, never mind feelings. He did not even want to respond when I asked him anything. ... Sometimes, he was even sarcastic.
Ming understood that her husband "was distressed by the situation." Notwithstanding, it was very hard for her to take his short temper. She was very sad and angry in the beginning. Gradually, she noticed that she could not change her introverted husband and had no choice but to accept him.

Teresa's husband joined her after one year of split-family arrangement. She noticed the difficulties that her husband experienced. Teresa described this stressful experiences:

A year later, my husband joined us. By then, I had a demanding job. Naturally, he had to share a lot of chores and got more involved with children. Together with my daughter's concern, he gradually became fed up with all those troubles. I could understand his difficulty in adjusting to a different lifestyle. He was not used to taking care of all those family concerns. Back home, we did not have to do chores at all. I understood that his work was very demanding and I did not want to bother him with any family concerns. Thus, I was fully involved with children and all the family business besides my full time job. Even with big decisions like buying a condo, I made all the decisions myself. My husband was left with his work only. Dinner was ready when he came home. It is very different from here.

Though Teresa did not want to specify how her husband's transition to life in Canada affected their relationship, it may not be too wrong to infer that it might have created some feelings of discomfort in the family.

Susan did not want to specify the reason why her husband drank. However, when asked about any unpleasant experience since immigration, Susan reported:

The other distressful experience was that my husband drinks a lot. When he becomes drunk, he throws his tantrums which are directed at my son in particular and at me. Later, he bought a beautiful dog which he likes to hold on his lap when he drinks. As a result, the dog protects us from being emotionally abused.

Further, different degrees of acculturation between Lynn and her husband might have some negative effect on a couple's concept of socialization. Though Lynn did not want to
specify the possible negative effects which might have affected their relationship, Lynn recounted:

I work in a mainstream advertising company. ... Everybody packs a lunch as opposed to dining in a restaurant together. After work, everybody goes home as opposed to going to a social gathering with colleagues. It has been a great change for me. Compare this with my husband who holds the same profession and works in a Chinese company, so he hasn't had much changes in his life style. He and his colleagues still go out together three meals a day as if they were still living in Hong Kong. As well, there are many social gatherings among themselves. I believe that he may not know how much my life has been changed.

Lynn had this experience after immigration. The overt one was gender role and chores:

Back home, we had a domestic maid and none of us had to do a lot of chores at home. However, in Canada, I have to do all the domestic work and assign some chores to the children. My husband does not do any at all. Occasionally, he might offer a helping hand or when the children have noticed that and point it out sometimes, then he might do some which to him represents a great favour. But compared with many Western men, he does very little.

The assignments were: I take care of the kitchen and my husband takes care of the washrooms. Children vacuum the house. He and the children are supposed to do the laundry. However, very often nobody takes care of it and it ends up being my job. ... Besides, my base line is I don't iron clothes. He has to do it himself. His mother does not like to see her son iron clothes for everybody and she does it for him.

However, there was not much that Lynn could do. Perhaps, the other thing which she could do to ease the family relationships was to lessen the cultural or generation gap.


Lynn had this experience:

As my mother-in-law lives with us for the first time, I have to keep the traditional Chinese cultural values which children do not have the background to appreciate particularly in our interaction with my mother-in-
law. I, therefore, have to find a middle ground between the two generations.

In order to keep my mother-in-law happy, I encouraged her to socialize with other seniors and to take part in group activities such as `mah-jong'[a game for four people similar to bridge]. As long as they do it for leisure not big gambling, I am willing to provide transport for her. ...When my mother-in-law hears how poorly their friends have been treated by their daughters-in-law, she will appreciate me more, and will not be too demanding. She sometimes would report miserable stories such as Mrs. Cheung has been kicked out of the house and lives in public housing.

Sometimes the seniors would tell us about the miserable life experiences of their friends and asked us not to treat them like that. That showed that seniors like [my mother-in-law] would consider herself lucky that we do treat her nicely. She might be more cautious and not to show her traditional authoritarian role1. In this respect, our relationship is improved.

V. E. 3. Enduring the Stress of Split-Family Arrangement.

Due to the slow economy which resulted from a huge unemployment rate in Canada, many new immigrant men from Hong Kong went back to work. They opted for split-family arrangement which was called "astronaut family". Amy and her husband have been leading a split-family lifestyle for a few years since immigrating to Canada:

Taking care of two children in a strange country is a great responsibility. I felt very isolated, lost, and have nobody to depend on. The situation left me with a feeling of intimidation. ...When it comes to decision making by myself, I feel very uncertain and insecure.

Unfortunately, Amy had to handle all by herself such things as a few car accidents, her son being poisoned by carbon monoxide in the car, and an episode of prejudice in a supermarket.

In addition, over time, Amy noticed the differences between her and her husband's perspectives over many concerns:

1Mother-in-law is traditionally considered to be next to the father-in-law in the family hierarchy, so she has much power over the daughter-in-law.
Due to this geographic distance, it is very inconvenient for us to communicate with each other. Though we talk over the phone, we could not talk in detail. Gradually, I notice there are more differences in our points of view.

For example, my husband visits us a few times a year. When he came, he might be thinking of relaxing at home. For us, we were waiting for him to visit other places such as Montreal and Buffalo, with us. However, he preferred staying at home.

In the past, a lot of things went without saying.

However, their relationship seemed to be affirmed:

Though we have separated for about four years, it does not have a negative effect on our relationship. Rather we feel that we need each other even more. I do not know what will happen to us in the future. (She laughed jokingly).

Amy had many observations:

I heard a lot of stories of extramarital relationship or broken marriages occurred to couples leading an "astronaut's" [split-family] life style. Many cases were due to the temptations in their work environment. Many men still love their wives and yet at the same time want to have a relationship outside their marriage. The temptation is just similar to a cat which is placed in front of a plate of fish. How can one expect the cat not to eat the fish?

Mutual trust and care about each other seemed to be the rule to sustain a marital relationship in a split-family:

My husband works in a school setting which is very different from the business circle. In addition, he has a very good self-discipline. Maybe, he also understands that my life is also tough here. He did not want to betray his family. Likewise, a wife also has an opportunity to betray the husband. But when I think of his working very hard back home, I do not want to worry him. You have to trust and be loyal to each other.

Due to business failure, Joy and her husband resolved their financial needs in Hong Kong. As a result, they had a split-family arrangement. The impact of this long-term separation on their relationship is yet to be evaluated. However, day to day life was challenging enough for Joy:
When I realized that my husband had no choice but to work in Hong Kong in order to support us in Canada. That was the most detrimental experience after migration.

What worried me most was ... would I be able to take good care of the two children's schooling well. The first difficulty ... was the language barrier. Meeting with a teacher was a great pressure to me. Sometimes I asked my cousin-in-law who was studying at a university, to go with me... I even asked her if my tone of voice was appropriate when I asked a question. I had never experienced such stress before.

Because I was very concerned about my children's progress, I kept close contact with my children's school when I was in Hong Kong. .... I had absolutely no problem in expressing myself at all. But, in Canada, I don't even have enough vocabulary to describe everyday activities. This is the hardest part for me to take.

For Teresa, her experience as a "single-parent" was:

As we Chinese are not used to talking to strangers about their personal concerns, I kept everything within. Particularly during the first year of immigration when my husband had to go back to his job for another year. I was here with my two children. I took my children to a Catholic church... because they went to a Catholic school in Hong Kong. That was the only place for me to enlarge my small social circle.

It was not clear whether her child's running away from home was related to the stress that was generated in split-family life style. However, Teresa reported that her mother-in-law perceived the problem this way:

My mother-in-law puts the blame on me by saying that it would not have happened if we had not immigrated to Canada.

The relationship in Teresa's family thus became even more complex.

Overall, according to the reports, each participant's family had a different coping style during this transitional period of adjustment to life in Canada. Lydia's and Susan's husbands seemed to act out their frustrations. That resulted in a very dissonant family relationship. Ming's husband threw all his energy in his business and coped in silence. However, it cost
them a happy marriage which seemed to affect their child's emotional well-being. In Lynns' family, the stress was reflected in an non co-operative atmosphere. In split-families like Amy's and Teresa's, the feelings of isolation, insecurity, anxiety and worries were clearly present in Amy's and Teresa's reports. Due to immigration, mothers in-law lived with some of the participants like Lynn and Teresa. This highlighted the tension between the traditional Chinese culture and the Western one. Thus, family relationships were even more tenuous when each family member needed a space, or something soothing for themselves. When a child acted out or became sick in these families under stress, problems in their family relationship became even more pronounced. Perhaps Teresa's mother-in-law was right. All this would not have happened if they had not immigrated to Canada.

V. F. Struggling with Language Differences

All the participants in this study had completed at least secondary education and had studied English as a Second Language in Hong Kong. Nine of them graduated from grade 12 or 13 before they went for secretarial training in English preparing them to work in the local or international business sectors. The rest of three participants had professional training in Britain. Lynn had a postgraduate degree from Britain and also had work experience there for another half a year upon graduation. Tina completed grade 13 before she was educated as a nurse in English and furthered her study in Britain. Subsequently, she worked there for another one and a half years. Pam received a secretarial education after graduating from grade 13. Then she worked for a while to gain some experience before she took a Diploma in Business Administration and Secretarial Course in Britain. Proficiency with the English
language varied from one participant to another. However, they all experienced various degrees of language barriers. They found language limitations adversely affected their life circumstances and shaped their various coping strategies.

Joy, a home maker, realized:

My first frustration was in relation to language difficulties. ...I always believed that I spoke English...To my surprise, as soon as I got out of the plane at the airport, I realized that I did not understand what the other people were talking about. ... I was not able to express myself as much as I wished. ...Gradually, I felt lost. I dared not say what I should say. ...Because I realized that people may not understand what I was asking about or I might not get what others said.

Besides, I was afraid to answer phone calls. Some of my friends also shared the same feeling. Because the other party spoke so fast that I couldn't follow him or her. ... Having had all those discouraging experiences, I thought how wonderful it would be if my English language skills were better.

Further, as a mother taking care of her two children all by herself when her husband was away, Joy had additional stress:

Meeting with a teacher was a great pressure to me. Sometimes I asked my cousin-in-law who was studying at a university, to go with me. ... I even asked her if my tone of voice was appropriate when I asked a question. I had never experienced such stress before.

...I think this change of behaviour was due to my English language barrier.

This might be my subconscious motivation to study the English language.

Another home maker, Ming, could not get involved in her husband's business because of her language limitations:

In Canada, because of my language barriers, I am not involved in the business at all.

The language barrier also limited her social circle.

Considering my limitations in the English language, my social circle is
confined to the Chinese community. With English speaking people, I may have to speak very slowly. If ideas are complex, I am not able to express myself. Also, if they speak fast, I may not understand what they say. After all, I do not have any opportunity to meet other English speaking people other than my ESL teacher.

I went to an ESL class taught by a Western teacher. I wanted to learn more conversational English and learn more vocabulary.

The worst incident was:

After our house burned down, our neighbours sent notes to us and offered help. Due to my language barrier, I could not accept their offers. I took care of everything all by myself.

Amy had the unfortunate experience of being mistakenly accused of shoplifting when she was lining up to pay. She was very angry and upset and wanted to make a formal complaint to the management and felt helplessness in the end. Amy recalled:

I wanted to write a letter and make a formal complaint to the management. If my language skills were better, I would have done that. Then, I thought ‘my language skill is not that fluent. How can I write a letter like this?’ I felt stress and helplessness right away.

There was so much struggle between overcoming the hurt and finding ways to relieve the feeling of helplessness. Amy recalled:

At one moment, I thought that I could get a friend whose command of English was better than mine to write a complaint letter to the head office for me. At another moment, I thought ‘May be he was doing his job. If he lost his job just because of this episode, his family will suffer? I will be sorry for his family.’ When I thought of this, I felt better for not pursuing the complaint not just because of my language limitations. In reality, my language difficulty was the first major obstacle to expressing myself.

This study found that language differences perhaps caused equal, if not greater, amount of stress, in the workplace. Teresa, who had a post-secondary level in secretarial training reported that she was very eager to improve her English language skills by attending
ESL classes before she entered the job market. She reported:

My understanding of the English language is manageable but not at the spoken English level. This put me in a disadvantaged position when it came to employment. In fact, when I first arrived in 1989 Summer, I studied English as a Second Language (ESL) for 10 months. The ESL class and afterwards, the Co-Op course taught me how to converse with people in English...

With language difficulties, it was hard to talk to clients or write letters in the insurance company. I worked very hard and made sure that my work was acceptable. It was a 9 am - 5 pm job but was 9 am - 8 pm for me.

When I was offered a permanent position, I took both spoken and written English courses. My company encouraged me to do that by reimbursing me the fees and bonus.

Lydia also found the differences of language was a barrier to advancement at her workplace:

I applied for a secretarial position but was advised to take another offer titled "Information Co-Ordinator". Due to my English language limitation, I would not get the maximum pay in a secretory position. The salary would not be enough to run a family. Besides, there would not be good prospects for advance.

The position of Information-Co-Ordinator included responsibilities for the whole department of 150 employees spread out into three floors. ... I had to deal with everybody. However, I did not have sufficient English language skills for the job and my Chinese accent was not very helpful either. Besides, there was so much to read but not enough time. It was very hard for me. They sent me to study the English language and interpersonal skills.

Lynn had studied and worked in Britain prior to immigration. She did not mention how adequate her English language skills were. However, she tried to cope not only for herself but also for her children. Lynn reported:

In order to learn more English, I didn't subscribe to Chinese TV programmes but to Canadian ones.

Over time, I also found my Chinese language is influenced by English. As
well, my English is influenced by Chinese. Sometimes, people comment that my English language is too British.

Lynn also found some differences between the British and Canadian English languages. She reported:

My opinion was British language tended to be too formal while the Canadian one too creative. ... One day, I had an idea when a colleague of mine told me that his son did not attend university but college and had so much free time. I thought I could practise spoken English with his son.

As well, Lynn sent her two daughters to practise spoken English with her tutor, too. Lynn smiled satisfactorily and recalled:

When the school complained that my children were too quiet and passive. I sent them to the private tutor for four months to learn spoken English so as to build up their self-confidence. In the following year, the younger one obtained an A and the oldest one was awarded an ESL towards Excellence.

Polly's strategy was to attend an ESL class. However, when she had to consult a specialist for her child's selective mutism, she sighed:

As you know, it is hard to find a Chinese speaking specialist here.

In respect to job searching, Polly reported:

I took a course on labour market language training... I took the class very seriously because I wanted to look for a job.

Susan was sensitive enough to see her disadvantaged position as an ESL immigrant in the job market. She coped with it differently:

I realized that as a minority member and a new immigrant, no matter how good my English is, it is not as fluent as the English Canadians. That put me in a disadvantaged position as far as job searching is concerned. Therefore, [though I was a teacher], I decided to set up my own business.

Pam, who had some training in business administration and had some work
experience in Britain, did not mention specifically how she was coping with the language difference. However, she reported that after struggling for a while she accepted being underemployed by taking up a secretarial position.

It was a busy job but not demanding. I took up this job because I wanted to live a simple lifestyle in contrast to my previous busy sales and marketing vice-regional director’s position in Asia.

I take my job lightly. Then, I spend my leisure on what I like to do, a hostess position at a Chinese community radio station. Through this job I met a lot of people.

This seems to suggest that Pam was pleased with the active life in the Chinese community. Her less demanding job may require less English language skills. Perhaps this was Pam’s coping strategy as a new immigrant.

V. G. Dancing with Cultural Dissimilarities and Tension

Since the participants were aware of the cultural differences and had prepared to adjust to them before immigration, not every participant described how they coped with them. However, nine of them did find cultural differences to be a source of stress and described varied coping strategies.

Culture involves a certain style or a manner of living (Appendix 3). These participants naturally approached their new world with their habitual lifestyle. However, they experienced the tension between their culture and the mainstream one when they were interacting with other people. Challenging situations arouse in the business field, in the workplace, and at school. In some families, this also happened at home among family members with various degrees of acculturation.
In terms of the manner of running a business, Joy had this experience:

We thought we could advertise our restaurant through any good media like what we did back home. So we tried to put advertisements in magazines such as tourist guides... but were rejected. We then learned that our restaurant was not big enough to qualify for those magazines. We could only rely on the flyers that we sent out in the neighbourhood.

In the workplace, Lydia had this experience at her company:

Back home, we were very devoted to work and everybody worked very hard but we enjoyed our accomplishments. Here, they value very much the socializing aspect. I am not used to leaving stacks of work on my desk and socializing with a cup of coffee in my hand.

Teresa was sensitive enough to change her wardrobe to fit into the culture:

In Canada, my colleagues dress very causally in such things as jeans and runners. I, therefore, changed my wardrobe to fit into the culture.

Nevertheless, she did not want to subscribe to the Canadian work ethic. For example, diligence was valued more in her home country and she practised it in Canada. She, therefore, was disliked by her co-workers. Teresa had this painful experience:

I worked hard... because I felt responsible for what I did... This is our work ethic back home and I still believe that. Whereas, my colleagues... did not like my working hard and I became a target of negative discrimination. ... One day, a staff member was laid off. Before she left she said, "I do not understand why you Chinese work that hard!" What people in general did not like was that employers would compare our work attitude with theirs. What they thought was that I just needed a job. They did not see responsibility as equally important to me.

Teresa experienced cultural differences not only at work but also in the expression of the public opinion on government policies. Teresa realized the dissimilarity between individualistic and collective cultures:

When the Rae Government wanted to do something like job sharing, training immigrants to get a job, balance in a power and resources among various sectors, people did not want to see the whole picture of the society but their
own one and disagreed with it. We like to see the best interest of the society at large.

At school, things were also managed differently back home. For this reason, Joy and Susan were very frustrated when dealing with school. Joy recalled:

I planned to enrol for an English as a Second Language [ESL] class in the evening. I thought just as children could enrol with their school in September so could I without realizing that all the classes were full. Then, I became aware that adult learners had to enrol with the school in advance.

Besides administration, the school also handled students' concerns differently. Susan reported:

I did not think of counselling service before because I did not know who I should see. Back home, if a pupil has concerns, it is the teacher whom the parents should see. The teacher will offer advice or referral. That was the reason why I only focussed on school teachers.

Teachers explained very clearly about my son's work. However, they were so nice and polite that they only pointed out his strengths not his weaknesses.

Similarly, Polly did not know where to get help other than the school teacher for her son's selective mutism:

...I noticed that my son wasn't happy. ... His grade dropped to C. He requested to go back to his old school. ... I did not know what to do.

I talked to his home room teacher many times. She said that his work was not up to the standard. My son said that the teacher treated him unfairly. The teacher ... suspected that he had medical concerns. I was, therefore, advised to take my son to see a doctor.

However, I didn't see him behave like a sick child at home. ... In the end, an ESL teacher suggested me to see you. I was so pleased to hear that.

Like the parents, their children also experienced tremendous cultural shock. Teresa had this observations:

When we came, our daughter was 14 years old. She was used to school
regulations in Hong Kong where she was a strict "A" student. ... In Canada, as school regulations are very relaxed here, she could skip class without punishment. She apparently did not know how to handle so much freedom.

This seemed to be a common phenomenon among young immigrants. Teresa continued:

I also learned from the newspapers that groups of young immigrants did not realize how to conduct their rights and responsibilities properly.

In my view, as young immigrants, they experienced more cultural conflicts than we adults. For example, there is no clear value or moral education guidelines. I did not find any clear guidelines in my daughter's school. As long as she did not hurt others, she could do whatever she wanted to.

[In school], they had greater cultural barriers such as not understanding how to socialize with schoolmates. Further, the manner of teaching, learning, and the expectations of students were very different from their old schools back home. They did not have a frame of reference. They were utterly lost in a new culture.

However, once children like Lynn's daughters subscribed to the Canadian culture in contrast to their traditional one and brought it home, it created tension in the family. Lynn faced these challenges:

For example, my thirteen year old girl wanted a razor to shave her face, arms and legs. As we all know that our skin is not so hairy that it needs to be shaved. Once she starts, she has to shave herself for the rest of her life. ... However, my daughter did not listen to me because she thought I did not experience it and therefore I did not know the difference. In her school, everybody does it.

Another example is my two daughters told me how much their friends were paid for helping chores and I didn't pay them for any at all. For me, my cultural belief is that they are part of the family and they should share responsibilities. And parents pay for their expenses unconditionally. In Western culture, children are supposed to move out and live on their own when they reach 18 years old. But, Chinese parents support their children until they are able to be independent. Why do parents have to pay extra money for helping with the chores?

Cultural tension in Lynn's family was not only between her children and herself as a
parent. It also existed between the three generations. Lynn reported:

As my mother-in-law lives with us, I have to keep the traditional Chinese cultural values particularly in our interaction with my mother-in-law, or when grandmother is involved in our family activities and the choice of food. On the other hand, children do not have the background to appreciate the traditional Chinese cultural values. I, therefore, have to find a middle ground between the two generations. It is a challenge and stressful to handle those situations.

Being restricted by the language difficulties, Ming had less opportunity to incorporate Western values than her children. Consequently, her children tended to subscribe more to the Canadian culture than to the Chinese one. Ming summed up well her observations on the Eastern and Western cultural tensions between three generations:

The problem with our generation is that we have to take all the pressure from both our previous and the next generations. As children, ... we were to follow our parents' value-belief as our principle guide for life. As parents, we put up whatever pressure from our children. We seem to be afraid of our children nowadays.

In terms of intra-personal cultural conflict, Amy's struggle to complain or not about the manager's wrong accusation was a classic example:

At one moment, I thought that I could get a friend ... to write a complaint letter .... At another moment, I thought ... If he lost his job just because of this episode, his family will suffer? I will be sorry for his family.

Amy reported that when she thought of his family, she did not want to "push the last button. As the Chinese say, 'Don't push him to the very end." This value was derived from the Chinese modest culture with which Amy was operating. She might or might not be aware of it. However, it was this Chinese modest culture which made her decide to drop the complaint. When Amy reported the episode, she sounded natural and spontaneous in employing this modest culture in making the decision. The North American concept of asserting her right
did not seem to dawn on her at all in the decision process. However, Amy did not feel bad about not filing a complaint. Rather, she felt relief for not indirectly retaliating against his family through expressing her rage at the manager's wrong accusation. Perhaps, this feeling of relief also fit in well with her ceasing to struggle with language difficulties. Nonetheless, it seemed that if Amy really wanted to file a complaint against the manager, it would not have been a problem for her to ask someone to write on her behalf.

