Migration, Ethnic Relations and Chinese Business

Chan Kwok-bun

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Incorporating research carried out over the last twenty years, *Migration, Ethnic Relations and Chinese Business* documents the personal and collective responses of Chinese migrants and refugees to the prejudice and discrimination they have experienced.

Using case studies of Chinese communities in Canada, Chan argues that a defence mechanism has been created by Chinese immigrants in order to escape the systemic and institutional discrimination they face. Feeling themselves to be strangers, migrants tend to gravitate towards each other, forming their own close-knit communities and ethnic enterprises. This text analyses how many Chinese overseas choose to subject themselves to internal exploitation at work rather than face discrimination in the mainstream labour market – with a mixture of positive and negative consequences.

Drawing upon empirical and theoretical literature on the sociology of race and ethnic relations, the book stresses the variety in Chinese culture and its ability to exploit an emergent ethnicity as individuals, groups and communities. Fascinating, incisive and eye-opening, it will be a welcome addition to researchers and students of racism, ethnic studies, and Chinese studies.

Chan Kwok-bun is Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology and Director of the David C. Lam Institute for East–West Studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University.

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To my family, Kate, Nin and Yoan

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Foreword

Chan Kwok-bun has been working on the sociology of the 'Chinese overseas' (a preferred, but not universally accepted, term) since 1978, when his fieldwork on Chinatowns in Canada commenced. The Chinese in Canada remain the principal focus of this book. However, his experience is by no means confined to Canada. He has written on Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, the Chinese family structure in Vietnam, the expression of Chinese identity in Thailand, and on Chinese entrepreneurs worldwide. He has held senior posts at the National University of Singapore and is currently Head and Professor of the Department of Sociology and Director of the David C. Lam Institute for East–West Studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University. Although there are a number of distinguished scholars working on the Chinese abroad, Chan is one of the most prolific and most widely respected.

He brings to the field a classical sociological and social psychological training. It truly is a pleasure to read his subtle dialogue between classical social theory and the reality facing the 23 million Chinese (the number excludes those in Taiwan and Hong Kong) living in other lands. I lay particular emphasis on the strong sociological impress in Chan's work, as there is always a temptation for non-Chinese and Chinese scholars alike to exoticise the Chinese – fixing them in some timeless and unyielding Otherness instead of drawing their varied experiences into the common pool of human behaviour. To give just three examples, Chan uses to great effect Zwingmann's concept of 'nostalgic illusion' to talk of Indochinese refugees, Aldrich's 'deglamorisation thesis' to discuss ethnic entrepreneurship and Weber's celebrated discussion of culture and religion to analyse the basis for deviant economic conduct.

Comparisons and the use of general social theory do not prevent us from recognising the distinct rhythms and character of the Chinese migratory experience. In the nineteenth century, they formed a stigmatised group of workers in North America and elsewhere – grossly exploited, rarely drawn into a common struggle with white workers and often denied the fundamental rights to recognition, either as residents or as citizens. Early service as 'coolie labour' (the term is pejorative, but was widely used) in public works and in building the railways across the USA and Canada gave way to precarious ethnic enclave economies in laundering and, later, the restaurant trade. But the history of the Chinese labour diaspora needs to

be complemented by the extraordinary story of the Hokkien and other traders who first set up networks for international business and commerce. Chan is closely aware of this history and many of his respondents make explicit reference to it.

In this book, Chan covers issues of prejudice and discrimination, the problems facing elderly Chinese (where he finds that filial piety is not always to be assumed), the integration of refugees, the consequences of unemployment and the patterns of global entrepreneurship. Above all, he assesses and illuminates the dynamics of Chinatowns, those unusual Chinese inventions that can be found in London, Sydney, New York, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, Bangkok and many other places. Chinatowns allow the Chinese to be in, but not of, their surrounding society. Chinatowns also go in and out of favour as policymakers shift between integrationist policies and recognition that Chinatowns conveniently allow governments to escape their social responsibilities. The multiple 'protective, defensive, legal and paternalistic' associations effectively deal with the internal affairs of the community and mediate the relations between the residents of Chinatown and the outside world. Chinatowns have thus far survived precariously between the claims of the developers, the demands of city planners and their role as ethnic curiosities servicing the needs of tourists. They have survived too because many Chinese have resisted suburbanisation. As one respondent said to Chan, Chinatown 'belongs to us'.

We are now in a new era of renewed connection between the Chinese abroad and at home, as China's hothouse economy propels it to superpower status in the twenty-first century. Chan also covers this story, with an effective chapter on the business dealings of Singaporeans in China. Singapore is now the fifth largest investor in China, and it is a testimony to the tenacious memories of home that most capital has been invested in the original regions of emigration. The Chinese Singaporeans illustrate the dual aspects of their heritage – a commitment to legal rational ways of doing business drawn from their experiences on the island, which separates them from their Chinese forebears, and an evocation of a common heritage, origin, language, kinship, diet and religion, which unites them.

In all, this book can be heartily recommended for providing new insights on the world's most dynamic diaspora, showing how it survives and thrives. Of course, not every Chinese abroad is in a favourable economic situation, and many refugees from Indochina are still struggling to gain a foothold. However, there is little doubt that Chinese overseas are gaining fresh confidence in a global era and in a geopolitical world order that, finally, is moving in their favour.

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Introduction

Classical sociologists have written much about alienation, anomie, self-estrangement and exploitation (by the self and others). Simmel's (1908) essay 'The Stranger', Schuetz's (1943) essay of the same title and the works of Park (1928) and Stonequist (1937) on the marginal man portray the inner turmoil of a stranger in a foreign land with an understanding, sympathy and imagination that is not often seen in sociological works.

I first began to think about what it meant to be a stranger when I was doing fieldwork on the Chinese community in Canada in 1978. My respondents and informants confided in me, giving details of racial discrimination and the anguish that it caused them. I became interested in the stigma attached to racial characteristics, which, whether real or imaginary, are manifestations of 'difference' and 'otherness'. I also became curious about how people coped with the damaged sense of self that resulted from discrimination. This personal concern led quite naturally to a series of studies of Chinatowns. Feeling themselves to be strangers, migrants tend to gravitate towards each other, to form their own close-knit communities as an institutional defence against the hostility of others. In that sense, Chinatowns are a self-defence strategy – migrants band together, often involuntarily, keeping their distance from the outside world to avoid its racism. Chapters 1 to 4 of this book examine the experiences of the Chinese in Canada as individuals, groups and communities. Working with groups as diverse as miners, elderly women and community leaders, I pieced together a sociology of victimisation by and social response to racial discrimination, which is certainly one central aspect of being a stranger.

Chapters 5 to 8 are concerned with a harsh aspect of being a refugee, the Other, which is that of forced migration. I did fieldwork in refugee camps in Hong Kong, a place of first asylum, as well as in various Indochinese communities and neighbourhoods of Montreal in Canada, a place of resettlement. I studied forced migration from many angles, from the prison-like atmosphere and chronic stress, which might last for years, of the holding camps to the loss, grief and mourning for family, status and place that occurred in the country of resettlement. My focus was on the condition of refugeehood and, more precisely, on how forced migration changed the refugees and their families, for better or for worse. Their stories

made it all too clear that many of these people felt cut loose from their moorings, in both the inner and the outer world. They were strangers everywhere, some of them even to themselves, as Kristeva (1991) would put it. To survive their predicament, some individuals organised themselves into groups, associations and communities, both formal and informal. Families got together for meals regularly, or early migrants formed associations to help out the more recent ones. Out of these informal connections, social networks, solidarity and the spirit of mutual aid arose. Like the Chinatowns, the social organisation of refugees was established partly in self-defence and partly as a way to hold onto a sense of continuity, identity and meaning.

Two of the things that characterise the ethnic Chinese overseas are their subjection to discrimination and their over-representation, relative to the local people in the host society, in self-employment. In an attempt to link the two phenomena, studies reported in this book draw upon strands of theoretical and empirical literature on the sociology of race and ethnic relations on the one hand and on economic sociology on the other hand. The sociology of race and ethnic relations has an abundance of deep social theory to make sense of a stranger's encounters with prejudice and discrimination, and their strategies of coping and adaptation to differential treatment. At both the personal and the collective levels, one such coping strategy is to create self-employment in ethnic enterprises; as such, research into ethnic or immigrant businesses emerges out of the interface between the sociology of race and ethnic relations and economic sociology.

It seemed that, as strangers in a strange place, immigrants and refugees responded to racism and the inevitable hardships of making it in a host country with ethnic solidarity. In this sense, ethnic consciousness and cohesiveness may well be the unintended consequence of discrimination. Chapters 9 to 13 of this book present essays arguing that ethnic networks are a response to the hardships that immigrants face. Once established, such networks are conducive to the growth and development of ethnic or immigrant businesses. However, there seems to be an involuntary, even unwanted, element to ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic capitalism. Many ethnic businessmen are 'reluctant merchants', who have realised that their access to the political and professional landscapes outside their enclaves is blocked. Unable to participate in the capitalism of the host society, minorities create their own, an ethnic capitalism. Thus, the economic sociology of immigrant entrepreneurship needs to be placed within the larger context of prevailing race and ethnic relations.

Understood in that sense, there is an urgent need to rethink theoretical attempts to attribute Chinese business success to Chinese culture, the so-called 'supply side' of ethnic entrepreneurship, be it cultural values, familism, ethnicity or so on, by advocating an added sensitivity to the structure and context of prevailing race and ethnic relations, the so-called 'demand side' of ethnic business. Such a corrective, as attempted in the last five chapters of this book, typically proceeds by identifying the many myths and misconceptions of Chinese businesses. One may want to cast oneself in a 'revisionist' mood – that of deconstructing, demystifying, or deglamorising the layman's romance with ethnic Chinese enterprise. Ethnicity,

if indeed useful to business, is typically 'made' in the host society rather than imported wholesale from the place of departure. Culture or, for that matter, identity is rarely transplanted as is; instead, it is produced and reproduced, constructed and deconstructed, in exploitation of structural advantages and in adaptation to contextual constraints. Identity is often identity in context, in situation – a sort of situated identity or positionality. Emergent immigrant culture is culture adapted. Ethnic entrepreneurship should thus be seen as a collective, social response to structure and context. The field of ethnic entrepreneurship perhaps requires an 'opening out' and 'opening up' of the little black box of culture. Our analytical gaze should be focused on Chinese entrepreneurs' modes of daily interactions and transactions with their milieu, the Other, the non-Chinese, the larger, much larger world out there, way beyond the narrow confines of family, clan, lineage, ethnic group, community or what the journalists call 'tribes'. As it happens, the many myths and misperceptions of Chinese businesses will fall, one by one.

This book moves through three moments. The first moment begins with the Chinese migration to Canada, as immigrants and refugees who quickly find themselves being subjected to prejudice and discrimination in both historical and contemporary contexts. A study of the Chinese experience in Canada often turns out to be a study of racism. The kind of racism that the Chinese have experienced is systemic and institutional, a kind that has gone beyond the triviality of one person ill-treating another person. On an intimate level, the sociologist is deeply involved in documenting the costs of racism and segregation for the individuals and, as it happens, identifies with their suffering. This first moment is a moment of the pathos of race and ethnic relations produced by international migration and immigration when strangers attempt to take part in the fierce game of ethnic competition for scarce resources. This game, this human drama, is all too familiar in the sociological literature. It is a story told over and over again.

In the face of discrimination, the ethnic Chinese of Canada respond by digging deep into the social support resources embedded in their social networks made up of families, kin, friends, neighbours and an assortment of voluntary associations, many, though not all, of which are located in Chinatowns across Canada. This is the book's second moment. At this moment, we have heard stories of the Chinese coping with racism by segregation, withdrawal and avoidance as self-defence, individually and collectively. If Chinatowns are indeed sociological examples of institutionalisation of isolation and alienation, then such attempts at social organisation are at best an outcome of the dialectics of the action of the individual or the group and forces of history and social structure. The kind of sociology that I am putting together here is not one of strangers as helpless victims of racism, taking their suffering lying down, but of strangers learning to do things together, putting their emergent ethnicity to good use and strategically exploiting their sense of agency in a dialectic of control. This second moment is about human survival, about ordinary people asserting themselves in extraordinary times. It is not about going under, but about getting through suffering – by no means a familiar theme in sociology.

The third moment of this book arrives when one knocks at the door of economic

sociology pertaining to ethnic or immigrant entrepreneurship. The human drama of survival is now enacted in the form of ethnic enterprises as strategies of adaptation to blocked opportunity in the host society. Contrary to culturalist articulations of the Chinese propensity for entrepreneurship, not all successful businessmen are Chinese, and not all Chinese are successful businessmen. Many of them may well be 'reluctant merchants'. Culture, if of any explanatory value at all, must be a trimmed-down fellow. Immigrant entrepreneurship indeed has many faces. One face, a familiar one, is that of glamour, ethnic pride and triumph in a society hostile to its newcomers, its racial others, while the other face, its dark side, a less unfamiliar one, is that of immigrant businessmen subjecting themselves to self-exploitation (long hours of menial labour, low wages and poor health) and exploitation of their families, kin members and co-ethnics. Ethnic capitalism is capitalism nevertheless, the dark, exploitative side of which is underexplored in the sociological literature. Eager to escape from racism in the mainstream labour market and desiring autonomy, ethnic Chinese resort to internal exploitation to create and sustain their own enterprises.

I still remember what I was told by a Chinese businessman when I was doing interviews in Montreal some twenty years ago. The owner of a successful Chinese food company, he lamented about his children not showing interest in inheriting the business that he created. Yet his Canadian-born children, although determined to escape from the stigma of confinement to the ethnic subeconomy, experienced prejudice in the primary labour market and were thus at best ambivalent about integration into Canadian society. Although eager to bid farewell to their prescribed ethnicity, they were frustrated at discriminatory treatment by society at large. The net result is one of double alienation, from one's own ethnic group and from the society beyond it. Indeed, it is a classic moment of sociological marginality and inner turmoil: the individual is at the margin of two communities, but in neither site would they find personal comfort because they reject one community, their own, and are rejected by the other community into which they are anxious to seek entry. They are caught in between. Their anguish is simultaneously personal and public.

1 Coping with racism

How and to what extent were the Chinese subjected to racial discrimination in Canada? How did the Chinese react to and cope with racism? In resisting racism, to what extent did the Chinese mobilise community and organisational resources within and outside their own community, use media to publicise their cause or contact public officials or politicians for advocacy, support or protection? Is there evidence of the Chinese having used tactics such as petitions, marches, rallies, boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, demonstrations or protests? In other words, what precisely did the Chinese do or not do to combat racism, and why? The focus of such a perspective is as much on documenting how the Chinese reacted to and coped with discrimination as on the discrimination itself.

Racism in Canadian social science literature

One curious fact about the existing literature in Canada on racial discrimination is that a relatively large proportion of it was produced either by the government or by government-affiliated, government-funded organisations, often in the form of in-house research, special task forces or commissions, or through research contracted with university-based academics or private research and consultation companies. The bulk of this literature was produced to generate 'knowledge or information' about a specific ethnic group or a specific facet of ethnic relations hitherto unexamined or not well understood, or to respond to the perception that a particular ethnic group had been affected by racial discrimination.

A case in point was the series of Royal Commission enquiries into the 'Chinese question' in 1885, 1902 and 1908,[1] although one may see, in retrospect, that the enquiries were undertaken with the motive of generating information to justify and rationalise racism against the Chinese in the west coast, rather than to formulate federal policies or strategies to combat racism. Ironically, considering the motive, the Royal Commission enquiries are today the single most comprehensive testimony of personal and systemic racism against the Chinese in Canada.

In 1965, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, 'interested in the impact of human rights legislation on communities in which problems in intergroup relations have arisen' (Helling 1965: 1), commissioned a study of the blacks, Chinese

and Italians in Windsor. The report concluded that the Chinese suffered from considerable self-segregation, partly caused by the residual attitudes of government officials towards them; it was also reported that the Chinese had difficulties in setting up shops and stores and in accessing health services.

Between 1974 and 1978, within a span of five years, four major government-sponsored reports were released on racial discrimination (Henry 1974; Head 1975; Pitman 1977; Henry 1978). All four reports were about ethnic relations in Ontario, and three of them concerned Toronto. The Franklin Henry and Head reports were both commissioned by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Pitman report by the Council of Metropolitan Toronto, and the Frances Henry report by the Human Rights Directorate of the Secretary of State of Canada.

In Head's study of perceptions and practices of discrimination against blacks in Metropolitan Toronto, about 60 per cent of his black respondents reported having personally experienced discrimination in some form in Toronto. Both black and non-black respondents stated that most instances of discrimination involved housing (renting or buying) or employment. Head also reported that only sixty-two of the 123 who had experienced discrimination took some action following the particular incident, and only about 20 per cent, or twelve respondents, reported the matter directly to the Ontario Human Rights Commission or to a superior (or, in the case of housing discrimination, to the superintendent). About 48 per cent of the black respondents took no action. No satisfactory solution ensued from most instances of lodging a complaint.

The Pitman (1977) report was produced in response to rising racial tensions in Toronto, particularly between the South Asians and the Toronto community at large, especially as evidenced by a series of subway beatings that culminated in a multiple assault on New Year's Eve of 1976. The report detailed testimonial evidence of racism on the part of the media, the schools, the public services and the police force against the South Asian community in Toronto.

The Frances Henry study in 1978 was particularly significant: it used a 100-item questionnaire to measure the racial attitudes of a random sample of 617 whites in Toronto. The study reported that 16 per cent of its sample could be considered extremely racist; 35 per cent inclined towards some degree of racism; 30 per cent inclined towards tolerance; and 19 per cent were extremely tolerant. In the same report, Henry cited two earlier studies of immigrant adaptation. Richmond in 1976 reported that blacks and Asians were four times more likely than whites to report employment discrimination and eight times more likely to report housing discrimination. Ramcharan in 1974 reported that 58 per cent of West Indians claimed to have encountered employment discrimination, 37 per cent housing discrimination and 16 per cent discrimination in other areas.

In 1979, the Canadian Human Rights Commission 'took the pulse of the Canadian population in relation to … discriminatory practices' by conducting a survey of 2000 Canadians. Two-thirds of the respondents (67 per cent) believed that some people were excluded from certain social and economic activities because of discrimination; and the most commonly mentioned ground on which respondents believed people were discriminated against was race or colour. In her review

of the Canadian attitudinal survey literature (e.g. Gallup polls, nationwide surveys of ethnic attitudes), Henry (1986) concluded that between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of the Canadian population were extremely intolerant towards non-whites.

In 1982, Mr Jim Fleming, the Minister for Multiculturalism, commissioned situation reports on problems and difficulties in the area of race relations in ethnic and racial communities in eleven Canadian cities. The cities and their researchers were: Vancouver (Jobidon), Williams Lake (author not mentioned), Calgary (Buchignani), Regina (Collier and Baiton), Winnipeg (Kane), Windsor (Chacko), Toronto (Lowe), Ottawa (Tepper), Montreal (Malik), Halifax (Mensah) and St John's (Darisme). These situation reports were commissioned to provide a general information base on race relations in Canada, which would then be used 'to establish funding priorities and develop federal programs' in combating racial discrimination and other problems faced by Canada's ethnic communities. Taken together, these reports represented a body of knowledge on the state of race relations in the major urban areas of Canada at the time. As well as attesting to the existence, prevalence, magnitude and impact of racial discrimination, the majority of these reports invariably put forward specific policy recommendations, often in a manner and tone that evidences the severity of racial discrimination as a social malady and the urgent need for governmental and community interventions.

In 1978, a study of ethnic pluralism in Toronto (Breton 1978) reported that three-quarters of West Indians and 24 per cent of Chinese felt that employment discrimination was a serious problem. Twenty-eight per cent of West Indians and 29 per cent of Chinese respondents reported having experienced such discrimination.

One important source of data on the existence and impact of discrimination comes from studies of minorities in the workforce. Marr's (1976) study, using the 1971 census, found that unemployment rates for third-world immigrants in Ontario in 1969–1971 were twice as high as those for other immigrants. In another survey conducted by the Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1974, it was found that third-world immigrants, while suffering from high unemployment rates and low income, were also frequently unable to find work in their chosen fields. A 1973 study by Goldlust and Richmond suggested that persons of black and Asian origin were earning $2,900 less than expected, a finding they attributed to discrimination. In analysing the mobility patterns of males in the workforce, Richmond and Verma (1978) underlined the economic deprivation of persons of 'other' origins, which consist of native peoples and those of black and mixed racial groups. Also, Reitz and colleagues' (1981) study found that West Indian men and women underearned considerably compared with other immigrants when factors such as education, knowledge of English and work experience were controlled.

Using as direct measures of employment discrimination the procedures of in-person testing and telephone, by which white and black job applicants were actually sent out to job positions, Ginzberg and Henry (1984/1985) found that employment discrimination, either in the form of clearly favouring a white over a black or in the form of treating a white applicant better than a black one, took place in almost a quarter of the 201 job contacts tested. The results of the tele-

phone testing procedure indicated that a white Canadian had to make about eleven or twelve calls to secure ten potential job interviews while members of the racial minorities had to work harder and longer: they had to make about eighteen calls to get the same number of potential job interviews. Henry and Ginzberg (1985) combined the results of the in-person and telephone testing to develop an Index of Discrimination of three to one: whites had three job prospects to every one for blacks. The two authors concluded that their tests supported the findings of studies using indirect measures of discrimination such as large-scale attitudinal surveys, Gallup polls and analyses of disparities in job status and income between whites and non-whites. A more important conclusion from the study is that racial discrimination in Canada, and specifically in Toronto, 'is systematic in that there appears to be a system-wide bias against hiring non-whites and treating them fairly' (Ginzberg and Henry 1984/1985). In a brief but incisive and comprehensive review of three different sources of evidence of employment discrimination (Ontario Human Rights Commission caseloads, attitudinal surveys, and studies of income and employment status of minorities), Muszynski (1983: 9) arrived at a similar conclusion and argued that the data taken together 'offer a compelling case for recognising discrimination against racial minorities as a systematic phenomenon'. While analysis of human rights caseloads and attitudinal surveys document the existence and prevalence of discrimination, data from statistical studies of disparities in income and employment between whites and non-whites, as well as from field testing, provide objective information on the magnitude and impact of such discrimination.

In their survey of a stratified, random sample of 199 employers representing all sectors of the Metropolitan Toronto economy, Billingsley and Muszynski (1985) found a high degree of informality in employment recruitment (e.g. through 'word-of-mouth') as evidence of systemic discrimination on the part of employers and its correlation with low representation of non-whites both in organisations and in prestige occupational positions. The survey also found a lack of recognition among personnel managers of the correlation between their personnel procedures and discrimination.

The landmark 1984 federal government Report of the Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society, *Equality Now,* provides a most insightful analysis of racial discrimination. The list of eighty recommendations put forward in the report is also the most comprehensive and broad based that Canada has ever seen.

Frenette's (1985) study of perceptions among Haitians in Montreal found considerable racial discrimination in employment and housing. Job ghettoisation of Haitians and other instances of employment discrimination were found in other studies (Dejean 1978; Labelle *et al.* 1983). Racism against Haitian school children was also reported (Pierre-Jacques 1978). LaFerrière (1983) sees blacks as 'minorities among minorities' in a double minority bind in Quebec, while Locher (1984) describes the anglophone West Indians in Montreal in terms of 'triple' minority status (racial, demographic and linguistic) and predicts a rather bleak future for them in Montreal. In a 1981 report (cited in Henry 1986) for the Mouve-

ment pour combattre le racisme, black and other visible minority immigrants were asked about housing discrimination. A total of 22 per cent of respondents had encountered racial discrimination in housing, and many more had heard of others' unpleasant experiences. More than three-quarters had been told that an apartment was 'just rented'. These findings led the author to conclude that housing discrimination against visible minorities is severe in Montreal, while Teitelbaum and Bérubé (1983) note the increase in housing segregation in Montreal due to the difficulty visible minorities have in freely choosing living arrangements.

Most studies of the racial situation in Montreal seem to suggest that much of the discrimination in the city is institutional and systemic in nature. An example of systemic discrimination is the denial of equal opportunity, especially in the area of employment. An interdepartmental committee set up by the Quebec government in 1981 recognised the problem of under-representation of minorities in the civil service (CIPACC 1982). It was estimated that, in 1979, only 2.7 per cent of the provincial employees came from cultural communities (CIPACC 1981).

Two conferences held by the Centre for Research Action on Race Relations (CRARR), one on Visible Minority and Native Youth (1986) and the other on Racial Harassment in the Workplace (1987), highlighted the difficulties encountered by visible minorities, especially the youth and female members, in the job market. They have to overcome systemic and historical barriers to enter fields of their choice and then face harassment as a permanent condition at work.