V. H. Struggling with Various Facets of Prejudice and Discrimination

From the participants' accounts of their lives in Canada, prejudice and discrimination emerged as a central challenge. Various experiences of prejudice and discrimination were described by seven participants' without their being directly questioned about the issue. Only three used the term racism or discrimination. The rest described discriminatory behaviour or prejudicial attitudes towards them without using the racism label. The data did not show clearly the reasons why some victims of racism did not use this label in describing their experiences. However, they all considered that it was the most stressful experience in their lives.

Racism is defined as "an individual's prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour toward people of a given race, or institutional practices (even if not motivated by prejudice) that subordinate people of a given race" (Myers, 1996, p. 392). Prejudice is defined as "an unjustifiable negative attitude towards a group and its individual members" (Myers, 1996, p.390). Discrimination is defined as "unjustifiable negative behaviour towards a group or its members" (Myers, 1996, p.391).
According to this definition and the experiences of these seven participants, discriminatory behaviour usually took various forms and occurred in several areas such as the workplace, accommodation, financing and social situations. Lydia had this stressful experience while working in her company:

My supervisor treated me badly. He had no manners at all.... He blamed me for his mistakes.... Once he divided his work into two parts and had another man share one part of it with me.... the other colleague overhead how the supervisor had instructed me and gave him a different set of instructions.

After my supervisor left for lunch, that man told me that I was not supposed to do it that way. I told him that was what I was told so I had to follow his instructions. When my supervisor came back after lunch, he stared at my monitor and asked the reason why I did it that way. I asserted that was his instructions and he denied it again. Fortunately, the other colleague overhead how the supervisor had instructed me and gave him a different set of instructions. Still, he took that opportunity to badly blame me for being wrong.

...that colleague told me that I am a good person and he did not understand the reason why the supervisor treated me so badly. It was possible because I am a woman. ... However, he did not treat the white women in such a manner only me. I was the only visible minority woman under his supervision.

Kay was the one among all the participants who experiencing the most forms of discrimination. She still remembered the painful episodes vividly. She was terribly underpaid and deceived:

I found something tricky. First of all, everyday I had to stay back for another half an hour without pay in order to keep in contact with another office on the West coast. Secondly, it was not our agreement to do all the extra work without pay such as preparing water for everybody to make tea or coffee 20 minutes before everybody came in, carrying big buckets of water to all the plants in the office and taking care of the garbage.

Later, Kay was offered a better job which she did it well. However, her co-workers put her off:
The other Chinese-Canadian and I were warned not speaking our language in the office. Besides, the supervisor did not like people chatting during office hours. My friend and I worked very hard and did not socialize during work. However, other women chatted a lot among themselves and the supervisor didn't say anything but joined them.

Gradually, I realized that the harder we [I and my Chinese friend] worked, the more work we were given. They just threw the paper onto our desk rudely. Even though we were overwhelmed, people did not want to acknowledge that. Both of us were given long reports while the other "slow" white staff were given less work. [In addition], another woman always asked my friend, Alice, through the supervisor, to help her on data entry which was not Alice's job. Besides, Alice was insulted by the woman she helped.

On day,... my friend pressed a wrong key by mistake and asked how to correct it as she was not familiar with that programme. That woman yelled at her, "What language do you speak, I don't understand what you are talking about?" My friend reminded her that it was not her job. ...Objectively speaking, this Chinese-Canadian ... speaks good English. ... She had been working in that company for a few years, and was certainly able to make herself understood. Otherwise, how could she have been hired?

Furthermore:

When my friend gave two weeks' notice of resignation, I requested, after my friend left, to move to her seat where there was less office traffic and I could concentrate on my work better. The supervisor promised me. During those two weeks, I did not hear anybody who wanted that desk. It was late Friday afternoon, after my friend cleared her desk and I moved my stationery over there. To my surprise, the supervisor reversed her promise on the following Monday morning. The reason was that the woman who did data entry wanted the desk. I was certainly aware of what was going on behind me. My analogy was if that woman wanted that desk, why didn't she say so before I moved my stuff to it? Secondly, that woman's desk was just next to it where there was no traffic at all. Why did she want to move? It was only my desk which was facing the office traffic. Why did that women have stronger reasons to support her move?

The supervisor's reasoning was that even though I had requested it earlier, because that woman had been working in the company longer than I, she should let her move and let me stay back at my old desk.

However, it was not easy for Kay to look for another job and reluctantly, Kay stayed on until
she found one.

Teresa had another stressful experience in her company. She reported:

One day, a staff member was laid off. Before she left she said, 'I do not understand why you Chinese work that hard!'

I worked hard not only because I needed a job but also because I felt responsible for what I did. My belief is, as I am given a job, I shall try my best to do it right. This is our work ethic back home and I still believe that. Whereas, my colleagues work from nine o'clock and leave at a quarter to five. They did not like my working hard and I became a target of negative discrimination. They even said that I did not work hard enough during the day and left the work for the evenings.

Once I left on time, a co-worker said "I shall take a picture of you."

The worst was when some people stereotyped Hong Kong people as having a lot of money and were jealous of them. Teresa had this incident:

My colleagues always said, "You Hong Kong people are going to take over Canada or you are going to buy the whole Country." I was shocked to hear that. I could not stop telling them that we gave up a lot in order to come to Canada. After all, we also contribute a lot to the society. They thought we had a lot of money. They did not know how hard we had to work for it. We bought houses to live in because we believe in the idea of settling down. This is home.

New immigrants are also discriminated against financially. Canadians in general are not aware that new immigrants without a full-time job and established credibility in Canada, are not eligible to apply for a loan from the bank at all or rent an accommodation. As Teresa reported:

We cannot get a mortgage, rent an accommodation, or get a car loan at all. We needed a Canadian co-signer as a guarantor. As a new Canadian, where can we get one? We can't even get a visa card from the bank though we all have some money in our accounts.

As a result, before considering migration, potential immigrants are advised to plan if they
could afford accommodation and when they would like to buy one. Some would rather buy a house or a condominium before they bring along their children and send over their shipments. Those who have to or decide to rent accommodation must make sure they have ways to go about it. It is a common phenomenon that many average new Chinese immigrants resolve their accommodation problems by throwing in all their money plus loans from sympathetic relatives to buy their shelters - moderate houses or condominiums. They live in their new homes with very tight budgets for a few years without sufficient furniture. However, what the outsiders see is that they bought accommodation with cash and they are surprised or scared off! Teresa had this observations:

So what people do not like is: We have some money... Some people bought their houses or cars in cash which shocked them. Not only that we Chinese do not like to owe others money or receive financial assistance from others if we can avoid it... but we have no choice.

I can understand their mentality. (Historically), the French took over the First Nation's position. Then the British took over the French's. Now, they think we would do the same to them2.

Socially, Kay and her Chinese co-worker were deliberately excluded in her workplace:

When I first joined the company, I tried to socialize with other women but I was ignored. I greeted them "Good morning." People did not respond to me. As well, I also noticed that my friend was ignored, too.

Over all,.. [t]he engineers noticed that both of us worked overtime to meet their deadlines sometimes. Once, an engineer treated me with a box of chocolate. Out of kindness, my friend advised me to put it away before other women saw it, or otherwise, I would be gossiped about. ... I didn't understand the wisdom behind it but I took her advice...

2 Though there has been a long history of overseas Chinese spreading all over the world, there has never been a Chinese colony out of immigration.
I did not realize that those women loved gossip so much and created rumours: Occasionally, the Vice-President would ask my friend to go to MacDonald's together for lunch. However, it invited an enormous amount of gossip among those women. The gossip was so powerful that the President even questioned the Vice-President about their relationship. That relationship had nothing to do with other people and was not in violation of the company code of conduct. My friend was in a rage and left the company. I was all alone in the office.

Kay continued:

...everyday I went in the office and worked like a machine without saying a word. I heard other people exclusively talking and joking among themselves. One day, a part-time worker came and put her arm over my shoulder and said, "Do you feel very lonely since your friend left? If you want someone to talk to, you can talk to me." I was very moved by her empathic understanding.

Tina experienced an antagonistic attitude from some of her co-workers in the hospital:

Some of my colleagues exhibited racist behaviour towards me and other Chinese-Canadians. One episode could illustrate the racist intention very well. One day a colleague, a Chinese-Canadian, took a break in the cafeteria. She took a seat at a table where there was already another Chinese-Canadian. Naturally, they chatted in Chinese. Later, at a distance, she saw a white Canadian who was aware of their presence, at another table. They did not say hello to each other across the table.

To my surprise, the white nurse reported to the Head Nurse that she was not respected because the two Chinese-Canadians spoke Chinese at another table. One day, the Head Nurse warned all the Chinese nurses that they must not speak the Chinese language when the white people were present. My colleagues and I were very upset. Our argument was both the white and the two Chinese nurses went to the cafeteria at different times. Secondly, the white nurse did not choose to sit with them but another table. If the white nurse joined them, they certainly would speak English. How could she be disrespected when people speaking their language at another table? How about the Filipinos who speak their language in front of everybody? The Head Nurse replied that she did not hear that, which was not true. I was so upset with their racist attitude towards us. This was only one incident out of many.
Teresa had another observation:

They also don't like us speaking loudly. We have no excuse of speaking loudly but reasons. Hong Kong is a highly densely populated city. If we do not speak louder, we can't hear each other. Gradually, people are used to it without realizing it.

It is hard enough for anyone to take racism in the workplace, institutional practices, and social situations. However, it was extremely humiliating for Amy to be suspected of shoplifting by a store manager. Amy angrily recalled:

The most distressing experience was discrimination. One day, my husband and I were looking for a jar of fragrances and a stand for it. ... I noticed that a man seemed to follow us and I didn't pay much attention to him. ... While we were lining up to pay at the cashier. ... All of a sudden, that man without an identity card on him, pointed to the jar of fragrance that my husband was holding and said, 'You take this one? Your wife has got one. Take that one out before you can take this one. .... Don't pretend to be innocent. It must be in your handbag .... I saw you open a box of fragrance and now it is missing. It must be in your handbag'. I was very shocked and angry when I heard that. I challenged him, 'Are you saying that I shoplifted? Call the police then?' 'Yes, I am. Give it back to me. I don't need to call the police,' he said. 'Come with me,' I demanded him. I took him to where I left the refill which was still there. He said, 'You shouldn't have opened it.' I argued, 'Ok, I shouldn't. But you could have stopped me at once. You could also have told me that if I opened it I had to buy it. How could you be so sure that it was in my handbag? How could you accuse me of shoplifting while I was still lining up to pay?'

Ming had her unspeakable pain as she reported:

I did business here all by myself when my husband was away and was deceived. A white couple came [as customers] and paid me with a bad cheque of five thousand Canadian dollars. Naturally, the problem was attributed to my language limitations and my husband saw me as an ignorant woman.

Though it was hard to discern whether that deception was due to discrimination or

3As well, Cantonese is a low pitch language which sounds louder. Whereas English is high pitch language which sounds softer.
business fault only or both, the question why that couple chose to delude this new Chinese immigrant woman with limited language skills was raised. It is hard for an outsider to imagine the negative impact of prejudice or discrimination on a victim. But victims like Kay, Tina, Amy and Ming strongly experienced it. The painful experiences had shaken up their trust in people in general.

When Kay recalled the deception, she said:

I was very angry with that deceptive arrangement. Sometimes, when I was carrying a big bucket of water [to water the plants], I felt like crying. I felt that my dignity was robbed and I worked like a servant.

Kay firmly indicated:

I used to believe people hundred percent. ... but now I don't.

Kay also found some of her body reactions and behaviour changed as a result of others discriminatory behaviour towards her:

Since my friend left the construction firm, I was totally isolated. One evening, when I arrived home and tried to speak I felt stiff at the jaws. I then realized that I did not speak a word at work. Even the supervisor did not speak to me. I was working like a machine. I had no language to describe my feelings during those days.

As all the full time women overtly ignored me, I tried not to bother them as much as I could. I even worried that the smell of my food would irritate them. After heating my lunch, I let it cool down before I opened the lid. After each bit, I covered it again so as to stop the smell from spreading out to annoy the other women. Until one day, a woman made a positive comment about the smell of my food, I then slightly opened the lid of my lunch box while I was eating.

Over time, the people's indifferent attitude towards me did not change at all. Gradually, I felt a strong resistance to go to work. When I was at the door, I hesitated to enter and yet I had to.

I carried on for another three months [six months in total since I joined the firm] and then I could not take that kind of hostile attitude any further. I
responded to an ad that I saw from Sing Tao Daily - a Chinese newspaper. It was a secretarial position in an industrial consultation firm run by the Chinese. Luckily, I got the job and have been working in there for more than 5 years now.

Thinking back, I learned the dark side of human nature in Canada. I had never before come across people like that group of women in the construction firm.

In Tina's situation dealing with a hospital bureaucrat was a bad experience:

I felt victimized and helpless."

Susan was sensitive enough to anticipate discrimination in the job market as she explained the reason why she would rather give up teaching and set up her own business in order to avoid possible discriminations. Susan stated,

I realized that as a minority member and a new immigrant, no matter how good my English is, it is not as fluent as the English Canadians. That put me in a disadvantaged position as far as job searching is concerned.

Amy won the argument and an apology for the wrong accusation from a store manager who falsely blamed her. However, the extent of the psychological damage of the episode on the victim, Amy, has been immeasurable! Amy reported:

...the more I thought about the process and the more enraged I was. I sat down and wept. I asked myself, "Am I in a such a bad shape that I look like a thief now?" I was still very furious. I wondered if he was racist. If he wanted to catch me for shoplifting, he had to wait until I crossed the checkout counter. Instead, he followed me and then my husband all the way inside the store.... What I did not like most was the apparent racism.

Ming did not specify how the deception of a bad cheque affected her. However, she strongly emphasized that because of language barriers, she was not involved in the business.

This cunning episode seemed to undermine her confidence in her language skills and perhaps had sabotaged her husband's trust in her business skills when dealing with English speaking
customers. This might also have contributed to the break down of communications between her husband and herself.

All those participants reported that they like Canada because it is a great country. However, it is unfortunate that they strongly felt rejected by some people. It appeared that discrimination and prejudice are so prevalent that they occurred happened in many facets everywhere.

V. I. Adjusting to Harsh Winter and Transportation Concerns

Hong Kong is a densely populated city located in a subtropical zone in Asia. There is no snow in the winter. It has one of the best transportation systems in the world. Due to heavy traffic in the city, most of the people are discouraged from driving. Instead they take public transit. Those participants who drove in Hong Kong were used to city driving only, and on the left side of the road. Therefore, driving on the right, on highways and in snowy weather conditions in Canada are particularly challenging to them. Joy, who had experience in city driving in Hong Kong, reported:

Driving in a snowy winter is hard for me and I was not ready to drive yet. We normally refused to go for evening functions. ... However, I had no choice but to take the ESL class in winter term. Yet, I could not go to class by myself. Fortunately, my husband was around at that time. He enrolled in an advanced class in order to keep me company.

Teresa also found it challenging to drive on the highways:

I wanted to send my daughter to the Girl Guides in which she was a member in Hong Kong. Due to the long distance which I was not comfortable with particularly because of driving on the highways, I did not send her to Girl Guide activities in this country. I feel I had deprived her from doing what she was familiar with.
Ming was another participant who was very experienced in driving in Hong Kong.

However, in describing one of the most stressful incidents in Canada, she recalled:

One day in March 1985, it was the hardest snowstorm in 40 years. In the morning the weather was not that bad. I sent children to school in the morning, but they did not have their snow boots on. In the afternoon, the snowstorm was getting worse. I wanted to pick them up. Unfortunately, there was so much snow that the road was blocked. Many cars were stalled on the road. Even the buses had to stop running. I tried very hard and could not move further. In the end, I had to give in and wait anxiously for them to come home. It was a 10 minute drive and so they were not eligible for the school bus. When they came back, they were freezing.

When Kay went to work, she relied on public transit:

The weather was too harsh to rely on public transport in winter as we could not afford two cars. It was only a ten to fifteen minutes walk. However, before I arrived at the bus stop, my face and feet were freezing though I was well-protected by winter wear. Moreover, the public transit was very infrequent.

Among all the participants, Amy suffered the most from harsh winters. Amy recalled with so much anxiety:

The most distressing experience was when my son was accidentally poisoned by carbon monoxide from the car. It was wintertime. I wanted to pick up one small thing from a supermarket. I thought it would not take me long and it was too cold to take the six years old child in and out. So I advised my son to listen to the radio and wait for me in the car. Unfortunately, there was a long line at the check-out. When I went to the car, I did not see my son and I was very worried. When I found him lying down on the seat without any response, I felt desperate. I called for help. People in the parking lot came and advised me to take him to the hospital. Fortunately, my son recovered consciousness in the hospital.

About four years after the interview, Amy called the investigator for information on legal consultation. She was very apologetic:

We did not know where to get help. I thought the best is to call you to see if you have any idea on what we should do with the insurance company and where to get legal consultations on my car accident.
Amy sadly described her crash:

It was one of those worst freezing rainy days in January. On my way home after picking up my son from school, the car skidded and ran onto a pole on the road side. When I regained consciousness, I found myself lying in a hospital bed. I did not recognise my family members. I was badly injured. My front teeth were broken and my pelvis bones were fractured. I had stitches on my faces.

I do not know what will happen to my son who is still in the Sick Children's Hospital. He was in a coma for several days. He has acquired a brain injury. I do not know if he will ever get back to normal functioning.

Certainly, Amy and her husband had a lot to grieve for. Before the accident, she and her husband were planning that by summertime her husband could resign and come to Canada. Further, they considered what they could do for a living. Unfortunately, Amy's husband had to rush to Canada to look after her and the family as soon as he received the bad news from his daughter.

V. J. Searching for Meaning to Cope with Life as Immigrant Women

V. J. 1. Let Go of the Past, Value the Present and Hope for a Brighter Future.

As immigrant women, their meanings of life were closely related to their aims of immigrating to Canada. Most importantly, they all wanted to get Canadian citizenship as a protection from uncertainties in their homeland. For this reason, they were unquestionably ready to work much harder. As long as they could make a living, they were satisfied. Further, they were prepared to give up what they had established and not look back. They tried to appreciate what they had: a stable society, a more relaxed life style, a good living environment and better quality of air. As mothers, they valued the secure society for their children's development and an open opportunity for their children's education. All these have
been strong reasons for them to look ahead to a brighter future for their children.

V. J. 2. Religious Perspectives on the Meaning of Life as an Immigrant Woman

After coming to Canada, Pam lost a relationship which had been cultivated for several years. She calmly recalled what had supported her through the most depressed period of her life in Canada:

That loss was traumatic to me.

[Yet], I found help in Buddhism. It was destiny. Everything is already predetermined. There is reward and punishment. It is a circular will. As I find something else, I shall lose another thing. As I lose one thing, I shall find another thing. At present, I have a deterrent in my life and I feel down about it. One never knows that one day I may find out something else. ... This circular thinking brings me hope in life.

In Canada, Pam found something which she had never dreamed of but she treasured it very much:

I did not know what actually happened to my skin, but on and off it was not very well. Upon coming to this country, I was referred to a specialist who found out that I was allergic to certain types of food.

[Besides], there were a lot of good experiences. The crux of it was that I changed my lifestyle totally.

[After work], I can fully enjoy my hobby being a part-time Chinese ethnic radio station hostess. ... I felt that I had found myself. This is my major change in Canada.

Through the current affairs programme, I met many well-known community leaders and professionals. Through them I also came to know the deeper levels of the current issues of this society.

This new lifestyle seemed to fit in the circular will of Buddhism very well and engendered good meanings for Pam.
Lydia also found her religion has contributed the greatest support to her struggle with adversity in Canada. She recalled with a smile on her face:

The happiest event in Canada is my re-baptism. I was not clear about what I believed in the past and now am clear; I made a new commitment to my religion. That is a God-centred life attitude.

My priorities are: family first, church second. Regarding my church responsibilities, I prioritize Sunday service and choir practice as my thanks giving for what I have received from God.

What I believe is that only God can help me. In my everyday life, I have experienced that the more I trust God the more God has helped me.

For instance, the office politics were painful but not unbearable. ...because I read the Bible and prayed to God everyday. ... He granted me the ability to release my stress.

When my child was very ill, I prayed to God every night for him.

[As well], had we not worked our marital relationship by ourselves, I would have sought assistance from a spiritual friend in my religious group.

The endurance of hardship almost cost their marriage. However, she did not question whether it was worth the effort to face such challenges in Canada because she was very clear what she was struggling for:

What I like about Canada is a more stable society for studying, the spacious living environment and the many trees around us. All these are very good for our children. In addition, I do not feel obliged to pursue the busy social life that I used to have in Hong Kong. As a result, I have more time with my family which I treasure very much.

Kay was another participant who clarified her religious belief which she considered the best prize in Canada:

Through a friend we were introduced to a Protestant Christian group.

In the Bible study group, I learned and then realized that I did not understand the crux of being a Christian though I was baptised in a Catholic church when
I was a baby. From then on, I learned more about being a Christian, which was my best reward.

The group members were very understanding and sympathetic to our situations. They did not only listen but prayed for us.

The ministers are there to care about you. I like to talk to them when I have a problem.

Overtime, Kay had successfully adjusted to the life in Canada:

I like that the pace of life is more relaxed, and my husband and I have more time to be together and faced hardship together. All these assisted us in strengthening our marital relationship.

Further, I was pleased that I obtained a driver's license about which I would not care much back home. Moreover, my child started schooling here and seemed to adjust to it very well. All these made me feel good about staying in Canada.

Cathy, who had so many health concerns and had to deal with several instances of theft all by herself since coming to Canada, came to terms with Christianity. She regarded this as the biggest bonus besides getting Canadian citizenship which she accomplished by coming to Canada. Cathy recalled:

Back home, I had a very different goal in life. Working in a commercial field, the goal of work was to make money. So I focussed on work only. Coming to Canada, I began to understand more about interpersonal relations [she laughed], and later religion.

In Canada, I was lonely and wanted to meet people. ... I expected people in the church in general to be nicer and I agreed to go when I was invited. ... [Later], I was very involved with the church.

Gradually, I have had more contacts with immigrants from Hong Kong. Naturally, we supported each other.

I talk to my supervisor mostly about my troubles. My supervisor guided me to resolve my worries in our religion.

I read more of the Bible, particularly the Book of Job. By comparing my
problems with others' greater concerns, or with the pain that Jesus Christ experienced on the cross, mine became minor. I was encouraged as a result. I also prayed to God to strengthen my faith.

After reading the Bible and praying, I felt a peace of mind.

In the context of Christianity, sufferings seemed to bear positive meanings to Cathy. These intentions sustained Cathy to endure her worries and stress. Furthermore, there were also other good aspects of life which Cathy cherished very much:

There are also other good things which I enjoy in Canada. For instance, the good and spacious living environment widened my horizon. ...the air quality is fresher. People whom I have met have different value and belief systems and are nicer.

Cathy did not mention material gain or loss by coming to Canada. From her account of what she valued, Cathy seemed to be satisfied with her spiritual breakthrough.

Tina's goal of immigrating to Canada was to start a new life. She anticipated that life would be much harder:

I could not help but accepted the reality as difficulties were anticipated. I tried to do different things to cope with the loss and loneliness including visiting friends and attending the church as I used to back home.

Fortunately, there were things which Tina prized:

I was lucky that I came before economic recession. I was offered a full-time position plus moving expenses from Hong Kong. There was a staff accommodation within walking distance for me to rent, too. All those conveniences saved me from many troubles that new immigrants may have encountered. Therefore, I settled in very quickly. Moreover, I passed the Ontario Nursing Registration examination smoothly.

The living environment suits my style. I like travel and going to the countryside for leisure. In Canada, there are many places for sightseeing which compensated my loss.

However, the happiest of all, I met my partner.
One could conclude that Tina sacrificed for her new life but, as she indicated, she was well compensated.

Susan chose Canada as her host country because it provided her children with an open education system. However, when her younger child did not work up to his ability, she was very upset and frustrated. She sought various kinds of help. One of them was from her Christian neighbour:

I have not taken up any religion but I believed religions teach people to be good. Therefore, I asked my neighbour to arrange for her son to go to church with mine because her son behaved well and liked to study.

Susan’s intention was to encourage her son to associate with good children. Nonetheless,

[a]fter a period of time, my son stopped going to church and I, therefore, didn’t go any more.

Two years after the interview, Susan called the researcher who was writing up this thesis, and reported:

One day last year, I fell down on the road and had a bone fractured. My misfortune enlightened my husband to realize how vulnerable we human beings are. As a result, he requested to go to church with our neighbours and asked the minister to teach him the Bible.

He was the last man in the world I could think of who would go to church voluntarily. He used to make negative comments about the religion when I suggested to go with our son previously. But now, he diligently studied the Bible and appeared to be very devoted to Christianity. He even explained my misfortune in the context of religion.

Perhaps the meaning that her husband saw in her suffering also made good sense to her herself. Though Susan did not report how she would explain her life in Canada, her husband’s change from an alcoholic to a religious person should be attributed to her determination to immigrate to Canada. Their marital relationship had greatly improved.
Susan also proudly informed the researcher that her first child is graduating this year from a renowned university and her younger one won awards in college. Susan was delighted in her accomplishments. In contrast, her suffering was no longer significant in her life.

Similar to Susan, Teresa's biggest trouble was her daughter's difficulties in making a transition to her new life in Canada. Teresa accepted that challenge from her Buddhist perspective:

Maybe it is my destiny to have a daughter like her. So, I have to accept her and try my best to guide her and protect her.

Teresa did not give up because she was prepared to face challenges:

Since I chose to come to Canada, I knew that however hard life might be, I would do it.

Teresa wanted to expose her children to a more structured environment and to well-behaved children.

[So], I took my children to a Catholic church though I am a Buddhist. I went to the Catholic church because my children came from a Catholic school in Hong Kong. In the church, there were Bible study groups for children and adults, respectively.

The church was not only a social place for her children but for Teresa, who was a "single" mother with her husband still in Hong Kong as well. From her daughter, Teresa had learned the hard way of parenting. Nevertheless, she had hope. She attended a workshop on Parenting in Different Cultures and realized that:

From your parenting course, I learned a different style. I could try with my younger son by guiding him as opposed to telling him what to do and when to do it.

My son came to Canada when he was 9. It was a lot easier for him to learn the English language, Canadian customs and study skills. ... He is currently adjusting very well to the Canadian culture.
The workshop gave Teresa not only new hope for her younger child, but also greater awareness of her daughter's temporary cultural conflict complicated by her transition to adolescence. It enabled Teresa to empathize more with her daughter and stop seeing herself as an inadequate mother. In addition, the other good things that helped to endure her hardship were the good living environment, their spacious house which money could not buy in Hong Kong, good health and a reasonable degree of freedom.

Amy treasured what she had achieved:

The only pleasant experience was taking part in the citizenship ceremony. I felt that we have completed one stage [of life in Canada].

In term of split family arrangement, Amy sighed:

Maybe it is our destiny that we have to stay apart for sometime. Before immigration, we went to consult a palm reader who said that I would immigrate but not my husband.

Amy also has had a lot of hope for her children:

I feel good when I see my children well behaved and studying conscientiously.

As I do not work full-time, I have more time to spend with children. We, therefore, have a closer relationship. Particularly with my oldest daughter, when I see her become more mature, I feel pleased for her.

One of the major reasons which motivated Amy to come to Canada was her children's future.

It is not surprising that Amy was satisfied with their development despite her suffering.


Polly also concentrated her attention on what she could achieve for her family as opposed to what she was suffering:
My sister always reminded me of my purpose of migration and encouraged me to be patient with the situation.

As well, Polly was satisfied with what her child could accomplish in Canada as the Hong Kong educational system could not afford him such opportunity. Polly proudly reported:

After returning to his old school, he got five A's within a month. ... Now, he is selected for an art programme for gifted students.

In order to allow her son to develop his talent, Polly would continue with her underpaid job.

Hopefully, one day her two children will have a better opportunity. Moreover, Polly liked the living environment:

In terms of the qualities of living conditions, this is very good. It is a spacious environment with fresh air. People are polite. All these leave me a pleasant feeling.

For Lynn, despite her financial constraints and cultural tension since coming to Canada, there are satisfactions which she cherished:

The Canadian education system is healthier. There is less pressure in comparison with that in Hong Kong. The latter puts so much pressure on academic performance that children just cram facts.

Consequently, my daughters' development is much healthier. They changed from being tense, too serious and uptight to more relaxed and open.

Academically, they are very creative in their writings. They seem to let themselves unfold. This is the biggest reward of coming to Canada.

In terms of parent-child relations, Lynn enjoyed her involvement with her children:

My husband and I spend more time with our children as our life is not as busy as in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, Lynn found personal satisfaction from this thrifty and simple lifestyle:

I enjoy translating slang and writing a slang column with my colleague for a Chinese newspaper. It was inspired by my experience of learning spoken English. There is very little money that I can make from it. But what
satisfied me spiritually is using my creativity.

**V. J. 4. Adopting Positive Thinking about Future Prospects in Order to Overcome Worries.**

Joy was to think positively when recession hit her husband's business badly:

When I heard many people talking about a recession, it worried me. ...I dared not ask my husband or his partner. I tried to balance myself by thinking positively like things might not be that bad. Especially when the politicians said something positive, I felt reassured. However, only when my mood was good could I think optimistically. When my mood was low, my thought was gloomy.

Joy and her family did not have any choices. Focussing on the Canadian citizenship which they wanted to obtain to protect them from the uncertainties of their country, Joy and family had to accept the reality. To further balance herself, Joy took advantage of this good educational opportunity for herself:

ESL classes did not give me too much pressure. The positive effect was that I threw my energy into studying so that I didn't have time to worry.

Like other women in this study, Joy also focussed on the good facilitates for herself and children in contrast to those in Hong Kong:

Educational facilities such as the library which is a real treasure of knowledge, the school environment and teacher and student ratios are what I like, too. Students are not overwhelmed by the constant assignments.

As well, Joy liked the living environment:

From the very beginning, I liked the fresh air and the living environment which is very comfortable. These were unexpected for me.
Hoping for the best and appreciating what she prized seemed to be the best alternative for Joy.

**Conclusion**

These immigrant women gave up their comfortable lives to come to Canada in which they had to struggle for the means to survive and a meaning to live for. Culturally, they learned as children that the virtue of womanhood was tolerance and acceptance of adversity. They may not have realized that what they had learned as children could assist and sustain them through periods of distress and loneliness in a haven, Canada, the envy of many, a few decades later. The strengths of these immigrant women reflected the greatest wisdom of human beings: the capacity to find meaning to live for in circumstances of suffering and affliction (Frankl, 1984).
CHAPTER SIX

PATTERNS OF HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

VI. A. Help-Seeking Behaviour in Relation to Own Concerns

The focus of this inquiry is to investigate the patterns and meanings of help-seeking for emotional distress of Chinese immigrant women from Hong Kong. In this study, the reasons of seeking or not seeking counselling assistance were very complex. Each participant had various reasons to justify her help-seeking behaviour. Some opinions were shared by several participants and some were unique. However, there was no significant difference in their help-seeking behaviour whether they were in Hong Kong or in Canada, except in process. Back home they had a strong support system and knew where to reach out for help, while in Canada they were very isolated, particularly in terms of culture and language and they did not have relevant information about available services. Also, in Canada they were concerned about whether the agency offered ethno-specific counselling services and if they would be able to communicate with the English speaking counsellor. Yet, this was not a concern at all back home.

There was no evidence showing differences in the patterns of help-seeking between the participants who used the service as parents and those who had never used it. The non-users also believed that parents, particularly those of split-families, needed more counselling support. The data is organized according to the central themes which emerged in the analysis. The overlap in citations between this chapter, which describes patterns of help-seeking, and between the previous chapter, which described challenges and coping strategies
of the immigrant women, reflects the role of help-seeking behaviour as a coping strategy.

VI. B. The Reasons for Seeking or Not Seeking Counselling Assistance

VI. B. 1. Lack of Counselling Knowledge and Information.

Lack of information or knowledge on how to use counselling services was a central theme described by all the participants. All of them reported that they did not have the relevant information about counselling assistance or what counselling could do for them. Among all the participants, Ming was the first one who came to Canada. Her experience was:

We came in 1984. In those years, there were very few social services agencies even in Chinatown. I did not hear of any social services uptown at all. If there was, I would not have waited until I had troubles.

I didn't even know what was available or where to enquire about it.

Tina would have used the service had she known more about it. She recalled,

I was not aware of counselling services for everybody. I only heard of family counselling and did not know the details.

I didn't know anybody could go. Instead, I thought that I needed a referral letter.

If I knew that anyone could seek the service directly, I would have gone for help. I believed that every individual would have a certain degree of stress at various life circumstances. And the sooner I received help, the sooner I would feel better or even resolve the problem. My mental health would not be as badly affected.

Kay reported that she would not go for counselling assistance because,

I do not know the nature of counselling services and do not know what to expect. I have only heard about the term marital counselling but not more than that.
Susan was seeking for an appropriate help for more than a year until someone referred her to a counselling agency. She reported,

I did not think of counselling service before because I did not know who I should see. I did not know where to get help.

Teresa was referred from one agency to another. She was very frustrated as she reported,

We did not know where to get help or where to get the relevant information.

In Amy's observation, Chinese Canadians did not seek counselling help

...due to the fact that many of us do not know where to get help or what is available.

Lynn's opinion was this:

Many people are not aware of their problems or their living in an isolated environment may cause mental health concerns. They tend to attribute those to a new environment.

Lydia said she could heal herself and yet she also stated:

[a]s a matter of fact, I do not know any counselling and other social services at all. At one time, our church introduced the social services to new immigrants. Through that meeting, I came to know about Living Water Counselling Centre which is sponsored by the church; and Chinese Information & Community Services (CICS) which is sponsored by the government. However, I still do not know how CICS can help. They may make a lot of referrals. On the bus, I noticed their advertisement on reporting child abuse. That is about it.

At one time, I was on unemployment assistance and I requested some training and was denied by the welfare worker. When I went to Employment Canada, I was asked what I could do and put it down. That was it. No one told me about counselling services. So if I went to seek help from other agencies when I am not clear about their services, I would have been given the run around, which would have made me feel very uncertain.

[Further], I do not know when to see a counsellor.

Polly's frustrated experience also revealed the fact that she did not know what kind of help
her child needed or where to get help. She recalled,

[m]y understanding of counselling was something to do with psychology only.

We need information and advice on how to handle concerns or use the service.

Though Pam reported that she would not choose to use counselling service herself, she believed that counselling services are necessary for some people. However, in her observation,

[s]ome may not even know where to get the information.

In my experience at the radio station, many people called in to ask about information of any kind. They thought that you have been here longer so you must be able to offer them some pointers.

In Joy's experience and observation, there was a great need to know how to handle negative emotions in the process of adjustment but she did not know whether it needed counselling assistance or not. Joy explained,

[e]stablishing a new home in a new country, stress and unexpected conflicts may be aroused. Consequently, negative emotions may be generated.

These negative emotions will affect one's interpersonal relationships such as with children and neighbours.

I don't know whether they need counselling assistance or not. But I think they need to know how to handle it wisely.

What Joy pointed out is what counselling is all about. Unfortunately, she did not have the knowledge to use the services. Similar to Joy, Cathy did not know the nature of counselling services and assumed that it was for psychiatric patients only. Cathy explained,

[i]f people suggested I see a counsellor for my depression or related problems, I am not sure I would go. ... My understanding of counselling services are only for individuals who exhibit psychiatric behaviours. ... I
believe that if individuals have no one to talk about their problems they should go to see a counsellor before it is too late. However, I should also point out the difficulty of knowing when one has a problem and needs help.

**VI. B. 2. Counselling Is an Intangible Service And Is Not Part of the Chinese Culture.**

Many new Chinese immigrants did not know about the nature of counselling services or how to use them, possibly due to the fact that counselling services are intangible services and are foreign to the Chinese culture, as six participants pointed out. Nevertheless, those participants' attitudes towards the services were very positive. Lynn did not need to use counselling services upon the time of interview. She had this observation,

I have come across people who need counselling services but do not use them, partly because it is not our custom to seek counselling assistance. It will sound novel to them. Chinese people are from a nation of hardship. Historically, many people lived from hand to mouth. Putting food on the table is the first priority. They have to save for the rainy and elderly days. There is no old age pension, never mind social services such as welfare. When there is food on the table, all other problems do not seem to be big problems. Our Premier defined democracy in our Chinese context as the general public able to have three meals a day. Therefore, it won't occur to their minds that somebody or agencies out there will offer help even on intangible needs like psychological counselling.

Ming preferred concrete help. She had a similar view of abstract assistance. Ming explained,

[i]If my concrete need is not met, how can I be in the mood to reflect on myself. Once my concrete need is satisfied, I would be in the mood to reflect on my concerns. Concrete help must come first. For example, I have to get someone to take care of my younger ones before I can go to listen to you. Or otherwise, even if you come to talk to me, I would not be able to concentrate on what you say.

Cathy believed that if the help was intangible, how would she know if she had benefited from it. Cathy wondered,
...if the result is so abstract that I will not know whether there is healing, why should I go for it?

Teresa would also not choose counselling services because she shared similar ideas, as she pointed out,

... if I am unhappy or frustrated, I will not go to see a psychological counsellor voluntarily. Psychological help is so abstract that you are not able to concretize it. Therefore, you are not sure if you have got it or not.

Amy believes that counselling services may be helpful when one is frustrated but Chinese Canadians in general are not accustomed to talk therapy. She stated,

[It was very frustrating when we first arrived as new immigrants. If that frustration can be helped by a competent professional, the individuals' [mental health] would not get worse. But we Chinese are not that open to counselling services. In general, we Chinese tend to be more reserved. We do not tell everything to others.

Teresa shares those views as she explained,

I believe talking to a competent counsellor about our problems is a good thing to do. However, we were brought up in a different culture (in which counselling is foreign). It is hard to verbalize your problems to others. You were taught that those problems were shameful. When small, mother would tell you that "ugly things should not go out of the family gate". Our children may be able to seek counselling in the same manner as average Canadians do since they are brought up here but not us at present.

Pam also believed the cultural differences played a part in the use or not of counselling services. She explained,

[b]ecause of the differences in culture and social structure, it will be hard for Chinese women to change themselves in order to adopt the Western model of assistance.

VI. B. 3. Language Barrier Is an Obstacle to Counselling Services.

Out of emergency or necessity, some of these participants wanted to reach out for
help but were limited by their English language skills. The language barrier is another major obstacle to mental health facilities. Five of the participants found that the English language was a deterrent to relevant information about counselling services. Joy found it hard to express herself in English. She explained,

[the pure Western model of counselling in the English language won't be very helpful for women like me. ... we need the service in our native language... [unless] we have mastered the English language...

Lydia did not want to take the risk of going to any agency for help because of language difficulties. She said.

[if I go to any agency, I do not know whether I will be seen by a Chinese or a Westerner. If there is no Chinese speaking counsellor, it will be even worse because I cannot express myself in English as much as I wish.

Due to language barrier, Ming had this painful experience. She recalled,

...when our house was burned down. I could not even accept my neighbours' help due to my language barrier. I took care of everything all by myself.

Mental health facilities in the mainstream agencies where English is the medium of communication and not relevant to many Chinese immigrants. This is consistent with the observations of Teresa and Lynn. Teresa reported,

[w]e were not very smart but have some language to look around. For some immigrants, English language is a barrier to the information and services. It is even harder for them.

Lynn had similar remarks as she stated,

[m]any Chinese people do not know the services or where to get help because they do not understand English.

Polly speaks English, yet she believed that a counsellor who speaks her native language would enable better communication. However, in her experience,
... it is hard to find a Chinese speaking specialist here.

**VI. B. 4. Views of Stigma.**

The fear of stigma has been reported as major barrier for the Chinese people in use mental health facilities (Cheung & Lau, 1982; Tseng, 1975). Among the twelve informants, only seven participants thought that the fear of stigma is a barrier to utilizing mental health facilities. However, three out of seven who mentioned the fear of stigma had used counselling assistance for their children and two mentioned that they would use the facilities when they exhausted all other alternatives. In total, five out of seven of those who did not like to be stigmatised would cross the barrier of disgrace when needed. This may reflect a choice between a preference and a necessity.

Amy's feelings towards counselling services were:

We Chinese do not want others to know if we are somewhat abnormal [mentally ill]. We tend to think only abnormal patients should receive psychological counselling assistance. Even if people tell me that it is normal to seek counselling services, I think it has been deeply rooted in my subconscious mind that it is not normal. It is the general association of psychological services with psychiatric illness. This has nothing to do with religion. It is just the fear of being stigmatized.

Her experience was:

For example, when I mentioned to my close friends that I had to take my child to see a counsellor, they reacted strongly...I did not feel embarrassed about their reactions because my child was not as bad as they thought...I explained to them that because she was new to the school and the country... However, people already had a biased view of counselling services.

Nevertheless, Amy strongly encouraged her daughter to seek counselling help during the process of adjustment as a parent. The reason why Amy took the teacher's advice was because
...I trusted professional help. I believed that a professional is different from a parent. The counsellor might see something which a parent had overlooked. That was helpful to my child. I also noticed that my child was more receptive to the counsellor's advice.

Besides the fear of stigma, not wanting to face reality made Teresa hesitate about bringing her own concern to a counsellor. She reasoned,

[i]f you go (to see a psychological counsellor), it means that you have a "problem". (If you do not go, it means that you do not have a "problem".) I don't want to face reality. It is just like the way people never admit their mistakes.

To attract Chinese clients, she continued,

[t]he name of the place is better called something like friendship centre as opposed to psychological counselling centre with which people do not identify.

However, Teresa reached out for counselling services for her child. She recalled,

[t]he reason why we sought counselling assistance at that time was due to my daughter's behaviour. We did not understand why she behaved that way. As parents, we have the responsibility to protect our children so we went.

Similarly, Joy's feelings of seeking psychological counselling assistance were:

If I do go to see a psychological counsellor, I am afraid that people may think that I have psychiatric problems, and that I may have deviant behaviour and thoughts.

Parallel to Joy's view, Lynn's observation was,

[p]otential clients believe that.... anything related to psychology should not be disclosed to others, because they worry about how others see them.

However, Lynn's opinion was:

I don't think children's study problems or marital problems are family shame. If the couple can't get along and don't deal with it, it is a shame.

Perhaps for this reason, Joy consulted a psychologist, for the sake of her daughter, more than
ten years ago. She recalled,

[t]hinking back, the psychologist's analysis was helpful...But at the time, I felt it was a shame and it was not a reputable event.

Tina reported that she would have used the services if she knew about it. However, she also did not want to be stigmatized as she said,

[i]f I go to see a counsellor, I will not tell anybody but close friends because they will know what has happened to me anyway. So I would not mind letting them know about it.

I won't tell my acquaintances if I go to see a counsellor because I don't want them to gossip about me.

Stigma will be another reason that I don't let everybody know about my seeking a counselling service. However, I believe that knowledgeable people will not think that I have a psychiatric problem since I am normal. For those who deserved my explanation, I will do so or otherwise I shall let it be.

Kay admitted that there would be a psychological struggle which she had to overcome in order to have the courage to see a counsellor.

I do not want to be seen as a psychiatric patient and be rejected. People will be scared of me. ... They believe that psychiatric patients will lose self-control and be unpredictable. So they are not accepted.

Lydia also confessed that she was not able to overcome this barrier and take a big stride to see a psychological counsellor yet. She said,

[i]f it is an emotional problem, I would feel very shameful because I have psychological problems. That means that I am not normal. If it is a parenting issue... I would feel shameful because I am an inadequate parent. ...If it is a marital problem, it will be embarrassing to talk about it. I imagine sex may be involved in the process. As you know, discussing sex is taboo in our culture, never mind talking to a stranger about it.
VI. B. 5. The Belief in Self-Reliance and the Issue of Privacy

According to four participants, the other reason that they did not talk to anybody or seek outside assistance was due to their belief in self-reliance. Teresa believed that if she had control over her concerns, she would not seek counselling assistance as she explained:

Now, I know where to get counselling services but I do not go for it just because I am unhappy. I do not know the reason why. It may be due to my character. If I am unhappy because I do not have a job, I will try many ways to get even a very low paying job. When I do not have enough money for food, I try to eat less. In this way, I have control over my concerns.