Other studies dealt with problems encountered by visible minorities in various sectors. Laperrière (1983) and Le Comité sur l'Ecole Québécoise et les Communautés Culturelles (1985) recognised the difficulties minority children have in integrating into French schools. Newly arrived immigrant students are concentrated in ghettoised inner city schools with little contact with children of the majority group. In housing, Teitelbaum and Bérubé (1983) found that racial discrimination and, consequently, residential segregation critically affect black Montrealers, both anglophone and francophone.

Coping with racism

While there is no shortage of evidence on racial discrimination in Canada, relatively little is known about how members of the various ethnic and cultural groups react to and cope with racial discrimination. The 1975 Head report to the Ontario Human Rights Commission indicates that, although a considerable proportion of the study's respondents were 'angered' (41 per cent) or 'upset' (28 per cent) by discrimination, only about half those who had experienced discrimination actually took some course of action, and another 19 per cent merely discussed the incident with a relative or friend. Only 10 per cent of the victims of racial discrimination reported the incident to the Ontario Human Rights Commission or to a superior. The more important finding is that almost half the victims of racial discrimination took no action at all.

In one of the eleven situation reports on race relations submitted to the Multiculturalism Directorate, Buchignani (1982: 53) reports that while 'discrimination

is a highly significant problem for visible minorities as a whole, it is nevertheless not of such prominence that it stands out from other common problems relating to settlement and inter-cultural contact'. In fact, the respondents of the study ranked discrimination in frequency of occurrence after problems with immigration bureaucracy, the weather, getting appropriate jobs, adjustment to Canadian values and access to education. Unlike the native people, South Asians and blacks, who perceive discrimination as a 'highly significant' problem, the other Asians (Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese and other South-east Asians) see discrimination as a 'significant' problem only in selected spheres of life. As a group, the Japanese felt that discrimination was such a small factor in their lives that there was a general reluctance to respond to the survey (Buchignani 1982: 54). More significantly, respondents perceived 'do nothing' as a more frequent response to racial discrimination than, in order of decreasing frequency of occurrence, 'report incident to human rights commissions', 'call police', 'react directly', 'file complaint to human rights commissions' and 'report to the media'. When asked about their preference for various public programmes and measures to reduce discrimination, respondents preferred an essentially educational approach that favours providing information to the public about racial groups over more direct and confrontational approaches.

This discrepancy between feeling upset and angered by having been discriminated against on the one hand and the relative lack of action (e.g. lodging a complaint with human rights commissions) on the other calls for analysis and explanation. Muszynski (1983: 9), in his attempt to look at human rights caseloads as evidence of racial discrimination in Canada, makes the following observation:

> The way in which human rights enforcement bodies operate requires that, in most cases, the individuals who perceive themselves to have been discriminated against lodge a complaint. Because discrimination is very often subtle or unintentional, it is not obvious to the victim that they have been wronged. As a result most cases go unreported. There is also a fear of causing trouble which could have negative effects on a person's future employment-seeking efforts. And there is a general scepticism of the effectiveness of human rights bodies.

Such an explanation locates the causes of non-action in the technical procedures of the human rights commission and their perceived lack of effectiveness in enacting remedial measures; in the nature of racism as being difficult to identify (it is often subtle and systemic); and in the fear of loss of employment.

In her review of the literature on race relations research, Henry (1986: 19) emphasises the importance of empirical research on the victims' strategies for coping with racial discrimination. Lamenting the lack of such research, she cites Baureiss' (1985) discussion of how communities cope with racism, and Breton's (1964; 1981) work on 'institutional completeness' as major examples of such research.

Another interesting example of such research (Frenette 1985), cited in Henry's

review paper (1986: 18), concerns Haitians in Montreal and their use of accommodation as a defence mechanism. In general, the study found that the Haitians have a rather practical attitude towards racism. They feel that they have to accommodate to it as part of their being in Canada. As one respondent put it 'if the landlord does not want to rent to me, it's his loss, I can find another house'.

Buchignani's (1982: 85) observation on the leaders of the Chinese community in Calgary showed a similar response:

> Chinese tend to see the whole question of discrimination quite differently than any of the previous groups. Crudely put, the Chinese perspective is one of pragmatism; discrimination may exist, but one should fight it actively only when it directly conflicts with the achievement of valued goals.

Despite the above research, an adequate database on victims' reactions to and coping mechanisms for racial discrimination in Canada is non-existent.

The Chinese experience with racism

In 1858, the first Chinese immigrants, who were almost exclusively male, came from California to the mining regions of British Columbia as part of the gold rush. Other Chinese joined them, coming mainly from Guangdong province in southern China. When the gold rush subsided, they entered the workshops of the western provinces or signed on to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. When the railway was finished, most of these men stayed in British Columbia as workers; some of them established themselves as retail traders, in the first Chinatowns in Victoria and Vancouver. In addition, some Chinese migrated to the eastern provinces of Ontario and Quebec where they opened small shops in Montreal, Toronto and smaller towns and cities. By 1901, there were 17,312 Chinese in Canada, mostly in British Columbia (14,201). Twenty years later, their regional distribution had changed slightly: 23,533 were residents in British Columbia, 7,579 in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 5,625 in Ontario and 2,335 in Quebec. From 1923 to 1947, Chinese immigration to Canada was stopped. According to some sources, fewer than fifty Chinese entered Canada during these twenty-five years. Chinese immigration resumed in 1947, when newcomers arrived with their families. Some of these new immigrants obtained professional qualifications that enabled them to enter occupations that their predecessors could never have dreamed of.

The Chinese came to Canada as a labour force for the industrialisation of the nation. They contributed to the construction of one of the most important tools for national economic integration, the Canadian Pacific Railway, and worked in the nascent manufacturing and mining industries of British Columbia. From the time of their arrival, they were discriminated against by white entrepreneurs and workers: segregated into an inferior segment of the labour market; rewarded with lower wages than white labourers; rejected by white labour unions; and given only transient jobs. As impoverished artisans and peasants looking for ways to sustain their families in China, they had to endure harsh conditions in Canada.

Their inferior economic status was the direct product of capitalist expansion in Canada as individuals in the private sector exploited and discriminated against them. Almost every segment of the civil society contributed to this collective, public rejection of the Chinese immigrants. While other immigrants, including Americans, British and Australians, were also treated harshly, the Chinese drew particular attention because of their visibility. Poor white immigrants were considered assimilable, whereas the Chinese, along with the Japanese, East Indians, Native Americans and blacks, were perceived as a threat to the white cultural and political hegemony. Authoritarian regimes, poverty of the masses and lack of industrial development were at the roots of the white animosity towards the Asians and Native Americans, whereas the stigma of slavery was still attached to the blacks from the United States. Rich white entrepreneurs looked at the Chinese as a very useful labour force, but white farmers, artisans, traders and small workshop workers saw in the Chinese misery the very fate they would endure if they lost their economic and social autonomy through competing with the immigrants. In ideological defence, they accused those who seemed the most alien, and also the most visible and numerous, among the newcomers. They saw the Chinese as the culprits who were destroying their relatively easygoing life as independent workers. They protested violently against their entry into British Columbia and Canada and were opposed to their integration into the mainstream white society. They won the first skirmish, as Chinese immigrants became victims of institutional discrimination.

The state and political authorities, both provincial and national, fed the hostility of the white civil society by legitimising discriminatory practices against the Chinese. Because of the usefulness of the Chinese labour and the influence of white entrepreneurs, the Canadian government did not immediately curtail Chinese immigration, although it made necessary concessions to white public opinion in the western provinces, especially British Columbia. The government imposed head taxes on the Chinese entering Canada, which increased from $10 in 1884 to $50 in 1885 to $100 in 1901 and, finally, to $500 in 1904. Meanwhile, diverse and numerous regulations controlled and violated the economic and political rights of the Chinese residents in the western provinces. From 1875 until the turn of the century, Chinese immigrants were deprived of their right to vote in municipal and provincial elections in two Canadian provinces and, subsequently, at the national level, were excluded from the electoral lists, from certain occupations and from rights granted to every other group of immigrants or residents. In 1923, the federal government adopted a Chinese exclusion law, barring the entry of impoverished Chinese immigrants and allowing only students and investors into Canada.

Trapped by economic exploitation, despised by the civil society and denied their fundamental rights as Canadian residents, the Chinese immigrants coped with their inferior social status by avoidance and contest. Most of them receded into isolation among themselves and avoided the white society. Along this passive line of resistance, they chose to enter occupations that did not expose them to competition with white workers. This choice could not but reinforce their isolation in the labour market, although it was the only way for them to protect their

economic life from racism. The most illustrative piece of data about this mode of resistance is that it remained the choice of the Chinese immigrants migrating to Quebec and Ontario. There, they established occupational enclaves, becoming launderers. Before the Chinese arrived, white women had been laundresses but, in both provinces, laundry was not a real commercial trade until the Chinese came. At the beginning of the century, in Toronto and Montreal, between ten and twenty enterprises were established using mechanical devices and almost exclusively serving institutions (hospitals, steamship companies, etc.). This specialisation remained until the 1960s when new immigrants entered Canada.

The Chinese established social and cultural enclaves, building Chinatowns, funding associations and political parties related to life in China, creating a service sector for themselves and relying on each other to adapt to their exclusion. Consequently, they identified themselves with ideological and political concepts in mainland China. Chinese immigrants coming to Canada before the 1950s were not allowed social and cultural integration.

Between 1860 and 1923 when the poor Cantonese peasants and artisans left China for Canada, China was a society in transition. These Chinese immigrants were not the submissive miserable beings white ideologists described. Although not every one of them was a political activist in one of the secret societies trying to overthrow the imperial regime and its bureaucracy, the Chinese knew that they were victims of political corruption, exploitation and repression in their own country. The first partisans of the two central figures of political rivalry in China, Sun Yat-sen and Kang Youwei, were Chinese immigrants in Hawaii and in Canada, especially in British Columbia. The Cantonese immigrants contributed through funds and loyalty to the careers of these two leaders. One of them, Sun Yat-sen, became the first president of the Republic of China. Chinese immigrants were not coming from a democratic country, but they were well aware of individual civil rights, of representative parliamentary systems and of the concepts of justice and equality that the white British Columbians were so proud of.

The passive reaction of the Chinese immigrants to discrimination by avoiding white society, establishing economic and cultural enclaves or simply returning to China was not as peaceful as it looked. It was in fact a way of containing the violence white society had imposed upon them and, subsequently, their own violence towards whites. For example, two aims were central to the Chinese associations founded in Canada: to protect the immigrants from the effects of discrimination, exploitation, poverty and isolation; and to manage frictions between whites and Chinese. Criminality was not common among the Chinese immigrants and, when it appeared, either against whites or between Chinese, it was politically dangerous. It amplified racism.

This apparently peaceful strategy showed its real face during active collective or individual resistance, in every province where they were established. Chinese immigrants defended themselves against the suppression of their civil rights and against their economic exploitation. In most cases of collective resistance, we do not know which individual, local or sociological factors led to the mobilisation of Chinese immigrants. We do know that they understood their low social status

in Canada. Most of the men going back to their village of origin during the 1920s and 1930s experienced downward mobility in Canada, compared with their previous status in China.

Chinese immigrants fought back using white lawyers to defend their causes, organising strikes, challenging local white institutions and, when they could, using white organisations to forward their demands. But, if they sometimes succeeded in their fights against local white residents, they failed in their demand that the political leaders put an end to institutional discrimination. In 1947, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, and some civil rights were restored, not because of Chinese militancy or radical ideological changes in Canadian politics, but because Canada yielded to international pressure.

The Chinese immigrants lacked the means to win their battle against Ottawa because they were excluded from the political life of Canada (political parties, trade unions, lobby groups) and could not form effective and stable alliances with white organisations. When, for example, in Toronto or Montreal, the white Presbyterian and Catholic churches forwarded the demands of the Chinese, some social assistance was obtained.

Power relations were at the root of the failure of the Chinese immigrants, but other factors played a role, including a process of social and ideological change due to political and economic events in China**,** which were amplified by their social inhibition. Several aspects of this situation can be cited. We have seen no evidence of a perception of class conflict among Chinese immigrants, although Chinese merchants and entrepreneurs exploited poor Chinese workers in the manual labour force. Association leaders were chosen for their economic power, not their political stand on discrimination. The social system in China did not change drastically for the better with the installation of a republican regime in 1911; on the contrary, it aggravated the difficulties of peasants in the southern regions. Chinese immigrants in Canada did not emancipate themselves from the clanic ideology: they had maintained their families in Guangdong. Their social identification with Chinese values bound them to the welfare of their extended families, making them even more alienated from Canadian society. These various handicaps may explain the failure of their attempts to counteract the discriminatory regulations against them.