Lydia shared a similar view. She said,

I won't go ... for my own emotional needs because I can heal myself. If my stress is from work, it is useless to go to see a counsellor. To help me ventilate my emotions is easy. As soon as my children hug me or kiss me, I will feel all right. ... If I make a mistake, I admit it. Once I report it [to my employer], I will feel fine.

Pam attributed her not sharing her feelings with others to her personality, her ability to handle problems and her belief which was inherited from her father. She stated,

I did not share my joy with others. Due to my personality, ...in that most depressed period of time, I did not think of counselling help though I was fully aware of this kind of service. I did not even talk to friends. If you ask me now, I would rather ventilate to a total stranger and let go of it. I think it might have helped me go through the grief easier. .... But this is just a calm thought. I believe that I still won't go because I trust my ability to overcome it.

Like my father, I am very confident in myself. My father was an artist, a lonely artist. ...He infused me with a belief which was "it is better helping yourself than seeking help from others". He also said, "You may have a bit of luck or assistance from others. If you do not work hard yourself, you will not be able to accomplish anything." ....I gradually took his teaching as a basis of my belief.

Joy had a similar reason for not reaching out because,

[b]ly nature, I must say, I am not used to talking to people about my problems.
... When I had problems, I did not tell people easily. It might be due to my character.

My personal belief is to stand on my own feet. I try my best to deal with my problems. Sometimes I reflect and try to see if there is a better way. Of course, it is not so easy that every problem can be resolved by myself. Then I shall have no worries. Still I prefer resolving problems by myself rather than asking friends for help.

In addition,

... emotional disturbances and marital distresses are very personal.

Amy liked to vent her feelings but selectively with friends. She explained:

For very private matters which are not appropriate to talk to friends, I would keep it within myself. If I have to talk to someone, I would either phone or write to my husband.

**VI. B. 6. Resolve Life Challenges in Religion.**

Five participants liked to resolve their challenges through their preferred religion for different reasons. However, two of them also incorporated other assistance including counselling services. Only three of them relied on their religious beliefs and organizations.

Teresa is a Buddhist. However, she also tried to resolve her difficulties with her children in another religion, in addition to seeking counselling assistance and support from social sources. She explained,

I took my children to a Catholic church even though I am a Buddhist. I went to the Catholic church because my children came from a Catholic school in Hong Kong. ... My belief is religion teaches people to be good. After all, I went to the church without any intent of getting any material benefit from it. I just wanted to help my children.

In addition to other assistance including counselling service, Susan also tried to use religion to help her son. She recalled,
I sought help from my Christian neighbour. I asked her to arrange for her son to play with mine and to go to church together. Though I have not taken up any religion, I believe that religion teaches people to be good.

Pam, however, preferred to resolve her problems exclusively in her religion - Buddhism. She said,

I found out a belief in Buddhism. It was destiny. Everything is already predetermined. There is reward and punishment. It is a circular will. As I find something else, I shall lose another thing. Or as I lose one thing, I shall find another thing. At present, I have a deterrent in my life and I feel down about it. One never knows that one day I may find out something else. I believed that these are predetermined ups and downs that I have to go through. Even though you search around for help, you still have to go through this circular cycle. ...When I think of this and my [not reaching out] character, I think the best thing for me is to keep it within myself. This circular thinking brings me hope in life.

For a different reason, Kay also favoured talking to a religious minister because, she explained,

I would rather talk to a religious minister when I have a problem. Ministers are there to care about you. I do not want to see a professional because I do not want to be treated as a "case" and the counsellor would treat my concern as a job rather than a person to person contact. It is similar to seeing some doctors who do not come across as people who have emotions.

Lydia believed God's spiritual guidance. She, therefore, would use a religious counselling service if she needed it because, she explained,

I trust spiritual people. ... I trust that if the counsellor knows about God and God will guide me through the counsellor. That is enough for me.

The above data indicated that these participants resolved their problems in their religions for various reasons. Nevertheless, some like Teresa, Susan and Lydia also used the counselling services. This depended on their perceptions and the nature of their problems. These participants appeared to be more broad-minded and might benefit more from
counselling services.

VI. B. 7. Some Women were Locked in Immobile Situations.

Immobility is also a barrier to mental health facilities. In Lynn's observation, she said,

[the most disadvantaged groups are women. However, most of them do not drive or have no access to a car if their husbands took their cars to work.

Ming was one of those immobile women. She sighed,

...if I had a car myself, life would be very different. I could even go to work.

VI. B. 8. Some Women Do Not Want to Leave Work for Counselling Service.

Lynn also observed that:

[many people do not want to leave work for counselling because it is too troublesome.

Kay shared similar opinion. She said,

...it is too troublesome to wait and travel to see a counsellor. ...After waiting for the appointment, the upset feeling might have gone.

VI. C. Motivation for Seeking Help for Emotional Distress

VI. C. 1. Ventilation of Feelings with Family Members and Good Friends.

Ventilation of feelings was the most popular behaviour for which these participants sought help. For that purpose, they approached family members and friends. It also seemed to be a common phenomenon among both those who reached out for counselling assistance
and those who did not. Eight out of the twelve participants reported that they like to vent their feelings with relatives or friends. Only two participants, Joy and Pam, reported that they did not share their feelings with anybody at all. However, Joy reached out regarding her child's concern whereas Pam, who did not have family, did not reach out for her own depression. Another two participants indicated that they would reach out to family and friends if they had the right persons to talk to.

Cathy did not think of using counselling service to deal with her negative emotions at all. She reported,

[It has never occurred to me that I needed to deal with my negative emotions through counselling. Perhaps, I need to reflect on this issue. [She laughed]. I think I do not need it yet. However, I am not sure whether this is due to the fact that I have already received so much support from my friends and thus do not need counselling services. For instance, my health concerns are still there. The end result is the same after talking to people. However, I felt better after ventilating my feelings to my friends.

Cathy explained further,

I prefer talking to a friend rather than a counsellor, because I will not talk to people who do not appear to care about me. However, my friends do care. The church friends whom I talked to did not have professional training, yet, one woman called me at least 2-3 times a week to see if I was alright. I would talk about my problems to these people.

Like Cathy, Amy also talked to friends. She said,

I do not keep stress within myself. When my husband is not around, I like to vent my feelings by talking to friends except private matters. Even if there is conflict between me and somebody, I vent it out and won't keep it within overnight. In Canada, I talk to a few close friends whom I met back home. For the new acquaintances, if we share the same beliefs, I also talk to them. We shared a lot of common experience as new immigrants. I also talk to them about accidents which happened to me. Sometimes, people would say their experiences were worse than mine. We seemed to be comparing who had the worst luck. [She laughed]. I felt relieved a little bit after talking it out.
Lynn was one of those who liked to talk to friends and relatives and from whom she could get insights about her own concerns. Her experience was this:

It was good to vent my emotions with families who have similar experience. 
I then realized that some families have problems even worse than ours. ... 
I could put my children's concerns into perspective.

For unsolvable problems I prefer talking to trustworthy and knowledgeable friends and relatives.

Teresa had a similar view. She stated,

...I only talked to parents who experienced similar problems to mine. Hopefully, I could get some advice on how to handle the situation. Or, I could also reflect on my mistakes (by talking to them). We might not have any solution, but as long as we empathized with each other, we felt better. However, I would not talk to people who did not have similar experiences to mine or who treated me with a strange attitude.

...I [also] won't talk to someone who will impose a judgement on me.

Likewise, Kay did not want to talk to anybody who did not understand her. She said,

I don't talk about my stress to my acquaintances because they do not understand my situation, particularly, my financial constraint. For instance, we do not have sufficient savings to support my husband to go back to college for some training, but it was hard for others to believe us.

However,

I like to talk to a group of sincere friends. ... They were very understanding and sympathetic to our situation. They did not only listen but prayed for us.

Like Kay, Polly also liked to talk to someone who understood her worries. She explained,

I like to talk to a friend whom I met here. We seemed to be on the same wave length. She is approachable and we are of the same age group. I talked to her more than my younger sister who has been here for about twenty years. She.... has been very acculturated to the Canadian culture. She doesn't understand my worries which she thought a waste of energy. When I talked to her, she didn't respond.
Most of these participants preferred talking to someone who shared similar experiences about their concerns. At least they would not be judged. Further, they felt supported afterwards or they were able to get some insights from others’ experiences.

**VI. C. 2. Reaching Out to Their Support System Back Home for Emotional Support.**

All these participants have had support systems back home. Seven out of nine who still had families in Hong Kong, reported reaching out to them for emotional support.

Susan had felt very lonely in Canada. She recalled,

> I don’t have any moral support in Canada at all. I could only talk to my mother over the phone, or write to my siblings or friends whoever cared about my son. They wrote back to console me.

Like Susan, Teresa called her mother for support as she explained.

> I need someone to support me and empathize with my concerns. ...I talk to my mother about my worries for my children over the phone. She is very supportive to me and encourages me to be tolerant further (until my daughter was improved). I feel I have so much moral support from mother.

Polly also called her oldest sister for support. She narrated proudly,

> [w]hen my husband was not in Canada, I called my oldest sister back home because she is very good to me. She took care of me like a mother. ...She encouraged me to be patient with the situation. As soon as I become a citizen, the whole family could move back. She reminded me of my purpose of migration. She always consoled me like that. If I have any problems, she will support me morally and materially.

Tina also sought moral support from back home to overcome her loneliness. She recalled,

> I like writing letters so I wrote a lot of letters and called friends.

Amy had a very good supportive network in Canada, yet, she still needed the moral support from home. She said,
[f]or very private matters which are not appropriate to talk to friends, I would keep it within myself. If I have to talk to someone, I would either phone or write to my husband.

Cathy had this experience as she recalled,

To cope with homesickness, I had close telephone contacts with my family. On average, we called each other three times a month. Every two years I also went back for a visit and my mother visited me every two years as well.

Pam did not like to talk to anybody except her mother about her concerns. In time of distress, she recalled,

I did not go out to visit friends. Mother was so kind that she visited me at that time so I had her shoulder to lean on.

All these participants' experiences seemed to indicate that venting of feelings and sharing of concerns with family members and good friends were common coping strategies for immigrant women in a socially isolated foreign land.

Seeking moral support or concrete assistance from family members or close friends seemed to be a natural and spontaneous reactions to dealing with negative feelings related to immigration. However, despite various reasons for their not using mental health facilities for their own welfare, when it came to children's concerns over which parents had no control, they handled them differently from their own.

VI. D. Help-Seeking Behaviour in Relation to Children's Concerns

These participants indicated readiness to use counselling services for their children in situations where they would not use counselling service for themselves. Teresa believed that "an ugly thing should not go out of the family gate". Nevertheless, she used counselling
services as a parent. She explained,

[t]he reason why we sought counselling assistance at that time was due to my daughter's behaviour. We did not understand why she behaved that way. As parents, we have the responsibility to protect our children so we went.

Teresa continued,

[i]n time of emergency, you believed whatever people said.

If my daughter's concern happened in Hong Kong and I was referred to see a professional counsellor, I would go in the same way as I did here. On the other hand, if I see my child has a problem but nobody makes a referral, I will still seek outside help as I did here.

Teresa of course talked to family members at the same time. She stated,

I talked to my mother about my worries for my children over the phone. She was very supportive to me and encouraged me to continue be tolerant (until she was improved).

As well, she talked to parents who were in similar situations as she reported,

I ... talked to parents who experienced similar problems to mine. Hopefully, I could get some advice on how to handle the situation. Or, I could also reflect on my mistakes (by talking to them). We might not have any solution, but as long as we empathized with each other, we felt better.

Teresa also tried another alternative at the same time. She stated,

I took my children to a Catholic church though I am a Buddhist. I went to the Catholic church because my children came from a Catholic school in Hong Kong....My belief is religion teaches people to be good. ... I just wanted to help my children. Therefore, there was no conflict between the two religions.

For Teresa, seeking help for her children legitimatized going beyond her cultural and religious belief.

Joy also handled her child's concerns differently from her own. She explained,

I am not used to seeking counselling assistance.

[However], if there is a need, I would do that. When my first daughter was
five, in Hong Kong, she had both academic and behavioural problems. The school principal recommended us to see a psychologist. She believed that my daughter's problems might be directly related to myself, or was associated with our inconsistent parenting styles. There was also something to do with the child's attitude towards learning.

At that time, I thought, ordinary people did not need this kind of help, why me? When the problem was at its worst stage, we decided to give ourselves a trial.

Joy continued,

... a child's academic concern... is more impartial than a personal one.

It might be this academic reason which Joy seemed to find more justifiable in reaching out to counselling help for her concern about her daughter's behaviour.

Susan was very focussed on helping her child to be an independent adult in the future without mentioning any cultural beliefs at all. Susan narrated her worries about her son,

[i]n my observation, my son was non-cooperative and did not work up to his ability. ....I thought, if my son carried on with this attitude, he would become worse and wouldn't be an independent grown-up. ... I took advantage of all the teacher-parent meetings to meet his teachers and tried to understand his school performance. Teachers explained very clearly about my son's work. However, they were so nice and polite that they only pointed out his strengths not his weaknesses.

... I kept on discussing my concern with his teachers who did not think that my child had a problem at all.

They just did not think that my worries deserved such concern. As I was a teacher in Hong Kong, I was keenly aware of the possibility that my child's future would be in trouble if he carried on like that.

Before I talked to my family physician, I talked to my husband about the son's antagonistic behaviour and not wanting to study. He had a different view from mine.

I didn't have any moral support at all in Canada. I could only talk to my mother over the phone, or write to my siblings or friends whoever cared about my son. They wrote back to console me.
During that frustrating year, I consulted my family physician. As a physician, he certainly viewed the problem from a biological perspective and found my son normal, with which I agree. He also said that many parents told him the same thing. That was it.

Like Teresa, Susan also believed that religions teach people to be good and approached a religious group. She reported,

I sought help from my Christian neighbour. I asked her to arrange for her son to play with mine and to go to church together. After a period of time, my son stopped going and I, therefore, didn't go any more.

In the end, I consulted his guidance teacher who pulled out his file and examined all his records. She agreed with me that my son needed counselling. She gave me the name and phone number of two agencies. I thought psychological counselling is also important, so, I chose your agency.

I was very anxious and consulted among his teachers for about a year before I was referred to you.

Polly was open to outside help for her child and herself. Here is Polly's story:

In the new school after moving, I noticed my son wasn't happy. Gradually, he became very sad when he had to go to school. In his work, he wrote how unhappy he was and how he was not understood in the school. His grade dropped to C. He requested to go back to his old school. I didn't know if it would help him or not because I did not understand the reason why he was unhappy in this new school. So, I didn't know what to do.

I talked to his home room teacher many times. She said that his work was not up to the standard. My son said that the teacher treated him unfairly. Later, he didn't speak to the teacher.

When I talked to friends about my child's not speaking to his teacher and wanting to go back to his old school, they advised me not to go his way. He had to adjust to a new environment. That is don't let my child walk over me. Besides, without a car, it would be very inconvenient for me. They seemed to have good reasoning.

The teacher observed him for a while and suspected that he has medical concerns. I was, therefore, advised to take my son to see a doctor.

However, I didn't see him behave like a sick child at home. ... In the end, an
ESL teacher suggested me to see you. I was so pleased to hear that. I thought using a counselling service is better than treating him as a sick child. After seeing you, the whole problem was resolved.

Amy did not mention her opinion about seeking help for her children. However, she took the teacher's advice by sending the child to see a counsellor regularly during the adjustment process. In the following year when her child was promoted to Grade 9 at another school, Amy and her husband talked to the new school teacher and said that if their child needed counselling service, they wanted her to see the same counsellor as she did in the elementary school. The reason why Amy took the teacher's advice was because:

...I trusted professional help. I believed that a professional is different from a parent. The counsellor might see something which a parent had overlooked. That was helpful to my child. I also noticed that my child was more receptive to the counsellor's advice.

Pam did not have children. However, in her observations, Pam believed that "astronaut" families [split-family arrangements] with young children may need professional counselling assistance more. Pam reasoned,

[for "astronaut" families where husbands went back to work and left their wives and children behind, they will need a lot of support. They are to make decisions for children's education and day to day concerns. To a certain extent, they may feel frustrated and insecure, particularly those who are less independent. Professional or agency support will be very important to help them feel secure in a new country. If anything happens to their children, they could consult a professional for advice instead of calling their husbands abroad.

Kay did not use the counselling service at all but she shared a similar view to Pam's. Her opinion was:

"Single parent" families such as those whose spouse is out of the country may need the service. Particularly, those who have to make a decision in relation to their children's education.....
Ming was open to outside help but she did not reach out for her daughter because of her language limitations. She sighed,

I knew my daughter's psychological concern needs professional help. But I did not know how to go about it.

Lynn believed that she did not need to use counselling services yet. However, like Teresa, Lynn also talked to her friends and relatives about children's issues. Lynn stated,

[w]e all talked about our concerns and children's issues. It was good to vent my emotions. I then realized that some families had problems even worse than ours. As well, I could put my children's concerns into perspective. However, the greatest awareness was that something could be prevented.

Lynn, therefore, took preventative measures. Lynn appeared to know exactly what her children needed and she knew how to use the available resources. In order to prevent her children from dropping out of school, Lynn kept close contact with school teachers and responded to their advice immediately. Early interventions included:

I sent my children to learn conversational English from my tutor. As a result, they made good improvements in the English language as well as gained self-confidence.

Another way to help my two shy daughters to break through their barriers to socializing was to send them to learn the Canadian popular activities such as swimming, skiing and skating.

As well,

I try to learn young people's culture and the Canadian customs so I am able to discern what to take and what to leave. And also to be flexible with my children.

In summarizing the views and patterns of help seeking for children, these participants' reports strongly revealed their readiness to cross the cultural barriers to reach Western counselling services. Traditional Chinese culture and stigma did not seem to be as much of an issue in this context. The data did not reveal reasons for the different patterns of help
seeking behaviour, when related to their own concerns versus related to their children's issues. To find out the reasons why there was a shift from their beliefs of self-reliance and privacy to reaching out help-seeking behaviour for their children, further investigation is needed.

VI. E. Comparison of Views on Career Counselling and Psychological Counselling


VI. E. 1. a. Career counselling services met survival needs which assume first priority. When compared with seeking career counselling services, all the participants reported that career counselling, which met survival needs, took priority over psychological counselling. As well, career counselling was more concrete than psychological. Ten participants reported that they were more comfortable reaching out for career counselling for various reasons. One participant, Susan, reported that she would not use career counselling services because she had already taken a course on job searching skills when she arrived at Canada. In total, eleven participants were more motivated to use career counselling services. Only one participant, Kay, reported that she was not sure if she would use career counselling services because she did not know much about the service. No participant reported any negative attitude towards career counselling services. In the following sections, different opinions or perceptions of career and psychological counselling services are included.

Amy viewed career counselling as a survival related service. She explained:

Career counselling and psychological counselling are two different kinds of business. Career counselling is a job related assistance. You need a job for
a living. If I am looking for a job now, I will go to seek career counselling assistance, because if you want to get a good job, you may need some kind of training. Even now, I still like to learn new things if I can.

Going to see a career counsellor is to learn something about getting a job. The attitude is I can make a living out of it. Even though some career counselling service is to find out your strengths, it is to enlighten you [about the choice of career or job] as opposed to heal your illness.

Susan was one step ahead of the rest of the participants. When she arrived Canada, Susan learned job searching skills. Therefore, she recounted that she did not need career counselling services any more. Susan reported,

[i]If I am looking for a job, ... I will collect information from the employment centre. ... When I first arrived, I took courses in business English and accounting. Therefore, I know how to write a resume and look for jobs. ... [In the end], I set up my business.

Lynn also found career counselling services were very informative. She stated that she took the initiative to look for and attend a few seminars at the employment centre. Her attitude towards it was very positive. She found the service helpful as she reported:

I attended a few employment seminars and I got practical help such as how to write a resume, how to attend a job interview. I also obtained information on training courses and types of jobs in the government and the required qualifications. All the information has become a concrete asset, whereas psychological counselling is intangible.

Lydia did not use either career or psychological counselling services at all. She regarded career counselling a practical service

Career counselling is more practical. It may be able to assist you in getting a job or provide some training for you. It helps you develop your career in the future.

Cathy believed that career counselling was an informative service:

Career counselling service is knowledge based. I would be very ready and willing to go to update my knowledge.
Ming believed that career counselling was job related:

If I need a job to support myself and I cannot get one, I have to seek assistance from someone else [career counsellor], particularly if I have to support a family. Even if I do not live on a job or support a family, I cannot live idly. I have to do something to enrich my life.

Likewise, Joy reported that she was more motivated to see a career counsellor. Her opinion on career counselling services was:

Career counsellor will be the first professional I want to see if I am looking for a job. I would go for a critique of my resume and business letter. In my Business English Class, I learned a lot about the choice of words or what to emphasize in a letter. As well, I learned what an employer wants to see on my resume and what he or she doesn't. Career counselling is for technical concerns and for betterment. ... It is a concrete help....[besides] career concerns are more impartial.

VI. E. 1. b. Career counselling is a concrete service in which you know what to expect. Pam saw career counselling as concrete services:

A job is something concrete. If you can't find one you won't get one.

As a new immigrant, I need to know how to convince my potential employer that I am the right person for the job through a locally acceptable resume. In addition, I need to know the local job negotiation skills which may equip me to use the right wording in the process. I need to know what the employer is looking for. Career counsellors know all this information. So I think it is worthwhile using career counselling assistance. On the other hand, psychological counselling is dealing with emotions, which I can solve myself after some reflection.

It is a lot easier to go to see a career counsellor.

Teresa also viewed career counselling as concrete service:

Career counselling is more concrete. ... Living in a new country, it is natural that you need more information about getting a job. ...if I need some information about job searching, I would approach a career counselling centre.
Tina admitted that she would be more motivated to see a career counsellor and she explained:

If I could not get a job, I would try everything including career counselling. I would be more motivated to see a career counsellor.

To sum up the participants' views on career counselling services, they unanimously considered it as a concrete, practical service for their survival. As well, they knew what to expect and were more motivated to use the services.

VI. E. 2. Views on Psychological Counselling Services

VI. E. 2. a. Psychological counselling services were for personal problems which might bear a stigma or embarrassment. Kay considered psychological counselling services as relevant to delinquents or psychiatric patients. She would be stigmatised if she used the services:

I was brought up in an environment where counselling services were commonly for the delinquents. Average or normal people would not use the services.

Furthermore,

I do not want to be seen as a psychiatric patient and be rejected by others. ... People believe that psychiatric patients will lose self-control and be unpredictable. One will not know when they would be harmful. So they are not accepted.

Joy viewed psychological counselling as a service for personal problems:

If I go to see a psychological counsellor, I will feel that I have a problem which I can't handle and therefore, I am not happy. Because psychological matters imply that you have a personal problem which is out of your control. It may not be a psychiatric problem. It could be an emotional disturbance. ... they are more personal.
Likewise, Lydia perceived psychological counselling as for personal problems which she would be very embarrassed to talk about. She said:

For psychological counselling, first of all, I do not know when to see a counsellor. If it is an emotional problem, I would feel very shameful because I have psychological problems. That means that I am not normal. If it is a parenting issue... I would... feel shameful because I am an inadequate parent. ...If it is a marital problem, it will be embarrassing to talk about it. I imagine sex may be involved in the process. As you know, discussing sex is taboo in our culture, never mind talking to a stranger about it.

Pam also believed that psychological counselling is related to personal matters:

...if I consider psychological counselling, I have to think what I need from him or her. What can I talk about? I expect that I have to be very honest to the psychological counsellor because I need his or her help, whereas to the career counsellor, I only talk about my job related concerns.

It is associated with one's self-dignity. In this respect, many want to solve their problems by themselves.

**VI. E. 2. b. Psychological counselling services are too abstract.** Teresa, who used psychological counselling services as a parent and did not like to be stigmatized or face her emotional reality, had this opinion:

If I am not happy or frustrated, I will not go to see a psychological counsellor voluntarily. Psychological help is so abstract that you are not able to concretize it. Therefore, you are not sure if you have got it or not. The two kinds of services are just different. In addition, if you go (to see a psychological counsellor), it means that you have a "problem". (If you do not go, it means that you do not have a "problem.") It is just the same as some people never admitting their mistakes.

Cathy's view on psychological counselling is:

If I went to see a psychological counsellor, I would expect my problems to be solved and to learn some professional knowledge.

However,
Psychological counselling services are so conceptual that I would not be sure if my problems could be solved.

I would feel very uncertain about it.

**VI. E. 2. c. Psychological counselling services is a healing service.** Ming believed that psychological counselling healed something wrong inside a person. She reported:

Psychological problems are something accumulated in your heart¹ [psyche]. However unhappy you may be, you can still keep it within. Whereas a job is part of life. Your impetus is to work. When you are busy with work, you do not have time to think about your psychological problems. People who work will have more opportunities to interact with others. This [social interaction] may help alleviate their psychological problems.

Similarly, Amy's opinion on psychological counselling was:

Psychological counselling is in relation to something which is not right inside you.

If I go to see a psychological counsellor, my feeling will be similar to seeing a physician. I will feel that I am a patient.

Susan also viewed consulting a psychological counsellor as similar to consulting a physician:

Concerning using psychological counselling services, my view is: [consulting] a counsellor is no different from [consulting] a doctor or a teacher. Many movie stars or high profile people seek counselling help, too. I think it is a normal thing to do in Canada.

Some viewed psychological counselling as a psychological healing service without relating it to psychiatric illness. These participants viewed consulting the services similar to using medical services, and the data showed that they were more open to it than the others.

¹Traditional Chinese believe that emotion is from the heart.
VI. F. Other Opinions

VI. F. 1. Both Career and Psychological Counselling Services Provided Directions to Clients.

Polly, who had used a psychological counselling service as a parent, was the only participant reported motivated to use both facilities. She considered both career and psychological counselling services were for directions:

I would have used a career counselling service if someone told me about it. But nobody mentioned it to me.

I think... if I go to see a career counsellor, my feeling will be the same as going to see a psychological counsellor. Because, the purposes are the same: to seek a right direction. The only difference is the nature of help.

VI. F. 2. Not Knowing the Nature of the Services Was an Impediment to Services.

Kay was the only participant who reported that she did not understand the nature of both career and psychological counselling services and therefore she would not use them.

She explained:

I didn't know anything about career counselling and so I wasn't sure whether my problem would be sought out. Unless I was fired without a good reason and this left a bad record on my resume, I then would consult a career counsellor.

Regarding psychological counselling services, she stated:

I do not know the nature of counselling services and do not know what to expect. I have only heard about the term marital counselling.

In conclusion, most of the participants considered career counselling as concrete, informative and pertinent to survival needs. Therefore, it was justified to see such help-seeking behaviour as normal functioning. In contrast, psychological counselling services
were for personal psychological problems. The services bore stigma or the issues could be too embarrassing to be discussed with a stranger.

VI. G. Views on Westerners' Use of Psychological Counselling Help Seeking

Despite the numerous reasons for seeking or not seeking psychological counselling services, the participants viewed positively Westerners' pursuit of psychological services counselling. Nobody reported that it was a strange behaviour or they would not use the Western psychological counselling services at all. Only five of them mentioned that Westerners should try to solve their problems first and leave the big problems for psychological counselling services. Their views on Westerners' utilizing psychological counselling services are detailed below.

VI. G. 1. Seeking Counselling Help Was Part of the Westerners' Culture

Susan's opinion was:

I don't think Westerners' counselling help-seeking is a problem. It is just like consulting a physician. I would do that.

Polly shared similar opinion as she explained,

I think seeking counselling help when needed is the right thing to do.

Kay believed that

[i]t is their custom to take children to counselling. I think that they are very concerned about their children. If people are used to the service since they are small, they may not feel uncomfortable about it. But the Chinese do not have counselling services as such.

It would be good for the Westerners themselves to seek counselling assistance as this is part of their culture. If I were brought up in this society, I might accept it as easily as anybody else. As I was not brought up in this
culture, it would be too strange, too difficult and too foreign for me to take this step.

Teresa used the psychological counselling services as a parent, and also believed that seeking counselling assistance was the right thing for the Westerners to do. Her opinion was:

Westerners tend to seek counselling assistance on these [psychological] matters which I think is the right thing to do. When we knew that there was such a service, we went right away [for our daughter's concern].

Amy, who also used psychological counselling services as a parent, regarded it as the good thing for Westerners to do. Her point of view was:

I think it is a good thing for Westerners to seek counselling help. It is like what our idiom goes, "illness should be healed when it is not too serious." For example, it was very frustrating when we first arrived as new immigrants. If that frustration can be helped by a competent professional, some individuals' [mental health] would not get worse.

Cathy, who believed that her supportive network could replace counselling services, had a positive view on Westerners' utilizing psychological counselling services. She explained,

[m]y view on Westerners' use of counselling services is fine. I had a colleague who used the shelter service. I did not find it strange... I believe that Westerners, perhaps, are more open to others in general, and Easterners are more reserved. I also believe that sociable people who have many friends to talk to do not need a counselling service.

VI. G. 2. Psychological Counselling Services Should Be for Big Problems

However, other participants believed that psychological counselling services should only be for big problems which individuals could not handle. Joy had her reason to believe that:
I appreciate their way of seeking professional assistance for emotional needs. However, minor concerns, such as: I had a fight with my husband, or our family atmosphere is not very harmonized, or we don't talk much lately, or he hurt my dignity etc, should be dealt with by the couple. If I bring all these minor concerns to a professional or a psychologist for counselling assistance, I think it is too much. In contrast, if my husband is going to leave me, I will consider this as a big concern. I may not be able to keep my emotions under control, or I may have a nervous breakdown. In situations like these, it is justified to seek professional assistance. For incidents which occur repeatedly and or anticipate something drastic, professional help should be sought.

Likewise, Lydia shared a similar opinion. She said,

I think they make it a big thing by going to see a counsellor. I do not know whether they have free service or not. Saying that, if they have an important issue such as a marital problem, I think seeking counselling assistance is the right thing to do in order to safeguard yourself from making a wrong decision.

Similarly, from Pam's observation, she believed:

Counselling services are very common in this country. Very often I have also heard my Western friends talk about seeing a therapist. Judging from my perspective, they were not big concerns. To me they were too dependent. Why didn't they try to solve the problems by themselves first? If they could resolve them by themselves, they would have saved one step. If they could not do anything about them, they then could seek counselling assistance. I think they did not appear to try hard enough in the first place. Though some people said that they did try, I still believe that they are dependent upon seeking counselling help.

VI. G. 3. Clients Should Also Work Hard.

Tina also believed that seeking counselling services was good but one should not be dependent on it. She explained,

Their motivation is good. They see counselling help the right thing to do. They are more open to counselling services which is a good attitude.

However, counselling does not seem to be effective with everybody. I don't
know whether it is due to the type of counselling, or because Westerners depend too much on counsellors and have not developed their own problem solving skills.

I believed that psychological counselling services are for serious problems. Ming had a similar view as she said,

[only talking to a "psychology doctor" won't help. The doctor may be a good listener. He or she may assist you to change your attitude and to stop you from thinking about it [the problem] obsessively. He or she may base on a theory and talk to you. However good the psychologist may be, he or she only "talks" about it. But "talk" does not change the reality. When you come back home, you are still unhappy. It is only you who takes charge of the change. Most important of all, you have to use all your will and tolerance to overcome your problem.

If talking to someone can help to eliminate the possibility of illness (psychosomatization), you have to get someone who is genuinely willing to help.

VI. G. 4. Western Psychological Counselling Services Were the By-Products of an Individualistic Culture

Lynn viewed psychological counselling as a by-product of an individualistic culture in which some Westerners might need more of this type of service. Her explanations of Westerners' psychological help seeking behaviour was:

Westerners are more individualistic and, therefore, have weaker support systems which leads them to counselling help. They have less spiritual life satisfaction and, therefore, are more likely to get involved in alcohol or substance abuse which also leads them to counselling services.

In concluding the participants' opinions on Westerners' seeking counselling assistance, all of their views were positive because they needed it and it is part of their custom to seeking professional counselling help. However, some believed that clients should try their best first and should not depend on the services. Others would suggest leaving the
critical problems which were out of their control for the counsellors. This is consistent with my clinical observations that when the Chinese clients presented themselves in the counselling office, they were either in crisis or the problems were critical.

VI. H. Preferred Ethno-Specific Counselling Services

In this study the twelve participants unanimously pointed out the importance of ethno-specific counselling services. They suggested that the traditional model of counselling and psychotherapy may need to be modified to make it more meaningful to immigrants from various cultural backgrounds. Their explanations on the role of such services are quoted as follows.

Cathy believed that

Chinese language plays an important role in the understanding of the culture. I prefer talking to a Chinese counsellor who would be more culturally sensitive to and understand my lifestyle better. People from other backgrounds may not understand my background well.

Pam's opinion was:

I mentioned early on that the Western model of services delivery contains many constraints to Chinese-Canadian women who will feel very uncomfortable changing to accommodate new cultural behaviour without understanding the essence of it. It is because their upbringing is different. This may make them feel that they are inadequate and inferior. I doubt they would use the services.

In addition, we may be able to use our professional skills very well in English language. This does not guarantee our ability to translate our cultural nuances when talking about our concerns and emotions. Further, many nuances are untranslatable into English. On the flip side of the coin, a good counsellor without the clients' language skills is not guaranteed to understand the clients' cultural background and there is a risk of miscommunication in the process. So I think cultural fluency and the client's native language skills are the basic requirements for counsellors of Chinese-Canadian women.
Polly believed that a counsellor and the client speaking the same language would avoid miscommunication and sharing a similar cultural background would predict effective counselling results. Polly explained:

If I have a choice, I prefer a Cantonese speaking counsellor because I can easily express myself. In addition, I will not mistake what the counsellor says. I believe I can understand a hundred percent of what the Cantonese speaking counsellor says. If I had to see a counsellor and I had no choice, I think I will go and see him or her. However, with a non-Cantonese speaking counsellor, I wonder how much we would understand each other.

Likewise,

I will also prefer a counsellor who shares a similar cultural background. The reason being: A counsellor who shares a similar cultural background will know our lifestyle, custom, parenting style and general expectations of children. His or her advice will be more applicable [to children of our culture], while a counsellor of a different cultural background may not know our lifestyle, custom, parenting style and expectations of children well. They may think that our concern is not a problem. Hence, their advice may not be workable. Moreover, because of cultural differences, what he or she says about one thing, I may mistake as another thing. No, I do not prefer that.

Teresa was also worried about miscommunication and did not get appropriate services. She explained,

[di]ifferent culture has a different norm. If a counsellor sees my problems from his or her cultural norm, misunderstanding is likely to occur. Never mind problem solving. You won't get an expected result. I don't want to use this kind of services unless I have no where to turn to and I may give it a try.

If I have a choice. I definitely choose an ethno-specific counselling service. I shall be able to express myself more thoroughly and feel at home in my native language. The counsellor will understand my concerns and feelings better. Likewise, I will understand him or her better. It is more likely to get the expected result.

Susan shared this opinion:

If I have a choice, I prefer a counsellor who speaks my language because my English is not fluent enough to express myself. As well, I may not be able to
understand the counsellor. Just like meeting with my child's school teacher, we communicate in English. I felt that I had to "take a winding route" [it was hard] to make myself understood. It was just inconvenient. There may have been miscommunication between us, too.

If a counsellor understands my cultural background, he or she would have empathy for what I say. Otherwise, we may both misunderstand one another.

Lynn asserted that she would not use the services if she was not comfortable with the language, and if the counsellor might not understand her culture. She reasoned,

[i]f there is a language barrier, I won't go to see the counsellor. I need to feel comfortable in expressing myself [in my native language] and must be able to do so. As well, I expect the counsellor to understand me in addition to his or her credibility. If there are barriers, I won't feel like talking.

Furthermore,

I want someone who understands my cultural-values, lifestyle and my problem. Even if I do not have a language barrier with the counsellor, but he or she does not understand my cultural-values and lifestyle, it will be too hard for him or her to understand my problem, never mind problem solving. I will be even more frustrated because I cannot get my message across to the counsellor. I will drop out.

Amy agreed:

If it is in my native language, there are many advantages. Examples are: The counsellor and I will understand each other more thoroughly. Misunderstanding will unlikely occur. I will feel at home to talk to the counsellor in my mother tongue. On the other hand, if the counsellor does not speak my language, I am not able to express myself as much as I wish to in English. As we can't communicate with each other, the service will not be helpful to me. I won't go to see him or her. It won't serve my purpose but add more stress on me because I will be worried about expressing myself in another language in which I am not fluent. This will put me off.

In terms of culture, the counsellor has to be fluent in our culture in order to understand our problems better. Because of the differences in our cultural-value beliefs, what is a problem in our culture may not be an issue to others. If the counsellor does not understand our culture, he or she won't be helpful. It will be a waste of time if I go.
Kay did not use the services and reported that

[If the service is in a second language, I could only understand half of it. I would be very uncomfortable.

Language and cultural fluency are necessary qualities [for a counsellor] to understand me and vice versa.

Joy wanted the service to be conducted in her native language with cultural sensitivity. She narrated,

[a]s I said, verbal communication is a concern for me because I may not be able to convey what I want to express to the counsellor [in my native language], and it will be even worse if I have to speak in a language with which I am not comfortable. The consequence will be just like communicating with a doctor: I am not able to tell him or her about my illness. When he or she tells me about my illness, I won't quite understand what he or she is talking about. There may only be a small percentage of accuracy in the information exchange.

In response to the question, "Would a person who is able to communicate with you better help you regardless of his or her fluency in Chinese culture?" Joy continued:

I think culture differences are a barrier, too. Just like what I said early on, when I think this is a problem and the other person thinks that it isn't. Or when I don't think this is a problem, he or she wonders why I don't mind it at all. It is not fair to both parties. The counsellor is not able to fully utilise his or her professional skills to make a judgement [on my concern and I don't feel my concern is understood].

For example, the Chinese view of a good helper is a patient, initiating person who will make follow-up calls. Whereas the Westerners may see this as a client's dependence or the counsellor's "parenting need".

Tina believed that native language and culture were crucial factors in the counselling process. She explained.

[Language ... has a significant part in the process of counselling. Some expressions cannot be translated without losing their meanings or nuances.

Similarly,
Culture plays an important role in counselling. A counsellor from the same background, that is an immigrant from Hong Kong, will be able to understand me better.

Lydia did not want to go to any agency for help, particularly if she was not certain if the helper spoke her language or not. She reported,

[i]f I go to any agency, I do not know whether I will be seen by a Chinese or Westerner. If there is no Chinese speaking counsellor, it will be even worse because I cannot express myself in English as much as I wish.

Chinese who have been here a long time may not be able to understand new immigrants’ concerns, Westerners would be even less able to do so.

Ming expected a bond of affection and the concrete assistance of a helper in addition to language and cultural sensitivity. She explained,

[a]fter our house burned down, our neighbours sent notes to us and offered help. I could not accept their offer due to my language barrier [never mind the English speaking counsellors out there].

Back home, relatives knew so much about you and your family. Their advice would be more thorough. I would feel relieved and I was cared for by them because we already have an existing bond of affection. Besides, relatives would accommodate the children in their homes. That was the concrete help I needed.

On the other hand, a worker would not know much about you or your family. What they see is the surface. So there is a gap [between us]. You would not feel that kind of care [which entails so many bonds of affection]. As a professional, a worker may be able to tell you what it would be like to report to the police and how to go about it. Their advice would be superficial. Moreover, he or she would not offer you concrete help such as taking our children to his or her home while I was busy with the problems.

In sum, cultural and linguistic sensitivity play a significant role in the participants’ decision process on seeking or not seeking professional assistance when needed. One even opted for someone who have already had a bond of affection as a helper. All the participants preferred a counsellor who speaks their native language. Culturally, participants believed
that only the counsellor who shared similar cultural values would be able to understand their concerns. Therefore, they favoured ethnic-specific counselling services.

VI. I. QUALITIES OF A HELPER

In addition to fluency in the clients' culture and language, other positive counsellor's qualities emerged. Empathy was mentioned by five participants, credibility by five participants, good listening skills by four participants, understanding by three participants, and genuineness by two participants. The participants offered different explanations to their ideas.

Empathy seemed to be one of the most preferred personal qualities of a counsellor. Kay was one of those participants who looked for it.

[Empathic understanding, patience, and an ability to help [are what I expected of a helper].

As well, she expected the helper to be

"willing to listen to me".

Tina echoed this preference:

A counsellor's personal qualities such as the patience to listen are important. Most important of all, it relies on the counsellor's empathic understanding of the client. It also depends on whether the counsellor could help you.

Teresa agreed:

I need someone to support me and empathize with my concerns. I won't talk to anyone who will impose a judgement on me.

Susan explained:
[the qualities that I looked for are]: If the counsellor understands my cultural background, he or she would have empathy for what I say and be knowledgeable and professional [in my concerned area].

Lynn reported that she would use psychological services if she exhausted other alternatives.

However, she would not go to any counsellor:

...the type of counsellor to whom I would go must first impress me that he or she is a trustworthy, genuine, knowledgeable, responsible and not an arrogant person.

Many of my clients appreciated the counsellor's initiative in contacting them. As Joy said,

[u]sually, a counsellor will say "call me when you are in need". However, I think it is nice for the counsellor to make follow-up phone calls. Even if the client is reluctant to answer the call, the initiation by the counsellor is appreciated. In addition, patience and accountability are what I expect of a counsellor.

Credibility was another most preferred attribute. Pam was one of those who valued it very much. As well, she had other expectations of a helper, too. She reported,

[i]n our culture, if you are older than I am, or if you know more than I do, I shall listen to you. I always stress that if one wants to counsel others, one must establish a social status, a good image and credibility in the client's heart. Otherwise, even if you offer help, I will only hear you but not listen to you.

In our Chinese minds, knowledge is very important. Even age is a crucial criterion for the counsellor's credibility. If the counsellor looks like a teenager and I am a 40 year-old woman, I would wonder about his or her competence because I have more experience in life. Therefore, the first impression is very vital, too.

The counsellor's righteousness, genuineness and not being old fashioned in presentation will help to establish the client's trust and acceptance. In addition, counselling is effective when the counsellor is able to shed insight onto the client's needs and let her think it over. Then, she may be able to open up.

Amy preferred a genuine and friendly helper as she said,
In addition to professional opinions, the counsellor should care about the client genuinely. I would then feel comfortable with the service. Furthermore, if I talk about something else other than counselling issues, I would like the counsellor to respond to me like a friend.

Further to the above characteristics, Lydia emphasized a religious quality as she reported.

The counsellor must be a religious person who is an agent of God. It is not only her or his using of professional knowledge to help one but God's spirit.

Cathy expected mutual support as she explained,

I expect the helper to be as open as I am. The helper will share his or her concerns too. I expect mutual support.

However, Ming prioritized availability and less rigid boundaries in establishing the trust relationship between the helper and the helpee as she pointed out,

It takes time to establish the relationship [rapport] which leads to empathy. Here [in Canada], you talk when it is your turn to talk. When time is up, it is over [laughed]. It is hard to build up the necessary relationship....

I think it is better to do it in a way that...[t]he worker would visit the client at home and keep in touch with the client even after work. ...I do not mean that they have to be in touch day and night but at least every week they could relate to each other as friends. The client then would have trust in the social worker. If anything happens, the worker will be available to offer advice. The client will be more inclined to listen to the worker as the former has established trust in the latter already. Thus, assistance will be effective. In contrast, the client may not tell some important information deep in his or her heart [reserve some secret]. It is just like talking to a doctor, where the client remains superficial. It is a waste of time for both parties. I think in Canada you are not allowed to relate to clients in this manner.

Ming's opinion was the time allowed should be defined by the needs of the client:

When I am facilitated to talk more, more of my emotion will come up. Then time is over (she laughed). Keep it for next time. If I do not have emotional needs, it is fine to stop at that point. Just because I have emotional needs, I, therefore, come to talk to you. When my emotion is pouring out, I am then able to talk on a deeper level. If I wait until next time, my emotion will be different [I may not be able to talk that much]. A patient is usually strongly influenced by his or her emotions. If you do not spend more time, say twice
a week, with the client, particularly an introvert, on establishing the necessary trust, there will be a barrier between the counsellor and the client.