2 Ethnic stereotypes in the media

More than sixty years ago, Lippmann, in his book *Public Opinion* (1922), introduced the concept of stereotypes into the field of social science to convey his concern with the 'quasi-environment' man inserts between himself and his environment. Man constructs a 'picture inside his head' to deal with a world too complex for direct comprehension, a picture that is partially culturally determined in that 'we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture' (Lippmann 1922: 81). To Lippmann, the undesirability of stereotypes lies in their content, in the disjuncture between stereotypes and facts and in stereotypes' rigidity and resistance to change.

Ten years after the publication of *Public Opinion*, Katz and Braley (1933) conducted the first empirical study of ethnic stereotypes at Princeton and introduced a paradigm that was later modelled by generations of research on ethnic stereotypes. Our review of theory and research on stereotypes indicates an emerging focus on their content, their linkage with negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviour and their resistance to change.[1]

In Canada, the matter of stereotypic press portrayal has long been a concern of the French and other non-British immigrant groups (Black 1967; Davey 1970). Canada's rapidly growing Asian and black communities have voiced their dissatisfaction with their images as portrayed in the press. Indra (1979a) made a content analysis of South Asian stereotypes in the Vancouver press during three ten-year periods: 1905–1914, 1928–1937 and 1967–1976. She found that the press portrayed South Asians as culturally different and deviant in morally degrading terms and as a threat to the existence of Vancouver as it was then constituted. Indra also pointed to the high degree of coherence and consistency among these ethnic stereotypes in the press.

While Indra's study reported some evidence of similarly stigmatic portrayals of the Chinese in the *Vancouver Province* newspaper as early as 1912, one finds plenty of well-documented historical evidence for such derogation of the Chinese in a 1983 study (A.B. Chan) as well. On 30 September 1979, the CTV television network's *W5* aired a segment called 'Campus Giveaway', alleging that university campuses in Canada were being swamped by Chinese foreign students,

making it difficult for other Canadian and landed immigrants to be admitted into professional schools of dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and engineering.[2] The Chinese students were portrayed in the programme as 'alien, unassimilable, insular and competitive' or 'as transient, as exploiter, as sojourner' (A. Chan 1983: 165); these same stereotypes first appeared in the Vancouver press as early as the turn of the century.

Data sources and methods

In this chapter, we will analyse Chinese stereotypes as portrayed in the Canadian press and examine Chinese reactions and avoidance behaviours in coping with prejudice and discrimination. The chapter is based on two data sources: analysis of all printed materials between 1915 and 1950 in the *Porcupine Advance* pertaining to the Chinese in Timmins, a small mining town in Northern Ontario; and in-depth interviews with nine elderly Chinese in Timmins. The *Porcupine Advance* was the only newspaper in Timmins until 1950, when it was replaced by the *Daily Press*.

As a typical edition of the *Porcupine Advance* was about six pages, and the local museum in Timmins had every issue of the newspaper, we were able to hire four students to go through each edition for any material – including announcements and advertisements – about the Chinese in Timmins. In addition, we conducted in-depth interviews between May and August 1981 with nine Chinese men between fifty-four and ninety years of age, all of whom were originally from the province of Kwangtung, China, had worked as manual labourers for years in Vancouver, BC, and came to Timmins before 1925 to work with relatives in restaurants and hand laundries. At the time of the interviews, all nine respondents were retired.

Before the interviews, we spent days in the Chinese Community Centre in Timmins getting to know the Chinese living in the Centre and those who visited frequently. They were curious at first about the researcher's presence in such a small, remote community. Yet they were friendly and welcomed his questions. Once the purpose of our presence in Timmins was explained, the Chinese in the Centre took the initiative of introducing and referring us to the few remaining elderly persons who had been in Timmins for a long time and to some 'influential spokespersons' in the Chinese community. It was through these frequent visits to the Centre and the support of the local residents that we made contacts and were able to conduct in-depth interviews.

The openness and informality of the interviews seemed to be conducive to eliciting reliable information from our respondents. The Chinese community in Timmins was relatively small, and many of them had daily face-to-face interactions with one another, thus engendering in them an unspoken fear of being sanctioned and ridiculed if they distorted, misrepresented or exaggerated events and experiences. Furthermore, as the interviews took place publicly, what respondents said could be challenged by the other Chinese who were present. When the interviews were carried out in respondents' homes, other family members were always there listening to the 'stories'.

> What I told you can be verified by other Chinese in Timmins. I don't have to say anything that is not true because I don't have anything to hide. I have been here for over fifty years. You can ask other Chinese in Timmins, particularly the few old-timers, about the experiences that we have been through.

Chinese immigration

The first wave of Chinese immigration to Canada began in the 1850s in response to the gold rush in Barkerville, BC. These first immigrants were mostly poor young peasants from the southern provinces of China and were followed by others in the 1870s and 1880s. Their motivation was to accumulate money in Canada and then go home. On discovering that there were no more gold mines, they laboured under appalling conditions to build the Canadian Pacific Railway and then migrated eastward to places such as Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto and began to establish their own communities to counteract and avoid the discriminatory practices and policies instituted by the governments, labour unions and private industries (Krauter and Davis 1978).

The historical pattern of eastward migration of Chinese within Canada can be seen as a direct response to unemployment in the west upon completion of the railway and to institutionalised racial discrimination (Verma *et al*. 1980). The Canadian government instituted a head tax on every Chinese immigrant, which increased from $50 per head in 1885 to $500 in 1904. The Chinese Immigration Act in 1923 effectively barred the entry of Chinese to Canada, stipulating explicitly that 'the only Chinese allowed to enter until 1952 were those whose immediate family members were Canadian citizens or residents' (Krauter and Davis 1978). Chinese immigrants were labelled as 'middleman minorities' (Blalock 1967; Loewen 1971; Bonacich 1973) or 'sojourners' (Lopreato 1967; Mangin 1970) and considered incapable of, or uninterested in, assimilation into Canadian society, and thus they had to be excluded entirely (Ferguson 1975).[3]

In a recent oral history study (1910–1947) of the occupations of Chinese immigrants on the Canadian prairie, Li (1982) makes the following observation:

> As a result of the anti-Chinese movement and subsequent legislative control, the Chinese found it difficult to compete with white labourers in the core labour market. Many were forced to take up employment in the marginal sector. The hostile labour market also accelerated the growth of ethnic business among the Chinese, first concentrating in laundry operations, later in restaurants. The marginal sector and the ethnic business provided an occupational refuge for many Chinese when opportunities were restricted in the core labour market.

Li (1982) also cites statistics on the occupations of the Chinese in Canada for 1921 and 1931 to illustrate their lack of employment opportunities. In 1921, 24 per cent of the Chinese were labourers and unskilled workers, and 34 per cent were employed as store clerks, servants, cooks, laundry workers or waiters. The

figures for 1931 reflect their continuing concentration in the marginal and ethnic business sectors.

Johnson (1977) has argued that the early immigration restrictions made family formation impossible:

> From the beginning legal disability made it impossible for Chinese immigrants to even contemplate commitment to a society that so categorically rejected them from full membership. When we look to Chinese-Canadian family structure, it is determined partly by the cultural characteristics of China but largely by Canadian law which severely constrained the kinds of family structures that could emerge. For much of Chinese-Canadian history it was simply impossible for most Chinese-Canadians to form families in Canada.

The census data indicated that, among the Chinese, the sex ratio in 1941 was 10:1. This imbalance resulted not only in a 'bachelor society' consisting primarily of male migrants who, regardless of their actual marital status, were deprived of normal family relationships, but also in the Chinese men's overindulgence in activities such as gambling, opium-smoking and visiting prostitutes (Davidson 1952).

Timmins and the local Chinese community

The birth of Timmins and its continued economic prosperity was marked by the discovery of gold and various minerals in 1901. Three major mining companies, owned and operated by white Canadians, promptly obtained licences to begin mining in Timmins, using workers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds: French-Canadians, Italians, Ukrainians, Finns, Macedonians, Polish and Hungarians.

The elderly Chinese we interviewed reported that there were about 100 Chinese in Timmins in 1901, all of whom were prohibited from working as miners. Since the mining industry employed a pool of transient, all-male miners, the need for a workforce supplying meals and washing dirty laundry was met by the Chinese migrants. As early as the 1900s, the Chinese owned and operated about ten low-capital, labour-intensive hand laundries, cafes and lunch counters. Typically, the Chinese worked and lived in their stores. The respondents recalled that, except for one man who did home gardening in his backyard to grow vegetables for sale to restaurants, all the Chinese in Timmins worked in Chinese restaurants and laundries, a state of affairs that continued into the mid-1950s.

While there were about 100 Chinese migrant workers in Timmins in 1901, the total population of the Chinese community never exceeded 250 in the subsequent fifty years. The number of Chinese women in Timmins between 1900 and 1950 was less than ten. It was a tight-knit community: all the Chinese knew each other and most worked with one another. In 1912, they bought an old house and established the Chinese Community Centre. The Centre quickly became a popular drop-in place where people would go to read Chinese newspapers, play Chinese

games or simply sit and chat about local news or tidings from back home. Special events were held in the Centre to celebrate the Chinese New Year, the Autumn Moon Festival and other Chinese festivals. The Chinese Community Centre was then the only institution in Timmins to offer a variety of socio-cultural and recreational activities.

When asked to rank themselves relative to the other ethnic groups in Timmins, all nine old-timers agreed that they were on the lowest rung of the social ladder. Relatively few in number, excluded from mainstream social institutions and restricted to a few menial, unwanted jobs, the Chinese coped by segregating themselves from the larger community. One of our older respondents, aged 90, put it this way:

> I don't want to compare us the Chinese with other ethnic groups – the comparison is meaningless since we were among the lowest if not the lowest. For a long time in Timmins, there has been one dominant majority group consisting of the British, French, Italians, Ukrainians, Finns and Macedonians, and one subordinate minority group which included the Hungarians, Poles, Jews, Native people and the Chinese. We Chinese were the minority among the minorities. These conditions remained unchanged for almost a half century. I just wanted to make a living. I just wished they'd leave me alone and let me live my own life.

Media images of the Chinese before the First World War

Out of the fifty clippings taken from the *Porcupine Advance* between 1915 and 1957, none portrayed the Chinese in positive terms. The *Porcupine Advance* took an interest in the Chinese as early as 6 August 1915 with an advertisement for a cook. On 2 July 1915, the newspaper reported that the local Board of Trade, during a regular board meeting, had questioned the legality of employing white girls in Chinese restaurants. The president of the board asked: 'Is it lawful?' The reply was: 'Only where there is an open dining room and no portioned off places'. The inference was that white girls wouldn't be 'safe' in the workplace unless subject to public scrutiny.

On 23 July 1915, with the opening of a laundry owned by a white, the paper reported: 'Is the Chinaman of today to be the Canadian of tomorrow? Let's hope not! Then patronise the Sanitary Steam Laundry. They are White'. While the local Board of Trade was continuing its discussion on white girls working in Chinese restaurants, the Sanitary Steam Laundry pursued the issue with regard to 'What about white men giving their laundry to Chinese?'. The racism escalated: 'It costs $500 to land a Chinaman in Canada. Every shirt, collar, sheet, etc. sent to a Chinese laundry is so much towards that $500. Every $500 means another Chinaman. Why not patronise the Sanitary Steam Laundry?'.

On 6 August 1915, the *Porcupine Advance* reported a case brought before the police court with the headline: 'A Chinese Puzzle for Timmins Court: Wrangle Between Celestials At Local Court Last Night Was Amusing'. The final disposi-

tion of the case, which concerned money disputes, was not reported. The newspaper reported the case as if it were entertainment, not serious news: 'It seemed apparent that the combined wisdom of Solomon, patience of Job, and justice of Portia would be required to decide a lively Chinese puzzle'. The newspaper went on to describe 'a crowded court being entertained for over half an hour with something out of the ordinary as it is seldom this class of people are seen arguing their wrongs before the local justice'. As early as 1915, Chinese were portrayed by the newspaper as entertaining, incomprehensible and inferior ('this class of people'). They could not settle disputes among themselves without the white man's superior intellect, exceptional patience and sense of justice.

The newspaper made the point that the Chinese could only speak pidgin English by laboriously quoting such statements as: 'No, no, he tell my brother he go kill me. I don't pay. I no owe him money'. Once the reader had been so colourfully served, it was time to lower the curtain because 'this was getting deeper and deeper and it could be seen that the strain was rapidly wearing out the patience of the court'. The story finally ended not with the outcome of the case, but by reporting that, when the court pressed for a clear answer from the defendant, he did not reply promptly, and as '. . . this apparently could not be soaked into the Celestial cranium in English, the interpreter came to the aid of the court'.