In addition, when I need the counsellor [in between sessions], I do not know where to reach him or her. After failing to reach the counsellor for a few times, I will not be interested in talking to him or her any more. How can we establish the [necessary] relationship [for counselling]?

All these participants were candid about their expectations of the qualities of a helper. They valued personal qualities like empathy, genuineness and credibility as much as professional qualities. In this respect, their expectation of the personal qualities of the counsellor is consistent with the Western counselling culture.

VI. J. VIEWS ON USER FEES

All the participants considered user fees a major barrier to seeking help from mental health services. This is because most of the immigrant families have limited funds for various reasons such as unemployment, under employment, part-time or contract jobs. They either have no benefits or very limited ones plus limited resources. They strongly indicated that if they were expected to pay from their net income, most of them could not afford it. As a result, they could not get the service even if they wanted to. Therefore, four of them suggested the mental health services be under the government health plan, since psychological concerns are within the realm of health issues. Two of them suggested that the government should subsidize the major part of the expenses. Another two recommended that the fees should be geared to the financial ability of the consumers. The remaining four participants reported that they would not use the services if fees applied unless they were
referred by physicians and they had no choice at all. Nevertheless, they would still have to consider if they could afford it.

Lynn strongly supported the idea of basing the fee on the client's ability to pay. She explained,

[User fees should be geared to the client's financial ability. Many immigrants have limited income and cannot afford the fees. Not all companies have extended health care for employees. Many immigrants take up part-time or contract jobs which means no benefits at all.

If it is too expensive e.g. $80.0, I definitely won't go because I have to cut it from my grocery bills for the family. If I have an insurance plan which covers 80% and I only pay $16, then I will go. The fees determine my decision, too.

The government should see counselling as part of health care. Once an individual is assessed by social services that he or she needs professional counselling service, this individual should be referred to a professional counsellor and the fees should be covered by the health care fund. The initial assessment is to avoid abuse of the service.

Polly had a similar opinion regarding fees:

My opinion is: first of all, I have to consider if I need the service. Then, I have to see if the fees are reasonable and affordable. If I need the service and I can afford it. I should pay for it. So, it depends on an individual's situation.

The payment should be handled in a similar fashion as medical consultation. Psychological [mental] health is also part of a person's health concern. The government should help them to re-build their self-confidence before they can contribute to the society. The Health Department should intervene before the problem is manifested into a form of psychiatric illness which will be even more costly.

A friend of mine came to Canada and gradually became depressed. She suffered so much here. Until she got her citizenship, she went back to Hong Kong. However, she is a totally different person from when she first arrived. She has a mental health problem. You don't see it on surface. She has lost her self-confidence and energy to strive on. These kinds of problems have strong, long-term negative impacts on society as a whole. To restore one's self-confidence is vital. Don't think that it is an individual and personal
concern. It is in fact a social concern, because mental health problems can stop you from contributing your skills to the society. You will deteriorate and become a burden on society. So, mental health is very important for everybody.

Parallel to Polly's idea, Ming asserted that

[i]t depends on how much the fee is. However, I think it should be covered by OHIP [government health plan] because this is a mental health concern. Individuals live in this society which generates so much pressure on them. This pressure develops into mental health problems. As well, they contribute so much to the society. The society, therefore, should take care of their health expenses. Just see how much our country spent on supporting other countries. I am not against sending foreign aid. However, this country should take care of their citizens first. Thus, there should not be user fees but costs should be included in the government health plan.

Tina shared a similar point of view as she said,

[i]t is fine to charge fees because it costs money for the operation. However, if there is no subsidy, a full fee will be too expensive for many.

It is reasonable for the consumer to pay about $30.0, and the rest of the expenses be covered by the government.

If there is no subsidy at all, the expenses would go up to about $150.00 which is a lot for consumers.

Lydia had a similar view on user fees. She said,

[i]f I had no choice and was forced to seek counselling help, like seeing a chiropractor, and if I needed the service, I would pay for it. Twenty dollars is the most. I still feel bitter about paying the chiropractor. However, if my marital problem is caused by finance, how can I afford to pay for the service! My situation would be miserable. I think the service should be subsidized and they [the concerned department] should set a mechanism to stop abuse of the service.

Amy also said that

[i]t depends on whether I can afford it. If I can't afford it, I cannot get the service even if I want to. As I don't know the market value, I can't tell what a reasonable fee should be. A friend's husband went to see a psychological doctor (psychologist). She told me that it was very expensive. I think unless
the problem is very serious and I have to get healed, I wouldn't use the service because it is too expensive.

Cathy suggested a fair sliding scale for fees as she asserted,

[t]here should be a fair sliding scale for fees because not everybody can afford the fees.

Pam did not choose to use psychological counselling services. However, in her observations, user fee is a barrier to the services and suggested them to be covered by the government health plan or to set a fair sliding scale. Pam explained,

Canada offers a very good health services system which spoils so many people who are not comfortable to pay for psychological services. ... As medical services are covered by OHIP and psychological services are not, fee is a barrier to the services, particularly for those who are reluctant to see a counsellor. Why doesn't OHIP [the government health plan] cover it?

The amount of fee depends on the ability of the clients. Though they see the value of the services but cannot afford it, they won't go for it. If they have to choose between a meal and the psychological services, I think they will choose a meal, never mind those who do not see the value of the services. I think they won't use them at all.

Pam continued,

[even though parents] are more willing to pay for the services if it helps their children improve their attitude towards learning and performance, it still depends on their financial situation. If the need is desperate, within $100.00 may be possible for the average family. If it is more than this amount, it may be beyond their abilities.

Susan also believed that the fees should be affordable. She said,

I think it is reasonable to charge fees but they have to be affordable. But I do not know how much is reasonable because I don't know the market value.

Those who seek private services must be able to afford them. ...for majority of the immigrants, $50-60 is too expensive. We have to think for many of those who do not have a job or are underpaid. All in all, the fees have to be affordable for the majority of the consumers.
Joy accepted low fees as she pointed out,

...fees will discourage immigrants from using the service. If they have to charge a fee, it will be more acceptable if it is between five to ten dollars and not more than that. If the fee goes up to one hundred dollars, it is just like asking them not to use the service. Only well-off people can afford that. However, many people don't think that they need the service, unless there is a great need and the service is very professional.

If the problem manifests into illness, they will be more willing to pay. It is the same as how we deal with dental hygiene in Hong Kong. If there is no pain, we won't see the dentist. In Canada, however, children are taught to check their teeth regularly. Likewise, I believe it will take a period of time to educate parents about the value of prevention in mental health.

Kay had a similar view:

...about $5-15 per session [is acceptable] because one does not know how long it will take. If it is too expensive, people will not use the service because it is not a life and death issue.

However, different from Joy and Kay, Teresa reported that she would not use the services if fees apply. She explained,

[i]f fees apply, I don't think I will use the service. I don't even know what service this is. Nor do I know if the service is helpful or not and I have to pay $50 or $60 dollars. No, it is too expensive.

I don't see the value of the services. It is different from consulting a physician who is expected to prescribe medicine. (In Hong Kong, patients also buy medicine from the physician. Consultation fee and prescriptions are added together as one fee. Therefore, fees varies according to the fees of the prescriptions.)

When you are sick, you know what it is all about. But the psychological thing is too intangible. I won't go. In addition, you don't know how long it will take you. I have to think if I can afford it.

If a person is depressed, she won't think she is sick. So she won't seek help. When she gets sick (somatized), I don't think she will seek counselling but medical consultation.

I won't go [for psychological counselling] unless it is an illness and I am
referred by a physician. When I have to pay, thirty dollars ($30) a session for 4-5 sessions the most.

The participants had major reservations about paying user fees. Financial survival was seen as the most important factor. They advocated the use of a sliding scale, depending on the ability to pay. Financial insecurity was a prevalent experience among all these participants. It caused much mental pressure, and adversely affected their familial relationships. The expectation of fee for service seemed to add salt to other existing injuries. One may wonder about how effective counselling services could be when a client has to pay for service while experiencing financial insecurity!

In summarizing this section, these participants suggested that despite some cultural factors such as the fear of being stigmatized and the belief of interdependence discouraging them from seeking outside help, they were willing to seek counselling assistance in situations involving crisis or children's well being. However, the major barriers were the lack of information and knowledge about the mental health services. In addition, language and cultural barriers deterred them from obtaining the relevant information and communicating thoroughly with the services providers. A user fee was also considered as a major obstacle to utilize mental health services especially when they were struggling for financial survival. Other impediments were geographic inaccessibility and some women's immobility, such as lack of transportation to the mental health office. To encourage new immigrants to use mental health facilities, these participants suggested mental health education to the new immigrants through mass media with linguistic and cultural sensitivity. More importantly,
these participants suggested community-based ethno-specific counselling services to consumers covered by either the universal health insurance plan or according to the ability to pay. (Appendix B).
CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES DELIVERY

The purpose of this study was to investigate in depth the factors which governed the help-seeking behaviour of contemporary Chinese immigrant women from Hong Kong, and explicate implications for counselling services delivery. In the following sections, limitations of the study, discussion of the findings and the implications for the delivery of counselling services will be detailed and followed by specific recommendations.

VII. A. Limitations of This Study

VII. A. 1. Small Samples

This is a small study which is limited in several areas. First, this is a qualitative study involving a sample of twelve women. While allowing the researcher to understand the life experiences of the participants, this does not allow for generalizations beyond the sample. The relevance of the experiences described by the women to different readers can therefore only be determined by the readers themselves. The study does not assume to represent the experiences of all contemporary immigrant women from Hong Kong.

VII. A. 2. Samples Biases

The study included participants who heard about the study from parents of clients served by the mental health clinic where the researcher works. Six were parents of ex-clients. Others were immigrants who heard about the study from the parents. Some were
parents and some were single women. The study would have been enriched if some participants had had individual counselling experiences in the past. The single women seemed to have views on Western counselling services, the needs of the Chinese community and their patterns of help seeking similar to those of the parents group. To be able to generalize this trend, there is a necessity for a quantitative investigation with a very large random sample. The fact that participants who approached the mental health system and those who had not were both positive towards the idea of Western counselling may suggest that the study has recruited a biassed sample. This study was not able to reach those immigrant women who would not volunteer to share their life experiences in a research context. One may wonder about their attitudes and opinions of Western counselling services. In case they faced similar problems to the participants in the study, what would be their approach to coping with challenges? These questions remain unanswered at this point in time.

VII. A. 3. Researcher's Assumption in Data Interpretation

During the process of data analysis in a qualitative approach, the researcher is actively involved in the emergence of interpretive themes through the selection of lower- and higher level conceptual categories and of relevant raw interview narratives. The purpose of the study determines the interpretive process. As well, the researcher is inevitably informed and affected by her or his assumptions and life experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Therefore, varied interpretations may be derived by different researchers or the same researcher exploring different focuses of study. Consequently, there is no "perfect" objective analysis.
of the data. The researcher therefore recognises that the data analysis may have been informed and affected by her own subjectivity. As detailed in the Method section, the researcher has checked the credibility of her derived categories with two members of the Chinese community, as well as provided ample citations to allow the reader to assess the credibility of the findings.

VII. A. 4. The Inadequacy of Studying Traditional Chinese Women's Emotional Needs from the Western Counselling Perspective

The data strongly indicated that the pattern of help-seeking behaviour of these participants reflected the impact of Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism (e.g., self-control in Chinese yen, and family hierarchy and trust of authority); Taoism (e.g., circular mode of thinking – yin yang, feng-shui and physiognomy); and Buddhism (e.g., destiny in Chinese yuen and circular thinking). The impact of these philosophies on help seeking behaviour require further study. One may question the adequacy of studying Chinese immigrant women's emotional needs and coping strategies from the Western psychological perspective. Chinese philosophies and their interactions with dominant Canadian values should be systematically studied in order to further understand the help seeking behaviour of these Chinese immigrant women. For example, in this study, the family played a significant role in providing emotional and other support, even from a distance. Nonetheless, most of the participants reported that they had crossed or would cross the cultural barriers to seek assistance when in crisis. In the Eastern collective culture, individual endurance or tolerance of hardship (yen) is considered a woman's virtue. Western counselling, in contrast,
may be seen as a product of an expressive individualistic culture. These adult immigrants were expected by the mainstream services providers to adopt the Western approach to problem solving skills with respect to mental health concerns. How reasonable is such an expectation remains an open question.

**VII. A. 5. Translation**

In this study, the interviews were conducted in Cantonese. Similarly, data analysis was conducted on the Cantonese interview protocols. That helped maintain the culturally rich nuances and authentic meaning of the data. The findings and implications of the study could be possibly best conveyed in Cantonese. However, for the sake of this dissertation the conceptual categories and their interpretation were translated to English. This was done through the help of two bi-lingual and one English speaking evaluators. The described results may be somewhat compromised by this process of translation.

**VII. A. 6. The Impact of Racism on Help-Seeking Behaviour Was Not Investigated**

The various phenomena of racism emerged in the data analysis as an important category affecting these women immigrants’ experiences and mental health. While participants did not themselves connect experiences of racism to their help seeking behaviour (Nielsen, 1990), this issue may need further study.
VII. B. Study Implications

VII. B. 1. External Barriers to Psychological Counselling Services

VII. B. 1. a. Lacking counselling services knowledge. The findings presented in the previous sections strongly reflected several barriers, such as the lack of knowledge, language limitations, differing underlying philosophies, user fees and immobility, which deterred these new immigrant women from reaching out to psychological counselling services. The most profound obstacle was the lack of knowledge of the offered services. Being new in a country, these immigrants might not know what kind of services were appropriate to their needs. Nor would they know where to seek assistance except through family members, friends, or acquaintances who could all be almost as ignorant about the facilities as they. Some of these women might have heard about the services but not have the knowledge about using them. This findings are consistent with those of Kirmayer with the Vietnamese in Montreal, and Nguyen with the Vietnamese community in Toronto (Kirmayer, 1996; Nguyen, 1996). Via a long winding route, usually through individuals who were more informed about the services, such as guidance and ESL teachers or other social services agencies, these participants eventually reached the right services. In addition, Western psychology is deeply-rooted in the Canadian mainstream culture. Consequently, psychological counselling and psychotherapy services are part of the repertoire of problem solving skills in these Western cultures. In contrast, the Oriental societies have their own psychology and approach to coping with daily challenges. This wisdom is revealed in the various schools of philosophy such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. However, the profound cultural and emotional alienation between the host country and these immigrant
women caused a crisis in their habitual ways of coping. Regardless, new immigrants were expected to be acculturated overnight. This implicit expectation implies that there is a high possibility that the infrastructure of the current mainstream counselling services delivery system undermines the mental health of many new immigrants.

**VII. B. 1. b. Language barriers.** Language barriers were central in impeding the approach to mental health services. Several participants could not reach the right sources of information because they did not have the necessary language skills. Having approached the mental health system, they could not benefit from the services when they were offered in English. This finding is in line with that of Kirmayer (1996), who worked with Vietnamese immigrants in Montreal. The use of interpreters in counselling has been repeatedly debated among co-workers in the field and was recommended by the Canadian Task Force (1988b). However, no available literature indicates the benefit of using an interpreter in counselling. The use of an interpreter will bring about concerns such as confidentiality, professionalism and other issues. Other participants had basic language skills but were not fluent enough to express themselves to the degree that they wanted. That caused misunderstandings in the counselling process and possibly affected the effectiveness of the services. These immigrant women clearly indicated the relevance of language as an inhibiting factor preventing them from using counselling services, despite significant mental health issues.

**VII. B. 1. c. User fees.** User fee is another impediment to counselling services
described by these immigrant women. Most of the immigrant women were experiencing financial constraints and struggling to survive financially. Even a token fee of ten dollars may be too much, especially considering their ambivalence about how helpful this service could be for them. In addition to having limited financial means, counselling services are foreign to the Chinese culture, where their ancestors survived without such services. Considering that physical and psychiatric services are fully paid for by the government, the lack of support for mental health services may reflect a bias against the crucial role of mental, as compared with, physical well being. Inevitably, some immigrants end up in hospitals, suffering from acute mental health crises. Providing free mental health services may, in the long run, be more economical.

VII. B. 1. d. Immobility. At times, these immigrant women needed mental health services, but did not have access to transportation. Public transportation was not easily accessible in the suburbs where most of these participants lived. Most did not have cars. Unless it was a life and death situation, these women, who were still in the process of establishing themselves and their home, were not able to pay for a taxi. This may be one reason why these women only reached out in situations of acute crisis.

VII. C. Cultural Aspects of Not Seeking Outside Assistance

VII. C. 1. The Impact of the Concept of Interdependence in an Agrarian Culture.

The findings showed that all these participants sought immediate support from family members here in Canada or back home. As well, they also solicited information or ideas from good friends or acquaintances, but not from strangers. This reflects the concept of
interdependence borrowed from the Chinese collective agrarian culture. According to this value, a family has an obligation to assist or protect its members. Family members must put no conditions limiting their interdependence. Friends mainly abide by this law as well. However, strangers are not allowed to enter that interdependent circle. This is a deep-rooted traditional value governing social practice. Similar findings have been obtained by Hwang’s (cited by Cheung, 1991) studies coping strategies of stress among the Chinese in Taiwan. Yang (1995) reached a similar conclusion based on his analysis of Chinese Social Orientation.

**VII. C. 2. The Belief in Self-Reliance and the Tolerance of Hardship Yen**

The belief in self-reliance and tolerance of hardship was one of the major reasons for not seeking outside assistance among the Chinese women who participated in the study. Tolerance and patience in Chinese is *yen*. The concept of *yen* is more than patience. It also involves the idea of generosity, kindness and forgiveness (Hu, 1995) and "taking things at ease" (Lee, 1995). Several participants clearly asserted their beliefs in self-reliance and in the tolerance of tribulations. They only sought outside help when their problems got out of control. Other participants sought outside help for their children, while they would not do it for themselves. The participants were ready to tolerate high levels of stress and frustrations. Their extended family, as well, expected them to demonstrate *yen* even in extreme circumstances, such as a husband’s verbal abuse.

Further, the philosophy of tolerance, *yen*, was also applied to experiences of racism. Several participants reported the struggle of tolerating discriminatory and prejudiced work
environments. One participant turned the anger against herself (see also Beiser, *et al* 1994; Canadian Task Force, 1988a; Li, 1992; Smart, 1994). These episodes may have further pushed these women to rely on themselves or on their ethnic group. The two participants who repeatedly experienced the worst forms of discrimination at work because of their race and colour, strongly refused to seek help from any agency. These victims of racism did not want to reach out beyond their religious groups for assistance because they did not know what kind of people they would encounter in the helping services. They strongly emphasized that they would have felt worse if their assigned counsellor had been English speaking. Within the context of racism, even the anticipation of possible misunderstandings with mental health counsellors, seemed intolerable. Nickerson *et al.* (1994) and Terrell and Terrell (1981; 1984) reported similar experiences of cultural mistrust in cross-cultural counselling situations. Though the participants were not able to connect their experiences of prejudice and discriminatory behaviour with their help-seeking behaviour (Nielsen, 1990), it is likely that experiences of racism had an impact on their help-seeking behaviour. Instead, when the oppression became intolerable, they regained control of the problems by giving up their jobs or other pursuits.

Behaviour patterns reflecting tolerance to adversity in these immigrant women may be understood further through an understanding of their cultural background. Many traditional Chinese women learn as children that life does not promise to be a rose garden. Later in life, before leaving their home town, they prepare themselves to accept whatever difficulties might come up. They learn that: "A thousand days at home, peace; A moment abroad, trouble" (Chinese maxim cited in Bond, 1991). The saying "[i]f you wait for the
clouds to part, you will see a bright moon” expresses the importance of practising tolerance. Lee (1995), Hu (1993) and Hwang (1977; 1978; 1979 cited in Cheung, 1991) found that this coping strategy has also been common among Chinese men in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. The philosophy of perseverance is inherited from the belief of self-control in Confucianism (Hu, 1993). Interestingly, this finding is also consistent with the stoicism found in Mitsopulos's study (1995) of a group of Greek-Canadian male retirees who came to Canada as immigrants in the fifties and sixties. Immigrants to Canada seem to endure much hardship within existing socio-economic and political structures. The abuse of power and neglect of immigrants to Canada has been amply documented (Canadian Task Force, 1988a & 1988b).

VII. C. 3. Issues of Stigma, Privacy, And the View of the ‘Other’

Concern over how ‘other’ people may think of their involvement in counselling was mentioned several times by participants. Rather than referring to someone specific, they had a general sense of disapproval by people around them. Those could be strangers, acquaintances or family members who knew them but did not share their concerns about the distressing social situations. These findings supported the analysis of Yang (1995) on the orientation towards the ‘Other’ in the Chinese culture. Yang suggested that Chinese people are very sensitive to the opinions of others and therefore try to avoid differences between themselves and others. Since Chinese people tend to associate psychological services with psychiatric patients, several participants preferred to conform with the norm and not be seen as stigmatised psychiatric patients. They preferred to use possible alternatives to counselling.
A concern for privacy was interwoven with the sensitivity to the view of the 'other'. Feeling sensitive to others' thoughts, opinions and feelings, including those of strangers (Yang 1995), it is not too difficult to infer that the participants also felt anxious about the counsellor's opinion of themselves when they disclosed their private feelings and thoughts as Lydia, Joy and Pam strongly indicated.

It may be of interest to note while these participants mentioned concerns about bringing shame or disgrace themselves, they were not expressing the same concerns in relation to their families. This finding does not support the general assumption that Chinese people do not want to reach out for help because that may bring shame to their families (Bond, 1991; Sue, 1993; Toupin, 1980). This finding may reflect the observed weakening of the traditional collective concept of family in Hong Kong under the British rule, as well as here in Canada. Western individualistic influences contrast with traditional family and community structures. Yang has described the influence of Western industrialization and modernization on Chinese people (Yang, 1991, 1995).

**VII. C. 4. The Role of Religion Substituted Secular Counselling Services in Times of Suffering.**

The issue of the role of religion in counselling and psychotherapy has been a controversial issue (Bergin, 1980, 1991; Ellis, 1980; Sermabeikian, 1994; Tan, 1996; Walls, 1980). However, the role of religion in times of human suffering was strongly revealed in the findings. Religious perspectives were adopted by several participants in their struggle to find comfort and meaning in their sufferings. Several participants got emotional support
from their religious groups. One participant sought social support from another religious group, in addition to her own religion. One participant connected her son with her neighbour's religious group. For others, going to church represented a continuation of their customs from home. The phenomenon of relying on religious organizations for support is consistent with the findings of Hwang (1977, 1978, 1979, as cited in Cheung, 1991). Hwang found that one of the coping strategies with stress was to pray for blessings in addition to seeking help from varied social sources. Similar findings were observed by Tan (1996), and Nouwen (1974), and Uomoto (1995).

Several participants stated that they would rather approach their religious leaders about their problems instead of a secular psychological counsellor. One participant stressed that in her religious group people did not only listen to her, but also prayed for her. These experiences are in line with Uomoto's view on the role of others in relieving extreme pain (Nouwen, 1974; Uomoto, 1995).

The lack of integration of religiously based values in the counselling process may limit the appeal and effectiveness of counselling to religious individuals. There is a lack of systematic studies in this area which results in a superficial understanding of religion by clinical counsellors in general (Bergin, 1980). Consequently, many counsellors may not come across as accepting and sensitive to clients' religious beliefs. This anticipated lack of openness to religious beliefs has influenced several participants to avoid counselling services. The data suggested that it is advantageous for the counsellor to be actively sensitive to clients' religious beliefs in the counselling process. This finding is supported by Bergin (1980, 1991), Jung (1933), Sermabeikian (1994), and Tan (1996).
VII. D. Cultural Aspects of Seeking Professional Assistance

In spite of the value-laden barriers, there are cultural aspects which may make Chinese people seek help when needed. The value of responsibility which is also reinforced by the Buddhist concept of relational fatalism or destiny, *yuen*, is one such value. Another value is that of trust in authority.

VII. D. 1. The Buddhist Concept of Relational Fatalism *yuen*

In terms of familial responsibility, according to ancient Chinese culture, each person has a role which entails rights and responsibilities. In addition, traditional Chinese people believe in the Buddhist philosophy of predetermination in relationships such as parent-child. This is a fatalistic factor called *yuen*. No one can change it until the *yuen* is exhausted. Therefore, family members have the obligation to assist each other. This belief system is so powerful that it does not blame the self for the cause of the problem and explains away the negative aspect of the occurrence. As well, it convinces people to accept the reality of the relationship and motivates family members to offer assistance unconditionally. This concept was revealed, for example, in an eighty year old mother of one participant who came all the way from Hong Kong to Canada to support her daughter in her grief over a broken relationship. Most participants exhausted resources in assisting their children to get on the right track. These observations were in line with the analyses of Yang (1995) and Yang and Ho (cited in Yang, 1995) on relational fatalism, *yuen*. This theory of relational fatalism, *yuen*, may help explain help-seeking behaviours of parents who sought services for their children. The value of *yuen* seemed to encourage reaching out beyond one’s personal values.
VII. D. 2. The Trust in Authority

The trust in authority was inherited from the traditional patriarchal agrarian society in which the father had absolute power to rule the family with responsibility (Hamilton, 1984; Wang, 1988 cited in Yang, 1995). This trust was generalized to the head of any social groups including the local government official called *fu-mu guan* parent-official. It meant that the official's role, power and responsibility were considered parallel to a parent. Consequently, the emperor was seen as a father-substitute and the people were called *zimin*, son-people, which was parallel to the children of a father. The emperor's absolute power entailed responsibility and mercy. The trust in authority existed only when the people felt comfortable entrusting their welfare to the authority who was expected to be able to protect and assist them when in need. The government also honoured the *zimin* subjects' respectful behaviour. This behaviour became a mutual reinforcement to strengthen the patriarchal authority (Wang, 1988 cited in Yang, 1995). Gradually, this behaviour has become a spontaneous reaction to authority among traditional Chinese people. To these traditional Chinese, an authority was often perceived as implying seniority and high social status on the one hand; and morality, knowledge and wisdom on the other. However, under the impact of Western industrialization, modernization and open culture, this trust in authority has been profoundly weakened (see also Suinn, et al, 1994; Yang, 1991, 1995). Nevertheless, this characteristic still exists and is generalized to trust professionals as experts in some degree among contemporary traditional Chinese people as evidenced in this study (see also Chu and Sue, 1984). Participants like Amy, Teresa, Susan, Polly and Ming pointed out that professionals have the knowledge to assist their children's concerns. When positive results
were shown, their trust in the professionals was enhanced. This is consistent with findings from other contemporary societies such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China and the United States (Sue, 1993; Yang, 1995).

In the context of help-seeking, several studied participants tended to trust professionals whom they sought for help. However, they were very careful about who they consulted. All participants mentioned that a professional whom they trusted must possess the attributes of competence, accountability, credibility, responsibility, knowledge, empathy, good listening skills, understanding and genuineness, in addition to fluency in their native language and culture. Interestingly, these characteristics are also the pre-requisites of a competent counsellor, in particular a transcultural counsellor. This finding is consistent with the findings of Cheung (1985), Lorenzo and Adler (1984), S. Sue (1992b), and Sue and McKinney (1975). However, these participants had to be assured that the services were benevolent and competent and culturally and linguistically responsive in contrast to the Western counselling services offered in the English language (see also Canadian Task Force, 1988a). Offering transcultural counselling in ethnic and language specific centres may change the reported under-utilization of mental health services by Chinese people (Canadian Task Force, 1988a & 1988b; Kirmayer, 1996; Lo, 1986; Sue & Sue, 1974; Sue & Kirk, 1975; Sue & McKinney, 1975).

**Conclusion of the Findings**

In conclusion, from Western counselling perspective (Figure A), this study seemed to show that the major reasons for the under-utilization of the mental health services, in
particular counselling services, by these Chinese immigrant women were due to a combination of external and cultural impediments. External impediments involved the lack of knowledge of Western mental health services and the English language, user fees, and geographical inaccessibility. Cultural deterents involved issues of stigma, loss of face, or not reaching out to strangers. Nonetheless, when their situations involved crises or their children’s well-being, these participants were ready to cross both external and cultural hurdles. A state of crisis, combined with another set of cultural beliefs in personal or familial responsibility, destiny which reinforced the belief in responsibility, and the trust in authority, drove them to seek assistance from cultural sensitive counselling services in their native language. Similar findings were reflected in the studies of Atkinson, Jennings and Liongson (1990), Atkinson, Whiteley and Gim (1990), Lin (1994), D. W. Sue (1994), Sue, 1993, Sue and Zane (1987), Tata and Leong (1994), and Yeh, et al (1994). Other research findings such as those of Mau and Jephson (1990), Tracey, Leong and Glidden (1986), and Waxer (1996) suggested that people’s perceptions of their problems and their beliefs about the type of help they needed also governed their help-seeking behaviour. This suggestion is also reflected in the study.

However, the aforementioned two polarized conflictual cultural aspects which governed the help-seeking behaviour of the traditional Chinese people might have been obscured in previous research. This study revealed that participants actively searched, in a way that honoured their religious and cultural context, for the kind of help they wanted. In addition, the relationships between the motivation to seek assistance and the basic knowledge and information on counselling services also determined their help-seeking behaviour. The
external and cultural barriers to approaching mental health services may account for the tendency to present in mental health services at time of acute crisis. This is supported by the writer's survey and the reports of the clients within the twenty-two months in Canada (Wong, 1991; see also table 1).

When the data was interpreted within the Chinese cultural context (Figure B), two sets of seemingly conflictual beliefs coexisted effectively as guidelines for handling challenges. For example, the beliefs in self-reliance and tolerance of adversity imply self-responsibility. Tolerance, (yen), in Chinese is more than endurance. It also includes taking things easy, forgiveness, kindness and generosity, and adopting a wider capacity to accept reality. The belief in interdependence is, in a collective cultural context, to encourage mutual support in a family and a community. Adopting a religious point of view, particularly in time of suffering, is to pray for blessings and forgiveness, to remind everybody in the family to practise morality, and to put things in perspective as opposed to being overwhelmed by hardship. When it is necessary to seek professional assistance, it is the individual or the family’s responsibility to bring the issue to the relevant person. The belief in destiny yuen or fate further reinforces one’s responsibility from which no one can escape. The relevant helper has been traditionally reached through knowledgeable family members, or community leaders. In this respect, the issues of privacy and stigma do not have a place at all in the process of seeking help because it is appropriate behaviour. However, when it unnecessary to bring family or personal issues to the irrelevant person, it is considered inappropriate gossip. The belief in privacy and the avoidance of stigma are intended to discourage gossip, especially by children.
This interpretation strongly revealed two significant factors of their under-utilization of mental health facilities as pointed out by the participants. Firstly, being new to the country, they lacked the knowledge and information about mental health and facilities. Secondly, they lost a very significant party in their help-seeking process: a resourceful community leader whom they trusted. Traditionally, resourceful community leaders played a significant role in making referrals to the relevant helpers (Figure B). In modern times, community leaders are extended to teachers, doctors or religious leaders as were strongly reflected by the help-seeking paths of Susan, Kay and Lydia. Further, the unavailability of ethno-specific counselling services was another key factor in developing a habit of delaying interview of emotional distress. It is too superficial and naive to infer that the fear of being stigmatised and the issue of privacy are cultural deficits in the under-utilization of the Western mental health services. This conclusion seems to assume that all the Chinese should handle their emotional distress in the same manner as the middle-class Euro-Americans do, regardless of their culture, language, social, economic and political backgrounds as well as history. Stanley Sue once stated that the history of the Chinese Americans is replete with stereotype, prejudice and discrimination and this is supported by many other research findings such as those of Peter Li in Canada. If Sue and Li are right, it may explain further the reasons why Chinese people do not use the mainstream mental health services unless they are in crisis. Perhaps this is a way of avoiding being stereotyped, prejudiced or discriminated against. It also leads us to further understand the reasons why these participants preferred ethno-specific counselling services. What appears to be cultural deficit in using mainstream mental health facilities is in fact strengths in handling challenges.
in a strange land. The authentic help-seeking guideline becomes problematic only when the Chinese indigenous services and support systems are no longer there like in Toronto. These findings are, I believe, the major contributions of this research study.

**VII. E. Implications and Recommendations for Counselling Services Delivery**

Through their narratives, these participants strongly indicated that the current forms of counselling services neither respond to their needs nor value their cultural beliefs as immigrant women. In light of multiple stressors involved with immigration, and a host of culture-specific tendencies, the experience of these immigrant women may serve to suggest revisions to existing counselling services. One implication is to be informed and responsive to clients' linguistic needs and to their cultural values. In addition, new immigrants need to be exposed to basic knowledge about mental health services. New immigrants need assistance with life skills, finding emotional and social support and the opportunity to learn the language and culture of the host country. For parents, they need to learn ways to integrate the different parenting styles of the two cultures. In a broader way, a mentally healthy environment involves a respect for diversity and differences in a society in which discrimination and prejudice are challenged at all levels.

**VII. E. 1. Language and Cultural Sensitivity Framework.**

In order to reach out to new Chinese immigrants, service providers must bear in mind that new immigrants came from a different social cultural background and speak a different language. They also have a different perception of their daily challenges. Their concepts
of mental health are different from those of mainstream Western psychology and may be very unique to each ethnic group (Beiser et al, 1994; Sandhu, 1997; Sue, 1993). As a result, life challenges may be handled quite differently. For these reasons, service providers need to be flexible and open to unconventional theoretical frameworks when working with target non Western groups. In addition, they need to be familiar with the language and culture of these groups. In the case of Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, the services have to be understood and delivered within the Cantonese context.

**VII. E. 2. Education of Mental Health**

New immigrants need to be exposed to and educated about Western concepts of mental good health and ill health for children, adults, and the aged. It is particularly important that they be able to identify lower level difficulties and not only acute crises. Preventative measures may be particularly useful to immigrants who would like to have a good start in the new host country but are feeling the burdens involved with the process of adjustment. Moreover, they need information about what resources may be available and how and where to access them. Research findings such as those of Solberg et al (1994), and the Canadian Task Force (1988b) suggest that outreach programmes in the community would increase the utilization rate of counselling services.

**VII. E. 3. Publicity of Counselling Services**

The frustrations and stress that these participants experienced in the process of seeking counselling services implies that, currently, available counselling services are not
publicized in a way that makes them accessible to new immigrants. Innovative approaches to disseminating such information have to be undertaken. For example, pamphlets in the official and newcomers' native languages, with concise information about counselling services and agencies, could be distributed in the Canadian immigration and customs offices in airports. In addition, the same information can be disseminated through the ethnic media, schools, primary physicians' clinics, and community centres attended by new immigrants.

**VII. E. 4. Hiring of Bi-Lingual and Bi-Cultural Receptionists and Well Trained Counsellors**

What these participants were most concerned about in reaching out to counselling services was the possibility of miscommunication between themselves and service providers. This was found in studies by different researchers of cross-cultural counselling, such as those conducted by Atkinson, Jennings, and Liongson (1990), Ruiz, Casas, and Padilla (1977), and Vontress (1974). Thus, the success of public education programmes for new immigrants relies heavily on the availability of qualified bi-cultural and bi-lingual receptionists and counsellors. It is important to note that a bi-lingual counsellor is not necessarily bi-cultural. A competent transcultural counsellor needs additional relevant training (American Psychological Association, 1993; Arrendondo, et al, 1996; Lin & Lin, 1978; Mobley & Jones, 1996; D. W. Sue, Arrendondo & McDavis, 1992). The bi-cultural clinician has to be aware of the dynamics and evolution of cultures in a pluralistic society. Different individuals will exhibit various degrees of acculturation and distinct lived experiences. Contemporary Chinese culture, behaviour, personality and perception of difficulties comprise a complex
product of the interactions between the traditional Chinese culture and other cultures, as well as reactions to biases, stereotypes, prejudice and discriminations (see also Leong & Schneller, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1985). All these factors affect help-seeking behaviour. It would be a mistake to stereotype the Chinese people as unchanged, traditional beings only. It takes a bi-cultural and bi-lingual counsellor to thoroughly understand them both as universal human beings and as unique individuals affected by specific traditional Chinese characteristics (Yang, 1995). A bi-cultural counsellor would be familiar with the clients' social cultural norms. He or she is able to competently integrate clients' values and beliefs, perceptions of their difficulties, and attitudes towards mental health services in formulating diagnoses and counselling plans. To apply cultural knowledge with integrity, respect, sensitivity and empathy is the key to successful transcultural counselling. This transcultural person must be equally conversant and sensitive to Western ways in order to facilitate help within the Western context in which these people now live.

**VII. E. 5. Promotion of Respect and Acceptance of Diversity and the Fight against Discrimination and Prejudice**

Discrimination and prejudice towards Chinese immigrants in the job market, workplace, shopping mall, and in business, have been reported elsewhere, as well as documented in the current study (Economist and Sun, June 22, 1995 cited in the Ad-hoc Committee of Concerned Canadians, 1995; Johnson, 1994; Li, 1992; Smart, 1994). These experiences were detrimental to the mental health and successful adjustment of the victims as reported by the participants, and the society at large (see also Edwards & Beiser, 1994; Canadian
The results of stopping discrimination and promoting respect and acceptance of diversity promote good mental health and facilitate a healthy environment (Beiser et al., 1994). Counselling agencies have to acknowledge the existence of prejudice against and rejection of immigrants, particularly of visible minorities, who deserve to receive appropriate mental health services (Kirmayer, 1993; Sue, 1992a). They should set an example of non-discrimination through recruiting staff members from diverse backgrounds and through practising employment equity. Employment equity policy guidelines should be made available to protect staff members and clients from various expressions of discrimination and racism (Campbell, 1994; Gadd, 1997; Ontario Hospitals Anti-Racism Task Force, 1996; Peirol, 1996). In addition, these agencies should work in collaboration with the racial liaison sector to promote an understanding between different ethnic communities and stop prejudice and racism. The general public should be made aware of the policy through mass media communications within the context of promoting a healthy society.

VII. E. 6. Channel the Skills of Immigrants to the Right Position.

In light of the stress involved with the job searching and with financial constraints, and the consequent symptoms of situational depression reported among immigrants (see also Beiser et al., 1993), it is time to consider an innovative approach to mental health services offered to new immigrants. The immigrants in this study were highly qualified professionals whose skills are considered assets by the criteria of the Canadian Government. However, being members of a visible minority without a knowledge of Canadian customs (Hunter,
1996), perfect English, and a personal network (Smart, 1994), in addition to protectionism within the establishment (Peirol, 1996), new immigrants are unlikely to connect with the right people, be offered a job, or be incorporated into the right business network (Smart, 1994). In order to benefit from new immigrants, their skills and assets have to be integrate into existing opportunities. This will contribute to the Canadian economy and prevent unnecessary mental suffering and expenses related to the use of mental health services (see also Canadian Task Force, 1988a; Lam, 1994). An inter-disciplinary and inter-departmental team approach may be required to assess the needs of the host country and the required distributions of skills among its immigrants. This could be guided through an ongoing national study of required skills and businesses. Similarly, it may be helpful to give immigrants the opportunity, through brief training sessions, to become familiar with Canadian customs in their area of work. Help in facilitating a job search will be beneficial as immigrants work towards independence or interdependence. A success in job searching will boost self-esteem and self-confidence. This suggests the importance of providing career counselling in addition to psychological counselling (see also Canadian Task Force, 1988a, pp. 9-10, Prevention).

VII. E. 7. Reach Out to Immigrant Women in Isolation through Varied Activities and Educational Programmes

The findings of the study indicated that these immigrant women needed time and emotional support to grieve the loss of their past support systems. In addition, the experience of isolation and loneliness in Canada seemed to deepen and prolong their grieving process.
In order to address these issues of isolation and loss, it may be useful to integrate components of mental health services into other activities, such as classes in English as a second language, job searching groups, parent support groups, cooking classes or other activities. As participants find shared interests, they can then form their own support groups and these support groups, in turn, will lower the experience of isolation.

**VII. E. 8. Adopt an Integrative and Holistic Approach to Counselling Services**

The data strongly showed that parents were more eager to seek psychological counselling assistance for children's concerns than for their own mental well-being. These parents tended to place children's needs above their own. In North America, psychological and career counselling are separate services. As well, adult and child mental health services are also independently managed. However, when these new immigrant women presented with a particular difficulty, such as a job search or a child's problem, they also related other difficulties, such as financial strains, parenting issues, or language and cultural barriers (Chabot *et al.*, 1994). They also tended to place survival needs above emotional concerns, as has been observed by others (Smart, 1994; Tracey, Leong, & Glidden, 1986). This might be due to their beliefs that survival needs, or children's concerns, are more legitimate concerns for professional services. Their own emotional needs were private matters which are valued less in an Eastern collective culture than in the Western individualistic one. This is consistent with Vontress's finding in other ethnic minorities (Vontress, 1983). However, these beliefs did not mean that they did not have emotional needs or mental health concerns. Like other immigrants, they also suffered and grieved a great deal (Canadian Task Force,
1988a; Lam, 1994; Smart, 1994). Their experiences of emotional disturbances would not be lower than that of the average Canadian, and may likely be higher (Currer, 1984, Lam, 1994). However, they tended to handle emotional needs by themselves or through relatives and friends whom they trusted and with whom they had bonds of affection. Further, it would be extremely hard for victims of discrimination to trust strangers outside their community (Terrel & Terrel, 1981, 1984). Integrating services for immigrants would result in immigrants accessing all at once help with job search, career counselling, children's concerns, as well as individual or marital counselling (Vontress, 1983). This may assist the goal of preventing serious mental distress.

The findings also showed that these Chinese immigrants had great spiritual needs which they often pursued through their religious organizations. Indeed, the number of Chinese Christian churches and Chinese Buddhist temples is expanding with the influx of immigrants in Toronto and Vancouver (Chabot, et al, 1994; Lee, 1994; Lary & Luk, 1994). Counselling services and mental health educators may consider running their programmes in collaboration with various religious sectors. More ambitiously, training programmes on mental health education and on available services could be offered to religious leaders since they are often at the forefront as far as many immigrants are concerned. They could then refer immigrants to counselling services when needed.


Barriers to the utilization of services were not only language and cultural difficulties but as well as user fees and physical accessibility. These research participants pointed out
that they felt tremendous stress over the issue of finances and that they placed basic survival needs above emotional needs. Some could only pay for a few sessions if necessary. This phenomenon was consistent with the findings of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health in 1988a: "It has been found that where a person is referred to a psychologist by a medical doctor that the Medical Services Insurance system will not provide coverage; it only covers for psychiatrists... Therefore, there is no treatment available since the individual is in the process of establishing himself and cannot afford to pay for the services himself" (p.38). The Task Force asserted that barriers have to be overcome in order to care for these new Canadians. Thus, psychological services should be considered an integral part of health services and the government should provide coverage for these services similar to the coverage of psychiatric and physical health services. Regarding location, it is essential to set up counselling services in each community and in locations easily accessible by public transit.

**Summary of Implications and Recommendations for Counselling or Psychotherapy**

**Services Delivery**

1. To construct a linguistically responsive and culturally sensitive framework for counselling services delivery.

2. To educate new immigrants about basic concepts of mental health, prevention and counselling services through mass media and in collaboration with primary physicians, schools and religious organizations.

3. To publicize the importance of mental health and the use of counselling services.
4. To hire bi-lingual and bi-cultural well-trained receptionists and counselling professionals to implement and deliver the services.

5. To promote the concept of respect and acceptance of diversity and combat discrimination and prejudice within and outside of agencies.

6. To channel the skills of immigrants to the right positions by liberalizing the barriers to licensing.

7. To reach out to immigrant women in isolation through varied activities and educational programmes.

8. To adopt an integrative, holistic and inter-disciplinary approach to counselling services.

9. To assure easy accessibility by eliminating user fees and setting up the services in each community.

Suggestions for Future Research

The study suggests the importance of studying the experiences of new immigrants in order to plan revisions of existing counselling services. Larger scale studies within the Chinese and other communities are needed. In conducting such studies, it is important to access immigrants who have used and those who have not used counselling services.