The Chinese caught the press's attention in another court case, this time involving a white woman on 20 August 1915. The newspaper headlined it as 'Trying to Keep Out Of Soup: An Anglo-Chinese Drama Which Was Presented At Timmins'. In fact, the newspaper did treat the case as a drama by reporting the sequence of events as Act 1, Act 2 and Act 3. Mrs Noble, a waitress, was alleged to have assaulted a Chinese cook, Ing Fee (no honorific was attached to his name). The defendant, after an argument concerning money allegedly owed to a boarder at the cafe where they both worked, threw a 'cup of scalding tea in Ing's face'. The newspaper reported that 'she rushed out of the kitchen expecting a kettle of boiling water to follow her at the hands of the Chinaman'. Her husband went to the kitchen to 'remonstrate'; four Chinamen were alleged to have tackled him. Failing to find the police, she rushed back to 'save her husband from being put into the pot of boiling soup or stock' and threw a soup dish at Ing's head. Ing received a bad scalp wound and bled profusely. The couple left, and Ing was tended by 'Doctor McInnes being called in to fix up the broken head of the Celestial'.

When the case came before the court in Act 2, the newspaper reported that Ing 'produced properties utilised to make them more real. Properties are: soup plates in several pieces, shirt all covered with blood and similarly stained handkerchief'. Perhaps, these properties did not please the judge who 'in tragic attitudes, removes these to the cells after production'.

A theatrically comical presentation of the facts reduced any sympathy a reader might have felt for the man who had been assaulted. It portrayed Mrs Noble as having a legitimate cause for her behaviour. She defended her actions as 'losing temper and (she) did not know the tea was scalding as it never was when she gave it to customers'. She was fined $10 and ordered to pay the medical bills. In concluding the drama, the newspaper reported that Mrs Noble was unwilling to

pay; her husband, who didn't want her to go to jail, paid the fine instead. Nothing more was said about Ing Fee, as if he was only supporting cast.

For almost two years, the Chinese garnered no attention from the press. Then, on 18 July 1917, the newspaper headline read: 'Tomorrow Will Be "Chinese Day" At Court'. The case involved charges and countercharges over gambling debts. Again, in an attempt to dramatise the case, the article read:

> The cases . . . are said to arise from some games of chance that were played and in which the losers thought they did not have a fair show. The arrest of one Chinaman on a charge of theft brought all the other charges tumbling around at once. It will be an interesting day at the police court if all the Chinamen all start to tell in their own way all at the one time.

The article reads as an advance notice for a pending drama performed by the entertaining and unruly Chinese, and also implies that the Chinese do not know what 'fair play' is.

The way in which the Chinese spoke the English language was noted to create dramatic effect. It was reported that, when the police went to locate these Celestials, the Chinese would duly reply: 'Washee the shirtee, no playee the game. . .'. It seems as if the report would not have been complete if such quotes were not included, implying: they don't speak our language; they are not like us.

During that same year, on 14 February 1917, it was reported that a Chinese was arrested when he was under the influence of opium. He was charged as a result of complaints that the community had made. It was deemed imperative that the 'community' and the police keep a constant watchful eye on the Chinese.

The Chinese in Timmins were targets of outright and blatant discrimination, and were often perceived as undesirables. After the First World War began, on 23 January 1918, the *Porcupine Advance* had this to say:

> . . . recently there has been a tendency in some quarters to learn the feeling of the people in regard to the proposal that Chinese coolies be imported, under bond, to do farm labour and to work in the mines during the period of the war. If the people are wise they will make it known in no uncertain voice that such a proposal will not be tolerated. There are enough, and too many, aliens in this country.

The report went on to say that these aliens, especially the Chinese, were procuring their livelihood in such despicable ways as gambling and were not contributing to the country in a 'productive and substantial way'. They were further accused of 'doing nothing, no helpful work . . . and too many of them cut no other figure in a public way than in police court cases . . .'. The press further insinuated that these undesirable aliens should have been 'conscripted' to do the labour, and to '. . . import more aliens, no matter what the excuse or guarantee under which they may come, would be a breach of faith with the workers of Canada and a piece of traitorism to this country'.

Such language indicates that the Chinese were undesirable aliens, and that their absence would be applauded. When the government, in response to the Russian revolution in 1917, banned political organisations and activities in Canada, the newspaper heartily endorsed this governmental measure, as if the survival of the country was at stake, and mentioned two voluntary Chinese organisations, the Chinese National League and the Chinese Labour Association, even though they had no connection whatsoever with the Bolsheviks.

The Chinese who were portrayed as sojourners did not escape the attention of the press. On 30 October 1918, a Chinese committed suicide because he did not want to be hospitalised for influenza. At that time, the whole region was attacked by this epidemic. What made this particular case noteworthy seemed to be that:

> . . . he is said to leave a wife and family in China. He is also reputed to have gathered considerable money together during his several years' sojourn in the Porcupine . . .

Given the context of wartime, when people had difficulties making ends meet, this particular Chinese may have been looked upon as an 'economic traitor' to the country by accumulating wealth; also, he was not to be considered as a permanent resident because he had left his family behind.

Other Chinese with flu were portrayed as a danger to public health. On 5 November 1918, the newspaper ran an editorial as follows:

> King Tong, a cook at the Paris Cafe, was reputed as ill with influenza. When the medical officers called there, they said no one was sick there. He finally told the truth and he was found in a serious condition from the flu. He was taken to the hospital and the Paris Cafe was closed up to be disinfected. The Chinaman died a few days later.

During the influenza epidemic, a total of eighty-seven residents died. When the newspaper reported these cases, the aliens had to be identified. On 13 and 20 November 1918, the newspaper reported that Mrs Ukkola (Finlander), Antonio Sanharon (Italian), Fong Klew (a Chinaman) and Charlie Lem (a Chinaman) died. No nationality was included when reporting such names as James Rouseau or Mrs Foster. Furthermore, in reporting the case of Mrs Foster, a preferential treatment in terms of a more detailed description of her as an integrated member of the community of family members, kin and friends was given: 'Mrs Foster, daughter of Mr and Mrs J. E. Salom, Timmins, died. To the bereaved relatives and near friends the sympathy of all goes out specially in the sad death'.

Only those who were regarded as the legitimate, welcome and bona fide citizens of this country deserved a eulogy and the respect and sympathy of the community. The Chinese were aliens and their deaths were not treated as being sad.

In summing up the images of the Chinese in Timmins up to the end of the First World War, the following aspects seem to predominate:

1 They were undesirable aliens, contributing nothing to the growth and development of the community.
2 They were sojourners and economic traitors whose main goal was to accumulate wealth and take it with them back to China.
3 They spoke incorrect and broken English.
4 They provided public entertainment by having their wrongs or disputes solved in court.
5 Their private troubles necessitated public intervention, and taxed the intellect and patience of the whites.
6 As a savage and backward people in need of redemption, they had no sense of fairness and justice.
7 They did not intend, and were unable, to integrate into the community, and the only time they came under public scrutiny and display was in court cases involving money disputes.

Media images of the Chinese after the First World War

The 1923 Chinese Immigration Act effectively halted the growth of the Chinese community in Canada (Krauter and Davis 1978; Li 1982). At the same time, the newspaper began reporting deaths of the Chinese in Timmins. By reporting these deaths, the newspaper was reflecting the subtle wish for the eventual extinction of these undesirable aliens in the community. On 1 July 1943, a Chinese passed away, and it was reported: 'A resident of this community for six years . . . a Chinaman died at the age of 63 years. He had only been ill a short time . . .'. The reader is left wondering if the Chinese were really that fragile and died after being ill for only a short time. No comprehensible cause of death was mentioned, perpetuating the belief that the Chinese were medically backward – opposed to hospitalisation and resorting to mysterious and ineffectual Chinese herbs instead.

On 9 September 1943, the following was written:

> . . . a Chinese gentleman who had conducted a laundry in Noranda for the past eight years left there . . . finding it necessary to close up his business . . . (he) found that Noranda was no place for fun . . .

While it remains uncertain whether the newspaper endorsed the departure of this particular Chinese from the community, it did depict him as rootless and frivolous. In the midst of the Second World War, every able person in the country had to work hard to enable the country to survive the crisis, but this Chinese man had closed his business for 'fun'.

Stories about gambling did not escape the press. On 7 January 1935, the newspaper reported the following:

> Last night, police surprised a group of Chinese playing 'dominoes'. Only eight were playing and they were taken to the police station along with the cloth-covered table and $200 in cash.

The names of all the eight Chinese were printed and they were charged under the Lord's Day Act. Three days later, the newspaper reported their conviction. Another case headlined 'Raid Chinese Place' received the same treatment on the front page in February 1937.

The Chinese involvement with prostitutes was another favourite story of the press. On 29 July 1935, the newspaper reported the raids and arrests of two 'Chinamen facing charges in connection with the Prince of Wales Hotel'. The manager was charged with keeping a disorderly house. Details were given:

> In the raid, the police seized an unusually large quantity of articles such as are usually associated with disorderly houses. The Chinaman found under the bed in the girl's room while the girl herself was downstairs had the further distinction of being a one-legged Chinaman, having at some time suffered the amputation of one leg.

The cases finally came to court and were disposed of with the release of the Chinese because of insufficient evidence. The newspaper reported on 5 September 1935 the Magistrate's warning to the Chinese even though the girls were probably prostitutes:

> I (the Magistrate) don't like the complaints about the girls being annoyed by the Chinese . . . I want these people (the Chinese) to understand that when they're given privileges and licences in this country, they must respect them. Girl employees must not be subjected to improper treatment. Young girls are entitled to protection from that sort of thing . . .

While the Chinese were scorned and warned as it was a 'privilege' for them to stay in the country, the other defendants (three girls charged as being 'found-ins') did not receive parallel lessons.

The stupidity and ignorance of the Chinese were insinuated by the following stories. On 17 May 1934, there was this story with the headline 'Rope Burned Chinaman's Hand', concerning the escape of a Chinese from a burning house. A fire broke out in a rooming house, and one of the roomers, a Chinaman, attempted to escape by using a rope from the window. While sliding down the rope, he suffered severe rope burns on his hands. The emphasis is on the rope burns instead of the quick escape. On 13 August 1936, again on the front page with the headline 'First Time Chinaman On Drunk Charge', it was reported that for the first time in Magistrate Atkinson's long experience as a judge, a Chinese was charged with being drunk. He was fined $10 and, instead of repenting, he commented on the 'good beer'. The newspaper found it amusing to add that 'the Chinaman couldn't remember what brand it was'.

On 28 May 1931, the newspaper seemed anxious to impress upon its readers the ludicrousness and absurdity of the Chinese with the following story:

> A young Chinaman who has been three years in Timmins died at the hospital as a result of gun shot injuries sustained. He and a friend went to enjoy some target practice, taking a gun. While humorously using the gun as a club for playing golf, he had the ill fortune to discharge the gun receiving a nasty wound in the stomach . . . He at first did not appear to care much . . . he didn't follow the instructions of the nurses, so his condition had developed into a serious situation and little hope could be held for his recovery. He passed away a few days later. He was born in Newfoundland.

On 15 July 1937, the newspaper reported, with 'a Chinaman's chance', meaning no chance at all the editorial that day explained, a lucky laundryman won a model home in the Lion's Club draw. Almost immediately, he made arrangements to sell the house for a sum between $7,000 and $7,500. The newspaper headlined the story as 'Sells House But Not To Return To China', and seemed perplexed by this laundryman's decision not to return to China after having attained the lifelong goal of wealth. It seems as if the newspaper and the community would be vexed and dissatisfied whether or not he returned to China.

The newspaper ridiculed Chinese philosophical thinking with the following joke: 'Mr Chine and Mr Chin stood on a bridge watching goldfish playfully chasing each other. Mr Chine said: "See how happy they are!" Mr Chin replied: "How do you know they are happy? You are not a goldfish". Mr Chine then said: "How do you know I don't know? You are not me!" '. This joke is another instance of the 'absurdity' of the Chinese.

In summary, images of the Chinese in newspaper reporting did not improve after the First World War. Cases of Chinese caught gambling, using drugs and visiting prostitutes abounded, and the Chinese were often depicted as stupid, ignorant and absurd. The press often took upon themselves the responsibility of monitoring the geographic movement of the Chinese, and publishing news about their sicknesses and deaths, but only to portray them as sojourners, rootless in Canada and unassimilable. However, a slight positive change in the newspaper's depiction of the Chinese was detected in this period. Instead of using the term 'Chinaman' exclusively, the words 'Chinese man' or, on rare occasions, 'Chinese gentleman' were used. This change was particularly evident during the early 1940s. The newspaper did report twice (23 August 1937 and 11 June 1942) on Chinese fund-raising to relieve the sufferings of the Chinese people in the war with Japan.

The data from interviews with the nine elderly Chinese then residing in Timmins indicate that they almost unanimously attribute this positive change in media portrayal to China's participation in the Second World War as an ally with Canada:

> Before the Second World War, the whites thought and believed that we Chinese were parasites contributing nothing to society. They thought that we just want to make money and did not care. But, when China fought against the

> Japanese who were also Canada's enemies, the whites in Timmins came to their senses. They knew that we were not what they thought we were. When we had the fund-raising parties for the war, they came too. They began to respect us . . . It is a sad thing to say that it took a war for them to turn around and consider us Chinese worthy humans.

Avoidance and withdrawal as coping mechanisms

Our in-depth interviews with the nine elderly Chinese indicate that, although they had never read stories about the Chinese in the English newspaper, they were very much aware of the negative, stereotypical and derogatory remarks directed against them.

A couple of them argued that how the Chinese were portrayed in the newspaper was a correct reflection of the larger community's long-standing perception of and attitudes towards them. Media portrayal of the Chinese thus served the function of reinforcing, dramatising and legitimising the stereotypical images held by the white community. In that sense, media portrayal and community opinion fed into and reinforced each other in a collective process of myth-making about the Chinese:

> Did I read these newspaper stories about us, the Chinese? I didn't need to. All we needed to do was to step out into the street to know how we were treated. Because we worked in the laundry and restaurant business, we had to deal with the white persons a lot. Discrimination was everywhere: in our stores, on the streets. What you read about in the newspapers was nothing compared to what we experienced.
>
> (male, aged 90)

Discriminatory ethnic portrayal and intentional misrepresentation and distortion of facts coupled with a long history of being subjected to various modes of institutional discrimination helped to create a circumscribed world for the Chinese in Timmins. As stigmatised persons, they began to develop and perpetuate a self-image based on their interpretations of how others saw and acted towards them. The effects of the stigma permeated (and could well have interfered with) their social relations with others outside the Chinese community. They were forced to lead a sheltered existence associated only with other Chinese as a means of defence:

> We know we are not welcome in Canada. But we have to make a living and support a family in China. We ignore and we endure. I do not have to read the newspaper to know. I still have a vivid recollection of the song they sang when they saw us: 'Chink, Chink, Chink, fifteen cents, wash my pants; five cents, make a dance'.
>
> (male, aged 86)

> Whites are whites. Canada is their place. Of course, they forget the Natives. I dare not walk on the streets alone at that time. They threw things at you any time they pleased. You know, I like winter, but do you know the reason? It is because I could wrap myself up in a bundle and hide my face.
>
> One time, I went to a hockey game, I chose to sit in an aisle which was empty. A few minutes later, a group of whites took the other seats. I felt uncomfortable because I was afraid they might find a Chink and then call me names.
>
> I can only say, before 1950, I avoided seeing and meeting whites on the streets. The shame of being a 'Chink' really got me. Sometimes, the whites came and ate in the restaurant, they didn't pay, because it's a 'Chinky' restaurant.
>
> (male, aged 90)

The Chinese in Timmins were acutely aware that, being physically visible and noticeable, they were often the target of public ridicule and blatant discrimination. Some of them tried to reduce their visibility by being faceless:

> At that time, we had no interactions with the whites. Usually, we worked in the kitchen. Of course, some of the waitresses were good and polite. Yet, I am talking about the majority. Let me tell you one thing. You know how the parents taught and disciplined their children? They said if they did not behave well, a Chinaman would come and take them away, or they would become a Chinaman.
>
> (male, aged 74)

Whites asserted that anything was better than being Chinese and, after living in Canada for a while, the Chinese began to agree with them. In Canada, anything was better than being Chinese:

> We are humans but we lived in a subhuman way. We did not have a family with us here and we had no family life. We were hated by the whites and they did not want to have anything to do with us because we are Chinese. Among ourselves we just played some games as our recreational outlets. You know, we were not allowed to do this or that. [The whites said that the] Chinese should be blamed and not the whites. They didn't like us and they made the excuses.
>
> Yes, we gambled, but, surely, we were not hurting others. We had no alternatives and we had no family life here. True, at first, we did not have enough money to bring our family here. But, when we did, we were not allowed. What was more insulting was that when we took a trip back to China to see our family, or to get married, they said that we were spending their money in China instead of in Canada. Now, you go and ask how many Chinese in Timmins spend their time after work in the games. I bet, many of them will say: 'no time, and there is a family to look after'. So, who should be blamed?
>
> (male, aged 80)

A fifty-four-year-old man recalled:

> I came here when I was ten. I went to school here but I avoided the main road. I took the side streets all the time. They (other students) called me Chinaman. Sometimes, I fought back but I would get the punishment from the teacher. I still remember those dark days.

A ninety-year-old man said:

> I don't know where they learned these good words: Chinaman, Chink or Chinky. You know, when I told my children what I had gone through, they replied: 'You are stupid. Why don't you fight back?' They don't understand. I am sure had I done that, the newspaper would have the incident reported with exaggeration. Either way, we Chinese would be the losers. If we won the fight, we would be accused as barbaric, rude, aggressive and uncivilised. They might even say that, for their own protection, no Chinese should be allowed into the school. If we got beaten up, then, they would describe us as fragile, weak. So, the best way was to avoid them.

A seventy-year-old man commented on Chinese men going to prostitutes:

> You cannot deny the fact that we have this [sexual] need too. What can we do? We lived like a monk even though we were married. Do you think that it is a sin to have a girl who was willing to do this kind of job? We were forced to do this immoral thing by the whites because we were not allowed to bring our family here. You just look around now and see if there is any prostitute in Timmins with Chinese among her clients.

In an attempt to cope with ethnic insults and hostile confrontations, the Chinese in Timmins chose withdrawal and avoidance, not counter-arguments or attacks. If they had chosen to fight back, the Chinese would probably have been accused of being uncivilised and militant; instead, they were portrayed as morally and physically weak. In this no-win situation, they opted to cope quietly and survive.

Conclusion

Two major interconnected themes have emerged from our analysis of the images of the Chinese as portrayed by the *Porcupine Advance* in Timmins between 1915 and 1950. The perception of the Chinese as sojourners and economic traitors whose main goal was to accumulate wealth in Canada and take it back to China was fuelled by a parallel resentment of the lack of participation of the Chinese in the mainstream society. The second theme, of the Chinese as a savage and backward people lacking a sense of fairness and justice, and desperately in need of moral enlightenment and redemption, was amplified by stories of Chinese in court or caught gambling, using drugs and going to prostitutes. The first theme

explained the lack of integration of the Chinese in terms of motive and intent (i.e. because they did not want to), while the second theme rationalised their unassimilability in terms of their moral depravity, ignorance and deviance (i.e. because they were not able to). The separation of the Chinese from the white society took place both because the Chinese had voluntarily chosen to be apart and because they were different and inferior; the two perceptions reinforced and fed each other. These two major themes gave news reporting on the Chinese a consistency and predictability spanning almost four decades, a trend not broken until the early 1940s with China's participation in the Second World War as an ally with Canada. Our oral history data give evidence that the wartime effort of the Chinese in Canada marked the beginning of a positive change in white attitudes in general and press portrayal in particular. The repeal of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act took place in 1947 and resulted in the enfranchisement of the Chinese. In treating our analysis of the media portrayal of the Chinese in Timmins in terms of the total historical experience, including the history of Canada's immigration policy and the myriad discriminatory measures against the Chinese, one begins to understand that the press's treatment of the Chinese in Timmins was a reflection as well as a reinforcement of white attitudes.

Not being allowed to join trade unions and the labour movement, the Chinese pioneers in Timmins were never part of the local mythology of the hard rock miner (Gold 1983). The Chinese never organised to combat discrimination. Job entry and mobility in the mining town depended on one's accessibility to social network resources; the Chinese had none and were restricted to providing services for the mining economy.

The Chinese in Timmins, as in other parts of Canada, coped with the removal of their political rights, the country's prohibition of family reunification, their confinement to menial jobs and their exclusion from society's institutions by creating and then retreating to their own community. Our oral history data have pointed out that the Chinese in Timmins dealt with 'street racism' on a daily basis by avoidance and withdrawal.

3 Ethnic space, displacement and forced relocation

Between 1981 and 1984, journalists in Montreal graphically portrayed the economic and psychological effects of urban displacement due to government or developers' expropriation. These articles were dramatised by such headlines as 'Renovation Craze Puts Squeeze on Low-income Roomers – Roomers Pushed out by Gentrification' (Penketh 1981); 'Expropriation Steamer is Very Tough to Stop' (Wilson 1981); and 'Renovation Blitz Forcing Low-income Groups from Inner City' (Saper 1984).

In a comparative study of the impact of forced relocation on people in Montreal and other North American cities, Melamed *et al*. (1984) document massive destruction in the neighbourhoods of the poor during the early years of municipal reform to combat organised crime in Montreal. From 1958 to 1968, a period often known as the 'Golden Decade' in Montreal, major public investments in street widenings (e.g. Métropolitain, Décarie, Bonaventure), the Metro subway and Expo '67 were made to stimulate private investment and tourism. The expropriation of the city's low-rent districts forced their inhabitants to relocate to areas hostile to their housing and economic needs. Melamed is particularly concerned with 'the deep sense of loss by dozens of elderly, long-time residents of the neighbourhood from which they were evicted' and 'the effects of psychological trauma which must surely have hurt a number of the weakest and most vulnerable of the relocatees'. Melamed concludes that the impact of forced relocation on relocatees in Montreal is the same as in other North American cities: higher rents, less living space and loss of neighbourhood identity.

In his book *Lost Montreal* (1975: 12), Luc d'Iberville-Moreau, in lamenting the destruction of heritage, linkage with the past and immigrant neighbourhoods, makes the following observation:

> Commerce, speculation, and foreign investment in real estate – often dictated from abroad without any respect for or understanding of the soul of the city – can do work against the needs and wishes of citizens by disregarding the origins, the habitants, the functions, and the architecture of a district in which property is coveted.

One example of a victim of urban displacement by governments and by 'commerce, speculation, and foreign investment in real estate' is the Chinatown in Montreal, which attracted considerable journalistic and editorial coverage with headlines such as 'City Tearing Us Apart, Brick by Brick, say Montreal's Chinese' (Peritz 1981), 'Chinatown Won't Last Ten Years' (Sanger 1984), 'The Changing Face of Chinatown' (Ganten 1984), 'Chinatown Shafted (Again)' (Editorial, *The Montreal Gazette,* 29 January 1985) and 'Listen to Chinatown' (Editorial, *The Montreal Gazette,* 27 February 1985).

The literature on urban displacement

In the United States, urban displacement and its deleterious social effects attracted considerable attention from the popular press (Hartnett 1977; *New York Times* 1977; Reinhold 1977; Besser 1979; Unger 1984), scholars (Fried 1967; Lang 1982) and city planners and architects (Sumka 1978, 1979a, 1979b; Hartman, 1979a, 1979b). Most studies of the displacement process agree, first, that a highly disproportionate number of the displacees are elderly, on low income and non-white and, second, that the psychosocial effects of forced uprooting and relocation on them are particularly severe partly because they are most likely to be long-term residents dependent on the neighbourhood's institutions and locally based social networks, and partly because they lack resources and, therefore, more likely to experience forced relocation and uprootedness as a crisis. At least two studies (James 1977; Smith 1977) have found that dislocated families had often moved more than once since they were first dislocated. These displacees are often powerless in the face of massive urban displacement, victimised by 'market forces' beyond their control (Hartman 1979a).

An observer of urban displacement (Hartman 1979a: 22) has pointed out that 'Often government has acted in the interests of profit maximisers via its functions as builders of freeways, commercial and civil projects . . . In the l950s and 1960s government agencies were immediate displacers; in the 1970s the profit maximisers have been acting directly'. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in its 1979 Interim Displacement report, points out that about one-fifth of all displacements in the US were caused directly by government programmes and highway projects sponsored by local and federal authorities.

Lang (1982: 14) describes the dynamics of the renewal-displacement process as follows:

> By simply casting their covetous eye on a particular neighbourhood, the rich home buyers will immediately produce a surge in house prices and rents that will eventually preclude market participation by the poor. In addition this effect will be most pronounced in the dense inner city where any physical improvements are quickly noted by local residents, speculators, and neighbourhood handicappers bent on making windfall profits.