Many processes of immigration have a great effect on the help-seeking behaviour of new immigrants. The study of acculturation processes will further inform counselling services. Similarly, the study of Chinese philosophies and their impact on help-seeking behaviour of new immigrants may inform counselling services as well.
Specific qualitative processes involved in cross-cultural acculturation have not been researched. For example, the impact of expectations, within Western counselling, that clients showed adopt Western modes of coping strategies has not been studied. As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, the impact of exposure to racial discrimination on help-seeking behaviour has not been studied. The integration of traditional healing practices with Western approaches to counselling requires further study as well.

Current demographic trends suggest that Canadian society is culturally and racially diverse. Continued research in the area of mental health and diversity is essential in guiding future developments in the field of mental health.
REFERENCES


The Ad-hoc Committee of Concerned Canadians & Chinese Canadian National Council, [1995]. Chinese Canadians are part of Markham too: A response to a racist remark of the Deputy Mayor of Markham. Symposium, August, 21, Markham, Ontario, Canada.


Beiser, M., Dion, R., Gotowiec, A. Hyman, I., & Vu, N. [1995]. Immigrant and refugee children

235


Canadian Task Force, [1988a]. After the Door Has Been Opened: Mental health issues


Chou, K. L., Mak, K. Y., Chung, P. K. & Ho, K. [1996]. Attitudes towards mental patients


Han, Y. [1938] *Changli Xiensheng Ji* [The collected essays of Master Changli]. Reprinted from *Shi Cai Tang* copy of the Sung Dynasty, vol.17, Shanghai: Shangwu.


Hong Kong Information Services [1997]. Hong Kong: Background Information. Hong Kong Government Website, February.


Psychology, 33, 122-124.


Chaninn Perspectives in Mental Illnss. San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.


Lo, H. T. [1986]. Hong Kong Immigrants in Toronto-Mental Health Perspectives. In T. P. Khoo [Ed.]. Mental Health in Hong Kong, [pp.331-336]. Hong Kong: Mental Health Association of Hong Kong.


Nguyen, S. D. [1982]. The Psycho-social adjustment and mental health needs of Southeast Asian refugees. The Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa. 7(1), 26-34.


Sue, D. W.; Arredondo, P. & McDavis, R. J. [1992]. Multicultural counseling competencies


Sue, S., & Zane, N. [1987]. The role of culture and cultural techniques in psychotherapy: A


Waxer, P. H. [1984]. Nonverbal aspects of psychotherapy: Discret functions in the intercultural


APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

I, __________________, hereby agree to participate in a research study conducted by Oye-Nam Christine Wong, a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. I understand that the study will focus on my adjustment experience as a landed immigrant in Canada. The purpose of the study is to understand what kind of help has or has not been available, and has or has not been conducive to me when needed. The hope is that the study will shed new light on intercultural counselling education as well as service delivery. Thus, more immigrants will benefit from the services.

I am aware that the research study will involve one to three interviews with Oye-Nam Christine Wong, who will ask questions regarding background demographic information, my experiences, thoughts and feelings about my adjustment experience in Canada, as well as my experiences in help-seeking path(s) back home and in Canada. In addition, I am also aware that the study might involve a couple of meetings with Oye-Nam Christine Wong for the purpose of clarifying and validating the information collected during the first interview.

I further understand that all information collected by Oye-Nam Christine Wong will remain private and confidential and may be shared, anonymously, only with her dissertation committee (Dr. Niva Piran, Dr. Peter Gamlin and Dr. Peter Waxer). I also understand that any presentation of publication of the results from the study will not reveal the identity of either myself or any other person[s] mentioned during the interview. As well, I give permission for Oye-Nam Christine Wong to have access to my clinical information relevant
to the present study. I understand that this information will also be held in strict confidence and will not be presented in any way that might reveal my identity.

I have been informed that tape recording will be erased by Oye-Nam Christine Wong on the completion of her dissertation and will, in the meantime, be stored in a locked compartment in Oye-Nam Christine Wong's home. I have also been informed that I may withdraw from the study at any point during the research process with no penalty. Should I decide to do so, the taped recording of my interview will be erased and any other research materials pertaining to me will be destroyed at that time.

It has been explained to me that the research study is separate from the counselling programme and that my participation in this study will in no way affect my standing or involvement with the counselling programme in the future. It has also been explained that my participation in the study will in no way interfere with any future therapeutic and non-therapeutic involvements.

Signature of Participant          Date          Signature of Witness
同意書

本人__________願意提供個人資料給黃榕楠用於多倫多大學，暨安省教育研究院之應用心理學系博士論文。

我明白這項調查目的是為要了解現時輔導服務資源是否適切地協助來自香港的女性移民，藉此為跨越文化輔導心理學教育及輔導服務界提供新理念，使更多女性移民得益。

我明白整項研究需要二至三次的訪問，每次訪問約一至二小時，黃榕楠會訪問我在加拿大的經歷，生活體驗，個人感受，當有困難時，我會怎樣應付等。我的參與純屬義務，並無任何酬勞。我了解這些資料是不記姓名和地址，任何可以辨認我個人身份的資料會被刪去及改寫。

我亦了解黃榕楠在討論和寫作上會把我的姓名及可辨認個人身份的資料改寫。我知道整個訪問過程被錄音。錄音帶會鎖在黃榕楠家中的文件櫃內。論文完成後，原資料會被毀滅。我亦明白我有權隨時退出協助此項研究，且無須付出任何賠償，而我的資料與錄音亦同時一併毀滅。

我了解這項研究調查與輔導服務無關，參與這項調查研究絕不會影響我現在或將來使用輔導服務。

__________  ___________  ___________
被訪者       日期         證人
APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule (Backward Translation from Cantonese)

I like to have casual conversation with participants and allow questions to emerge gradually. However, the contents of the interview will be the same as outlined. The sequence may not necessary be the same. I shall follow the flow of the interview and let the interviewee dictate the sequence. If the conversation covers what I want to ask, I shall skip those questions. Perhaps, I shall ask questions for clarification purpose. Following are the outlines of the conversation.

To the participants:

In order to give some directions to intercultural counselling educators to structure the counselling training programme and service providers to implement a more responsive service in the Chinese community, your life experiences, feelings, thoughts, attitudes and beliefs will be valuable to us. Your contribution is important since it will help ethnic Chinese, and new immigrants to go through the adjustment period. Thus, I am interested in understanding your experience of adjusting to life in Canada. What is most important to me is your unique experience, opinions and feelings. Whatever you say will be highly respected.

Natural Help-Seeking Behaviour

1. How long have you been in Canada?
2. How do you like life here?
3. Could you list three best experiences that you have had since you came to this
country?
4. Who did you most want to share those wonderful experiences with?
5. Would you mind if I ask you also to list your three worst experiences since you came to this country?
6. How did you cope with those incidents?
7. Did you talk to anybody about them? If not, what would happen if you did talk to anybody?
8. Whom did you talk to?
9. Were they the people whom you most wanted to talk to?
10. If you have a choice, whom would you choose to talk to? Why?
11. Did you seek assistance from anyone? [optional]
12. If yes, from whom did you receive assistance? [optional]
13. In what ways was it helpful?
14. [If help not sought], what would happen if you did go to seek assistance?
15. When do you think you would seek assistance from others?
16. Where would you get it?
17. How would you like to receive the assistance?
18. How important was that to you?

Attitudes Towards Psychological Counselling
19. What were the reasons that you did not choose to go to see a professional psychological counsellor?
20. Could you tell me those reasons?
21. How important were those reasons to you?
22. How important were those reasons to any of your family members?
23. How important were those reasons to your religion?
24. What would happen if you did go?
25. The Anglo-Celtic people tend to talk to a psychological counsellor about those incidents, what do you think of them?
26. If you did go, how would you like to receive the assistance?
27. Do you think psychological counselling service can be substituted for by any other service?
28. What would the substitute be?
29. If there is no substitute, what advice would you give the service providers in order to offer a more comprehensive psychological counselling service to the Chinese community?
30. What is your feeling/opinion to a fee for psychological services?

**Compare with Career Counseling.**

31. If you were looking for a job, would you be more inclined to go to see a career counsellor?
32. What are the reasons behind?
33. What is it like to see a career counsellor?
34. How would those experience be important to you?
Compare with their help-seeking behaviour in their home country

35. Suppose those incidents happened in Hong Kong, whom would you most like to talk to?

36. Are there any reasons behind this?

37. Would you seek help from anyone?

38. From whom would you like to seek assistance?

39. How would you like to receive the assistance?
Semi-Structured Interview Schedule (Spoken Cantonese)

訪問大綱 (廣東話)

1. 請問你來左加拿大幾年呀？
2. 你覺得呢邊嘅生活點樣呀？
3. 呀多年來，有無兩三件最開心嘅經歷呀？
4. 當時最想同邊嘅人講呀？
5. 又有無兩三件令你最難過的事發生呢？
6. 你當時點樣應付個事呀？
7. 有冇同人講過呢？同邊嘅人講？
8. 佢地係唔係你最想傾訴的對像呢？
9. 假如你有得揀嘅話，你最想同邊個講？
10. 有冇搵人幫忙？
11. (如有) 擾邊個人幫忙？
12. 佢點樣幫你呀？幫唔到？
13. (若無) 假如你真係搵人幫手嘅話？
    你估會有乜野後果呢？當時心情點？
14. 你認為啲乜野情況之下先至搵人幫忙？
15. 咁你會去邊搵呢？
16. 你最想人地點樣幫你呢？
17. 呢樣對你有幾緊要？點解呢？
18. 邊地原因導致你搵專業心裡輔導呢？
19. 呢地原因對你有幾緊要？
20. 呢地原因對你喺家人有幾緊要？
21. 呢D 原因對你嘅信念有幾著？
22. (若無)假如你真係揾專業心理輔導師幫忙？你估會有乜野發生呢？
    你估你嘅心情會點樣呢？
    你估你以爲人地會點睇你呢？
23. 英裔中層人士對於揾專業心理輔導師幫手處理困難係好隨便嘅事，你有乜野睇法呢？
24. 假如你揾輔導師的話，你最想佢點樣幫你？
25. 你認爲香港来る華人婦女需要西方的心理輔導嗎？
26. a. /既唔需要，又有乜野可以代替？
    b. /既然需要，你有乜野建議比我輔導服務機構，向華人婦女提議更完善嘅輔導服務？

心理與職業輔導之比較
27. 假如你而家揾緊工，你會揾職業輔導師幫忙嗎？點解呢？
28. 你估見職業輔導師之心情係點樣嘅呢？點解呢？
29. 假設剛才的遭遇是在香港發生你最想向邊個傾訴呢？點解呢？
30. (若無揾人)你會揾人幫嗎？
31. (若會)最想揾邊個人呢？
32. 你最希望人地點樣幫你？

收費
33. 你對於收服務費有乜野意見？
34. 你估為收服務費對消費者有乜野影響？點解呢？
APPENDIX C

Definition of Culture

1. Culture

Socially acceptable behaviour is strongly determined by the culture of a specific group. Culture is best defined by Murphy as "an abstraction which encompasses the total way of life of a society. It is a precipitate of the group's history and expresses its adaption to the physical environment. It is characterized especially by what A. I. Hallowell has called a 'psychological reality' [cited in Murphy, 1965, p.15]. It refers to the shared patterns of belief, feeling and knowledge. Members of the group carry the basic values, axioms and assumptions in their minds as guides for conduct and the definition of reality. C. P. Snow observes that without thinking about it [cultural guide], they respond alike [Snow, 1959].

Besides, Murphy asserts that culture refers to social relationship, technology, economics, religion, and other aspects of human life. All these aspects of life are interconnected and interdependent. This is how culture binds part to part to make a whole. Culture is constantly changing. It is learned and it is transmitted from one generation to the next. All societies have it. The style, however, varies from one group to another. When the variation between groups is marked, it is appropriate to speak of different cultures [Murphy, 1965].

2. Contemporary Chinese and their culture

The target group on this paper will be the contemporary Chinese immigrants. They are Chinese in terms of race and share the general traditional Chinese culture regardless the
sub-cultural differences and various degrees of acculturation. Also, it is appropriate to ask what the characteristics of contemporary Chinese culture are. Contemporary Chinese culture is derived from the traditional Confucius influenced culture and value system. As majority of the contemporary Chinese immigrants who came from the seventies onward, they are well educated, skilled professionals, and are bilingual in Chinese and English. Also, they have some exposure to Western culture through education in Hong Kong, North America, the United Kingdom as well as Australia. Therefore, they are bi-culture, too. Sue and Sue assert that Asian-American behaviours, culture, and personality are a product of traditional cultural values, interaction with Western values, and responses to discrimination and prejudice [Sue, & Sue, 1985]. For example, complaints of racial prejudice are voiced by recent immigrants as opposed to the older generation's passive tolerance [Sue, D. W. & Sue, D., 1985].

Contemporary Chinese-Canadians do not only voice out racial discrimination in Toronto, but also take positive action collectively. For instance, The Federation of Chinese Canadians in Scarborough organised programmes to promote race harmony [Sing Tao Jih Pao (Chinese Daily) 1991, The Chinese Canadian National Council confronted a Deputy mayor's racist remark (The Ad-hoc Committee, 1995). This seems to be consistent with the findings of Hsieh, Shybut and Lotsof [1969] that the "situation- centered" Chinese culture places importance on the group ... social roles-expectations, and harmony with the universe. Therefore, keeping harmonious relationships with neighbours means socially mature and responsible [Sue, 1981]. The difference is that the Chinese-Canadians, in the old days, remained passive and waited for things to improve [Sue, D.W. 1973]. The time has long passed. The contemporary immigrants realize that they need to speak up against injustices
in the world of confrontation politics. They have to actively seek changes that will preserve their sense of ethnic identity.
APPENDIX D

HIERARCHICAL ORDER OF PATTERNS OF THEMES

CHALLENGES THAT NEW CANADIAN WOMEN FACED AND THEIR COPING STRATEGIES

Coping with loss and loneliness

Tolerating the stress of job searching (yen)

Surviving with Financial constraints

Dealing with children's adjustment

Striving against the negative impacts of immigration on family relationships

Efforts to handle delicate spousal relationships

Managing a three-generation relationships

Enduring (yen) the stress of split-family arrangement

Struggling with language differences

Dancing with cultural dissimilarities and tension

Struggling with various facets of prejudice, discrimination and tension

Adjusting to harsh winter and transportation concerns

Searching for meaning to cope with life as immigrant women

THEMES OF HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Help-seeking behaviour in relation to own concerns

The reasons for seeking or not seeking counselling assistance

Lack of counselling knowledge and information

Counselling is an intangible service and is not part of the Chinese culture
Language barrier is an obstacle to counselling services

Views of stigma

Self-reliance and privacy

Resolve life challenges in religion

Some women were locked in immobile situations

Some women do not want to leave work for counselling service

Motivation for seeking help for emotional distress

Ventilation of feelings with family members and good friends

Reaching out to their support system back home for emotional support

Help-seeking behaviour in relation to children's concern

Comparison of views on career and psychological counselling

Views on career counselling services

Views on psychological counselling services

Other opinions

Both career and psychological counselling services provided direction to clients

Not knowing the nature of the services was an impediment to services

Views on Westerners' use of psychological counselling services

Seeking counselling help was part of the Westerners' culture

Psychological counselling services should be for big problems

Clients should also work hard

Western psychological counselling services were the by-products of an individualistic culture
Preferred language and cultural sensitivity of the counselling services

Qualities of a helper

Views on user fees
Table 2: Demographic Data of Users Group Pre-Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Teresa</th>
<th>Ming</th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Joy</th>
<th>Susan</th>
<th>Polly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>36-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Assisted family business</td>
<td>School clerk</td>
<td>Home maker</td>
<td>Junior high school teacher</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Range of annual income</td>
<td>42K - 60K</td>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>around 20K</td>
<td>62K - 80K</td>
<td>35K</td>
<td>35K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Currency: HK$6.00 to C$1.00.
K: thousand in Canadian dollars
Table 3: Demographic Data of Users Group Pre-Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Immigration Category</th>
<th>Language skills</th>
<th>Exposure to other cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese, some English</td>
<td>Australian, Japanese, Thai, U. S. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>Investor</td>
<td>Cantonese, Taishun, Some English</td>
<td>Australian, European, The Phillipines, Taiwanese, Thai, U. S. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Investor</td>
<td>Cantonese, some English, Mandarin</td>
<td>Australian, Japanese, Korea, Mainland Chinese, Singaporean, Taiwanese, The Phillipines, Thai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Investor</td>
<td>Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, Taishan &amp; some English</td>
<td>European, Japanese, Taiwanese, the Phillipines, U. S. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Investor</td>
<td>Cantonese, Mandarin, some English</td>
<td>Belgian, British, French, Dutch, Italian, Japanese, Mainland Chinese, Malaysian, Singaporean Swiss, Taiwanese &amp; Thai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polly</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese, some English, Mandarin</td>
<td>British, French, Mainland Chinese, The Phillipines, Taiwanese, Thai, U. S. A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*English as a Second Language started at about primary three or secondary school for these age groups.*
Table 4: Demographic Data of Mental Health Users Group Post-Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Length of living in Canada: Year Month</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Range of annual income</th>
<th>Family arrangement if applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>3 years 8 months</td>
<td>Client Administrator</td>
<td>C$26-35K</td>
<td>*Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>8 years 5 months</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>*Split/#Intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>4 years 1 months</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>under C$15K</td>
<td>*Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>4 years 11 months</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Loss of family business</td>
<td>*Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>6 years 6 months</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>under C$15K</td>
<td>#Intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polly</td>
<td>3 years 10 months</td>
<td>Bookkeeper</td>
<td>C$16-25K</td>
<td>*Split/#Intact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicated one spouse worked in Hong Kong to support the family in Canada.
# Indicated both spouses lived in Canada.
K: thousand in Canadian dollars.
Table 5. Demographic Data of Non-Users Group Pre-Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Lynn</th>
<th>Lydia</th>
<th>Pam</th>
<th>Kay</th>
<th>Tina</th>
<th>Cathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>under 35</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>36-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Community Officer</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Regional Vice-Manager</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual income</td>
<td>C$42-60K</td>
<td>around C$20K</td>
<td>C$42-60K</td>
<td>around C$20K</td>
<td>C$42-62K</td>
<td>C$22-40K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Currency: HK$6.00 to C$1.00. K: thousand in Canadian dollars
### Table 6: Demographic Data of Non-Users Group Pre-Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Immigration Category</th>
<th>Language Skills</th>
<th>Exposure to other culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese, English, understands some Mandarin</td>
<td>European, Japanese, Mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, Thai &amp; USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese, English, some Mandarin</td>
<td>Mainland Chinese, Taiwanese &amp; Thai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese, Mandarin, Shanghaihinese and English</td>
<td>Mainland Chinese, British, European, Australian &amp; USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese &amp; some English</td>
<td>Mainland Chinese, Japanese &amp; Thai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese &amp; English</td>
<td>Mainland Chinese, British, European, South East Asian &amp; USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Independent/Professional</td>
<td>Cantonese, English &amp; some Mandarin</td>
<td>Mainland Chinese, Australian, Japanese, Korean, South East Asian, &amp; USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7: Demographic Data of Non-Users Group Post-Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Length of living in Canada</th>
<th>Occupation ever taken</th>
<th>Range of annual income</th>
<th>Family arrangement if applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>5 years 3 months</td>
<td>Data Analyst, advertising research</td>
<td>Around C$25K</td>
<td>#Intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>5 years 3 months</td>
<td>1. Clerk&lt;br&gt;2. Information Coordinator</td>
<td>1. C$16K-25K&lt;br&gt;2. C$26-35K</td>
<td>#Intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>6 years 5 months</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>C$26-35K</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>6 years 6 months</td>
<td>1. Clerk&lt;br&gt;2. Secretary</td>
<td>1. Around C$10K&lt;br&gt;2. C$26-35K</td>
<td>Intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>5 years 5 months</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>C$46-55K</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>6 years 6 months</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>C$26-35K</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Indicated both spouses lived in Canada.
K: thousand in Canadian dollars
Figure A: Conflictual Beliefs in Participants' Seeking Outside Help as Perceived from the Western Counselling Perspective

Interwoven factors inhibiting the seeking professional help

Key:
1. Belief in self-reliance and tolerance of hardship (yen 忍)
   (handle problems by self)

2. Belief in interdependence
   (family, friends, acquaintances)

3. Belief in the role of religion in addressing personal suffering

4. Fear of stigma or the maintenance personal privacy

Interwoven factors facilitating the seeking of professional help

Key:
1. Family responsibility
   (Family responsibility to handle problems, particularly children's concern)

2. Buddhist concept of relational fatalism, destiny / fate (yuen 緣/ 命)
   (People cannot escape relationships, e.g. parent-child relationship. Therefore, the familial responsibility still exists.)

3. The trust in authority. This trust is derived from the traditional trust of the authority (父母官) i.e. People believed that the emperor would protect them as children (子民 "Son-people Zimin"). This trust is generalized to trust creditable professionals. Referral functions as an informal reference check.
Figure B: The Traditional Chinese Guideline for Handling Challenges

1. Self-reliance, self-responsibility (yen 個) involves
   Tolerance of hardship, taking things at easy,
   Forgiveness, kindness, generosity

2. Interdependence
   (Mutual support in collective culture)

3. Religion
   Pray for blessings & forgiveness
   Do good deeds
   (put sufferings in perspective as opposed to be overwhelmed)

4. Family responsibility to handle problems

5. Destiny
   (yuen 緣 / fate 命 reinforces one's
    responsibility from which one cannot escape)

6a. Resourceful support system
   Consult knowledgeable family
   members, or community leaders, or
   friends for the right helper

6b. Issues of stigma & privacy
   (discourage particularly from
   gossip to the irrelevant persons)

7. Trust in authority
   (Trust a knowledgeable, credible & relevant helper)
Figure C: Services Delivery as Suggested by Participants

EDUCATION

- Concept of mental good health
- Concept of mental stress
- Maintenance of good mental health
- Coping strategies
- Mass Media

DIRECT COUNSELLING SERVICES DELIVERY

- Immigrants' Language
- Cultural Sensitivity
- New immigrants

- Fees covered by Universal Health Insurance Plan or geared to financial ability
- Accessibility

- Entho-specific Counselling Services