Ethnic territory

Bound by Dorchester in the north, Viger in the south, Bleury in the west and Sanguinet in the east, Montreal's Chinatown, like most Chinatowns throughout North America, is located in the downtown area, which is why the few city blocks making up Chinatown have become attractive prey to the covetous eyes of developers and speculators. Within its three-mile radius, one is within walking distance of hotels (e.g. Bonaventure, Grand Hotel, Hotel Champlain and Méridien), tourist attractions (e.g. St Denis Street, Old Montreal and City Hall), Metro subway stations and theatres, cinemas and concert halls (e.g. Place des Arts).

For more than a century, the term Chinatown conjured up a multiplicity of stereotypical and largely derogatory images underlined by a strange blend of curiosity and paranoia. The images normally associated with Chinatowns are the same as with other ethnic ghettos and slums: dark alleys, prostitution and gambling rings, drugs, organised crime, overcrowding, high rates of physical and mental disorders and a diversity of ethnic vices. Chinatowns, usually concentrated in a few city blocks in the downtown area, are also known to maintain and support a marginal population – the elderly and the poor – who are handicapped by linguistic, cultural and psychological barriers. According to a survey (Gratton and Kien, 1985), there were 441 residents in Chinatown, 271 of whom were Chinese. Among the 271 Chinese, about 60 per cent (162) were sixty years of age or older. About 57 per cent of the Chinese population in Chinatown were female, and almost half (46.8 per cent) of the area's total population was widowed.

Historically, Chinatown has been the hub of Chinese business and entrepreneurial activities, with a distinct ethnic economy that is dependent on the larger economy. The display of Chinese signs and commodities in Chinese bookstores, restaurants, arts and crafts shops and grocery stores, the inundation of Chinese folk music and the aroma of exotic Chinese cuisines, and the domination of traditional Chinese symbols portrayed in huge patches of reds and yellows make Chinatown an urban space with an unmistakable flavour and character. In Chinatown, one often hears the Chinese old-timers and new immigrants from Asia conversing with each other in a mixture of Chinese dialects; the sheer physical visibility of the Chinese people gives the district a Chinese personality. In terms of the anthropology of language and culture, Chinatown looks, smells, sounds and feels Chinese.

From an ecological and territorial standpoint, Chinatown, to the Chinese people and even to a certain extent to outsiders, has clear boundaries. Our survey data based on interviews with the leaders of Montreal's Chinese community indicate that there is a consensus among them as to which city streets mark the boundaries of Chinatown (Chan 1983). It is also their firm belief that those few city blocks belong to them, and they should have the right to decide what happens in the area.

When the gold mines in British Columbia were dug, and the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed, the sudden labour shortage in the west generated intense prejudice among Canadian labourers and labour unions against the tens of thou-

sands of Chinese labourers brought to Canada in the 1880s. In the process of a massive eastward migration to escape organised, institutional discrimination and to look for jobs, some Chinese settled in Montreal. The *Montreal Gazette* (29 October 1894), a city English newspaper, reported a total of 500 Chinese in Montreal in 1894. The census of Canada recorded the number of Chinese in Montreal as 17,05 in 1931, 1,884 in 1941 and 1,272 in 1951. While not all Chinese lived in Chinatown, many of them worked in or owned restaurants, grocery stores and hand laundries there. Many others went to family and clan associations in Chinatown for services and entertainment or to participate in community celebrations and festivals.

Almost a century of structural, institutional and legal discrimination against the Chinese in Canada (see previous chapters) left them socially and legally vulnerable, which in turn created the need to establish their own ethnic institutions in Chinatowns to protect and safeguard their civil, social and legal rights in their transactions with the outside society. The Chinese in Montreal looked upon the many family and clan associations as 'surrogate families and parents'. In our study of the institutional infrastructure of Montreal Chinatown (Chan 1983), we counted a total of sixty-two associations and agencies squeezed into a few city blocks. Historically, these institutions served, among others, the following functions: to represent the Chinese in legal–social terms in their civil and business transactions with the larger society; to protect and safeguard the legal and human rights of the Chinese; to mediate, arbitrate and settle disputes among Chinese; to provide the Chinese with a shelter and a refuge from discriminatory treatment; to provide a range of social and community services that were otherwise unavailable because of linguistic, cultural and psychological barriers; to sponsor socio-cultural and recreational activities catering to the social needs of the Chinese; to provide a sense of cultural continuity and a base for ethnic identification by offering Chinese language classes; to bestow ethnic pride and ethnic strength; to cater to the religious and spiritual needs of those Chinese who are Protestant or Catholic.

A close scrutiny of the above list indicates that Chinatown organisations have gradually lost their protective, defensive, legal and paternalistic functions. The emergence in the early 1980s of several community- and neighbourhood-based social service organisations staffed by Canada-trained Chinese community workers and funded by federal and provincial grants has actually rendered most of these functions obsolete or redundant. However, when we asked the Chinese community leaders to articulate the functional significance of Chinatown to the Chinese community in Montreal (Chan 1983), the majority of our respondents pointed to two strategic functions. First, Chinatown provides a territory, a place where the Chinese can perpetuate and nurture a sense of ethno-cultural identification and pride, which in turn enables the Chinese as members of a visible minority to cope with racial discrimination. Second, the institutional infrastructure of Chinatown safeguards the continuity of Chinese values, beliefs, symbols and traditions, and transmits them with dignity and pride to the new generations.

Urban displacement and forced relocation

Since the late 1960s, the construction of two large-scale provincial government buildings, taking up two city blocks along Dorchester Street, has physically delimited and defined the northern boundary of Chinatown. When another federal office building, the Guy Favreau Complex, was built, no less than six acres of Montreal downtown land bounded by Dorchester, St Urbain, Lagauchetière and Jeanne Mance had to be cleared and nine buildings outside this area demolished to widen Jeanne Mance and St Urbain streets. In the process, two Chinese churches, a school, several Chinese groceries and arts and crafts stores, a Chinese food processing plant and about twenty dwellings were demolished and relocated outside Chinatown. The completion of this massive federal building in 1983 delimited the western boundary of Chinatown. With monthly rental rates for residential units inside the Guy Favreau Complex between $460 and $565 for one-bedroom apartments, between $640 and $840 for two-bedroom apartments and between $760 and $880 for three-bedroom apartments, the Complex was hardly affordable for those whose dwellings had been demolished. Rather, the Complex, with its downtown location, attracted middle-class families of professionals and businessmen, and was filled to capacity less than two years after its completion in 1983. As a final instance of government encroachment, a provincial government convention centre, taking up yet another city block, was built in 1983, delimiting the south-western boundary of Chinatown. Gigantic, large-scale, ultramodern federal and provincial government buildings hover over and encroach upon the low-lying buildings of Chinatown like giant tombstones, reminding the Chinese people that the days of their urban space are numbered.

As ethnic urban space and neighbourhoods were displaced by government buildings, land speculators and developers moved in on Chinatown. Also in 1983, a twenty-million-dollar condominium–office building called Place du Quartier, with condominium apartments priced between $74,000 and $118,000, was built inside Chinatown at the corner of St Urbain and Dorchester. Filled to capacity in less than three years, the building, as an urban project, does very little to complement the cultural and socio-economic reality of Chinatown. Like the Guy Favreau Complex, this condominium–office building marks the beginning of a trend of middle-class people moving into the downtown area. In this case, they work jointly with the governments and the developers to 'gentrify' Chinatown.

In spite of protests from the Chinese community, local French and English media and a few heritage preservation groups, a new municipal zoning bylaw in 1985 prohibited further commercial development on Lagauchetière Street east of St Laurent Boulevard, the sole direction for any kind of expansion for Chinatown. This municipal government restriction encouraged the construction of more residential buildings like the Guy Favreau Complex and the Place du Quartier, further reinforcing the trend towards gentrification.

Partly because of the availability of low-rental rooming houses and a spectrum of community services provided by ethnic organisations and agencies, and partly because of their strategic location in the downtown area, Chinatowns throughout

Canada have been historically attractive to low-income Chinese families and the elderly. Our survey data (see Chapter 4) indicate a steady but significant internal migration of elderly Chinese from the suburbs into Chinatown. Many of these are Chinese widows with a history of co-residence with their children and grandchildren within or outside the Montreal metropolitan area prior to moving into Chinatown. Such factors as intergenerational and familial conflicts and anxiety, isolation, boredom and alienation in the suburbs push these women away from their former residences. Other factors such as co-residence with and accessibility to peers, familiarity with the neighbourhood, a sense of belonging to an ethnic community and its institutions, availability of community resources and services and freedom of movement make living in Chinatown attractive. Chinatown has thus become a retirement community for the Chinese elderly.

While about 200 elderly Chinese women and men now live as retirees in rooming houses above Chinese restaurants and stores, it was estimated that Montreal's Chinatown supported a Chinese population of 3,000 before expropriation and demolition. The chain effect of urban displacement in terms of the abrupt increase in land and property values, as well as taxes, have continued to force both local landlords and tenants out.

A report put out by the Montreal Chinese Professional and Businessmen's Association (1985) points out that 'the market for retail commercial space in Chinatown is so tight that a tenant who holds a commercial lease for a small store with only two years left (on it) can sell the lease with the store empty for $30,000'. There is also evidence from real estate offices that some commercial spaces on the ground level in Chinatown (that are suitable for use as restaurants or grocery stores) have increased five-fold in rental value within a period of four years.

The sixty-two family and clan associations and community-based organisations and agencies will also be victimised by urban displacement. Even though these institutions have been part of the social ecology of Chinatown for half a century, they will have to be closed down or relocated. With its institutional and cultural infrastructure removed, Chinatown as an ethnic neighbourhood will be uprooted from its history and heritage, and will become nothing but a commercial and tourist district, catering only to the needs of consumers.

The small businessmen will be the next to go. With increases in taxes and rentals, they will discover that the pressure of business competition is too intense. With the departure of small Chinese businesses, large-scale entrepreneurial businesses from outside the area will move into Chinatown; one can foresee a drastic reduction in the commercial heterogeneity of Chinatown.

In the case of Montreal's Chinatown, urban displacement can be understood in terms of the government spearheading 'pioneering efforts' – using its political resources to expropriate land inside and around the area and constructing large-scale, modern government buildings that pay little respect to the area they are encroaching upon – and the infusion of Chinese or non-Chinese upper middle-class interests, thus pushing out the original residents, ethnic associations and family-run small businesses.

Conclusion

This study of Montreal's Chinatown has reviewed the changing historical and functional significance of Chinatown as an ethno-cultural district for the Chinese community in Quebec. In coping with structural prejudice and discrimination, the Chinese in Montreal, for more than a century, have been turning to Chinatown for support and comfort, as well as for cultural continuity and ethnic identification. Montreal's Chinatown has been the site of the local Chinese community's institutional structure; it also accommodates and takes care of the handicapped, the elderly, the poor and the disadvantaged.

Chinatown was created by a unique set of historical, political and economic forces. It existed because of a historical fact: discrimination. It has continued to exist because it serves a variety of functions, both for the Chinese and for the larger society. The Chinese insist that they have historical and territorial claims to Chinatown, that the residents, the ethnic associations and the businesses, as well as the traditional character of Chinatown, be protected, and that they have rights to an urban space that once was theirs.

Urban displacement has transformed Chinatown and will continue to force out those who cannot afford to stay in the area. With its institutional infrastructure eroded, Montreal's Chinatown is undergoing a transitional crisis. The crisis is worsened by government authorities who have chosen to resolve the conflict between commercial development and the rights of the people by siding with the former.

4 Coping with ageing and managing identity

The growing interest in theory and research in the field of ageing and the aged in Canada and the United States has not been matched by a parallel interest in the meaning and consequences of ageing among members of the ethnic minorities. The publication of the monograph *Ethnicity and Aging* (Gelfand and Kutzik 1979) has played a vital role not only in alerting social gerontologists to the importance of the historical, cultural and subcultural dimensions of the ageing process, but also in evaluating the extent to which existing theories of ageing are applicable to minority elderly persons.

A review of the gerontological literature points to the paucity of data on elderly Asian-Americans. In reviewing the scanty and scattered published materials on elderly Asian-Americans, Kalish and Yuen (1971) were critical of the long-standing myth of ageing Asians being respected and well cared for by their offspring in the name of filial piety; they also questioned the utility of the disengagement theory in making sense of the ageing process among Asian-Americans. Kalish and Moriwaki (1973) challenged a widespread stereotypical view of the Asian-American aged being self-supporting, self-sufficient and free of problems and distress. While recognising the 'historical uniqueness' of the ageing process and discrimination that they had been subjected to in the past century, Kalish and Moriwaki stressed that, to understand older Asian-Americans, gerontologists must attempt to grasp their cultural origins and the effects of their socialisation, their life history in North America and their expectations of old age.

In a study of elderly Chinese in the Los Angeles area, Wu (1975) identified several problems: inability to speak or understand English; inaccessibility to services at traditional social agencies; lack of transportation and leisure activity; and reduction of social status in the family. Like Kalish and Yuen (1971), Wu pointed to the growing discrepancy between filial piety as a norm and as a practice, and argued that this discrepancy was an underlying source of unhappiness and psychological distress among the aged Chinese. However, other findings of this study indicated that the elderly respondents themselves did not consider housing, health and income as serious problems, thus casting doubt on stereotypes of the elderly in ethnic minorities suffering from housing, health and financial difficulties. Wu (1975: 274) thus concluded that 'considering all the difficulties encountered in the new world, the adjustment of the elderly has been unexpectedly good'.

In another study of fifty Chinese elders undertaken as part of a cross-cultural study of minority elders in San Diego county, Cheng (1978) found that, in answering the question 'Do you think things in general are getting better, staying the same or getting worse for the Chinese?', 34 per cent of the respondents viewed things as getting better and 16 per cent thought things were the same. The same study reported that 86 per cent of the sample were satisfied with their immediate neighbourhood, identifying factors such as comfort and security, good neighbours, closeness to family and ethnic friends, closeness to resources and weather conducive to good health as important determinants of a good neighbourhood. Sixty-four per cent of the sample actually considered their health as good, and 14 per cent responded that their health was fair; only 22 per cent indicated poor health.

In a youth-oriented society, the aged are often depicted as decrepit and in poor health, socially isolated in the family and physically disabled and impoverished. Much of this social stereotyping, which is often presented in a more dramatic manner when applied to the aged minorities, has found its way into the social gerontology literature, the validity and accuracy of which have been called into question (Matthews 1979). One might want to argue that such perceptions of the aged are partly due to a social stigma applied to the aged and partly due to the ways in which survey and quantitative data on the aged are collected.

In view of this, further research on the aged minorities might want to take account of the following precautions: make explicit the task of research to test the validity and accuracy of stereotypes of the aged; beware of falling into the trap of either seeing the aged minorities as capable of taking care of themselves or seeing them as hopeless victims of the double jeopardy of age and racial prejudice (Dowd and Bengston 1978); take into account the impact of the aged minorities' personal histories, socialisation processes and the structural forces of racial prejudice and discrimination on the ageing process; view ethnicity and culture as variables that can both hinder and facilitate adjustment to the social and psychological constraints of ageing; and experiment with such alternative methods of data collection as participant observation and intensive, unstructured interviews to arrive at the aged persons' own definition of the situation.

This chapter is a report on a study which attempted to examine the social world of elderly Chinese women through their patterns of living and to see how they had coped with the exigencies of life in old age. The sample in our study consisted of twenty-six elderly Chinese women between fifty-six and eighty-eight years of age, who, at the time of the study, had all lost their husbands three to ten years earlier and lived in rooming houses above restaurants or stores in Montreal's Chinatown. Five areas were identified for this study: the women's immigration and work histories; their daily social participation; their patterns of use of elderly services; factors associated with intergenerational conflicts; and their management and negotiation of their identity as parents and grandparents.

The data for this study were collected by a combination of research methods. A community worker from a Chinatown social agency administered a structured, close-ended Chinese questionnaire over a three-month period in 1982. It included

questions on demographic and socio-economic characteristics, migration patterns, housing needs and level of satisfaction with current living arrangements, patterns of use of services and resources inside and outside the Chinese community, nature and frequency of social participation, and social and cultural needs.

After administering the questionnaires, the researcher conducted intensive, unstructured interviews with ten of the twenty-five women to collect their personal oral histories, with a focus on their work histories, relationships with spouse, children, grandchildren, and sons- and daughters-in-law, and feelings about living in Chinatown. Both the administration of the questionnaires and the oral history interviews were conducted in Chinese and in respondents' homes. The oral history interviews were all tape-recorded, translated into English and transcribed verbatim. Personal, unstructured interviews were also conducted with three community workers from three different social agencies of the Chinese community, and with two Chinese physicians practising in Chinatown, whose clientele consisted of a large proportion of elderly Chinatown residents.

Chinese immigration to Canada and work histories

The *Montreal Gazette* (29 October 1894) reported a total of 500 Chinese in Montreal in 1894. The census of Canada recorded the number of Chinese in Montreal to be 1,705 in 1931, 1,884 in 1941 and 1,272 in 1951 (Hoe 1979a, 1979b). Our own oral history data indicate that, before the Second World War, there were fewer than thirty Chinese families and perhaps a similar number of Chinese women in the city.

Owing to the head tax on Chinese entering Canada from 1885 to 1903 and the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923, which effectively barred Chinese from entering Canada and was not repealed until 1947, family life among the Chinese in Canada was a rarity until the Second World War. Economic hardship, racial hostility and federal discrimination deterred most Chinese men from bringing their wives and children over with them.

The twenty-six elderly Chinese women in our sample and their children were sent for by their husbands shortly after the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947, after a separation of twenty to thirty years. Between the time the couples were married in China and their reunion in Canada, only three women had managed to see their husbands while the latter were paying short visits to China or making sojourns of one to three years there before going back to Canada.

For the married men, prolonged deprivation of a family life and marital separation had several adverse social, psychological and economic consequences: lack of initiative in owning property and making economic investment in Canada; improper balance of work and leisure; residential segregation and socio-cultural isolation within the Chinese ghetto; loneliness and alienation; alcoholism and heavy smoking; poor physical and mental health; and pursuit of such illicit activities as gambling, visiting prostitutes and smoking opium. Indeed, our interview data indicate that one of the reasons why husbands sent for their wives and children was that they realised they were approaching old age, had serious infirmities and

were very fearful of ageing and dying alone in a foreign land. The Chinese women were literally brought to Canada to nurse their ailing husbands, who then passed away within a few short years of the family reunion.

All twenty-six women reported that their husbands had periodically sent money back to China to support families left behind. However, life in the poverty-stricken Chinese villages was difficult, and women often worked long hours as farmers or labourers to support the family. Upon arrival in Canada, these women were often shocked by the reality of a poor, ill, ageing and dependent husband. Many continued to work to support their families, mainly as dishwashers or manual labourers in Chinese restaurants and food processing companies, until they were eligible for federal and provincial old-age pensions.

One important observation that emerged from this brief sketch is that all these women had a history of hard work and devotion to their husbands and children, which perhaps engendered a psychological hardiness, resilience and integrity which served as a buffer from the direct onslaughts of the 'storm and stress' of life. Strong and self-sufficient, these women played an indispensable role in 'holding the family together', both in China and in Canada.

This sketch of their work history also helped us to understand their degree of satisfaction with their financial condition at the time. With the old-age pensions, the average monthly income of these women amounted to about $500. As the costs of room rental and other daily expenses and necessities were low, rarely exceeding $200 per month, all the twenty-six women reported that they were satisfied with their present standard of living and that they very rarely ran into serious financial difficulties. As a matter of fact, three women saw retirement at the age of sixty-five as a relief from hard and menial work:

> My husband and I worked very hard throughout our lives. I think I worked even harder and longer hours in Canada than in China. I often put in sixteen hours a day, seven days a week in the Chinese restaurant across the street. Now I can depend on the government for the rest of my life – we call the government 'the good old man'. The Canadian government is very nice to us and we feel very, very grateful. Every woman I know looks forward to turning sixty-five, when she will get the old-age pension. I have more than enough to live on – I don't spend very much. Throughout my life, I never spent more than was necessary.

Social participation: time, space and ethnicity

In an attempt to reconstruct their daily social lives, the women were asked to indicate how often they undertook twenty-eight socio-cultural and recreational activities: daily, weekly, monthly, bimonthly or never. Things that were done daily by these women included: shopping for groceries and necessities; doing physical exercise; watching Chinese television; reading Chinese newspapers and magazines; and listening to tape-recorded Chinese music. Activities undertaken at least once per week were: receiving and entertaining friends or relatives at home; visit-

ing friends and relatives within Chinatown; watching movies at Chinese cinemas; attending events organised by community groups or agencies in Chinatown; and going to church. Those that were very rarely or never done were: reading non-Chinese newspapers, magazines or books, watching movies at non-Chinese cinemas; going to city museums, libraries and galleries; and going out for dinners or luncheons.

The women also were asked to describe a typical day. This excerpt from one of the interviews is illustrative:

> I usually wake up at about 6:30 in the morning. I would start my day preparing for myself a simple breakfast – usually a bit of Chinese rice soup or a bowl of rice with leftovers from supper the night before. I would take about an hour to finish the breakfast. I eat quite slowly. Then I sit around, clean up the kitchen, sit around again, chat with my neighbours, listen to Chinese music and what not. Then I start preparing my lunch around noon or slightly earlier. Real simple food: a bowl of rice with vegetables and some meat. Then I clean up the kitchen, sit around chatting. Sometimes I go back to my room, turn the radio on and do some knitting or sewing. I make all my clothes myself. If it is a nice sunny day, I would leave my room around three o'clock, walk a few blocks, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by a few women who also live on this level. We often go grocery shopping at supermarkets on St Laurent (outside Chinatown) together. It's better to go outside Chinatown once in a while with someone. We often sit inside the Complexe Desjardins (an air-conditioned provincial building within a short walking distance from Chinatown) for the entire afternoon. We just sit and watch people passing by. On a hot summer day, I would rather sit there than stay inside this stuffy room of mine. Then we would walk back to our rooms around 5 or 6 o'clock. By then, it's time to cook again. My diet is a very simple one, always very simple – I would add one or two extra dishes when my folks (a son and two grandchildren) come to visit me and stay for dinner. Then I clean up the kitchen for the use of others. The other twelve women on this floor usually start preparing their dinners around this time. We talk a lot while cooking in the common kitchen. At about 9 o'clock in the evening, I would go back to my own room; I might read the newspaper, or turn the television or radio on, or, if I'm tired, I would go straight to bed. During the winter, I sometimes stay inside the building for more than two weeks. It's too cold out there. I always have enough food to last for a month. When it snows, the roads become very slippery and very dangerous. I fell once and was taken to the hospital. The streets of Chinatown are narrow and I don't want to fight with the cars and delivery trucks which pass by Chinatown very often. There are a lot of things I don't do during the winter.

A close scrutiny of the interview transcripts and the questionnaire data reveals several regularities in the social lives of these women. The total social space, as perceived by these women, was clearly divided into four compartments: the

room, the public space on one floor of the rooming house (common kitchen and corridor), Chinatown (stores, church, community organisations, streets) and the nearby neighbourhood (stores and public buildings within two or three blocks from Chinatown). These four physical compartments constituted the total context of their daily activities. While cognitive unfamiliarity with non-Chinese culture and customs, inability to communicate in French and English and a diffuse sense of anxiety and fear about the physical environment acted as barriers that shaped and determined the outer parameters of their social space, it was such factors as weather, perception of physical hazards in the urban context (a combination of heavy automobile traffic, narrow streets and pedestrian walks) and fear of victimisation by crime that determined which activity was done where, when and for how long.

Both the interview and questionnaire data indicate that our respondents seemed to have been engaged in a number of social activities regularly and intensively; a large number of other activities such as attending non-Chinese community events or going to museums and public libraries were very rarely if ever done at all. The first category of frequent and intensive routine activities includes those that are culture bound, things that can be done on their own within the room or the premises. The women themselves decided and chose what activities to undertake with others outside their rooms or the premises. The data indeed show very clearly that their participation in the social milieu outside Chinatown was almost non-existent. Their own social milieu was therefore a well-defined and self-enclosed one, circumscribed by unfamiliarity with and lack of interest in the larger community and the mainstream culture.

Our women respondents viewed movement within the parameters of this self-delimited social space as familiar, manageable, physically safe and relatively free from victimisation by crime. For these women, the average length of residence within Chinatown was seven years; six have lived there for more than twelve years and another four have been Chinatown residents for sixteen years or more. All claimed they have lived in the district long enough to know everybody else within the building and the majority of the residents in the district. The high degree of social familiarity seemed to serve as an effective crime detection and protection device, and helped to engender a sense of personal security.

Data gathered through participant observation and interviews with three social and community workers enabled us to reconstruct the social networks of our respondents. On a typical day, the elderly women spent a substantial amount of social time with each other. The two most popular social zones on a specific floor within the building were the kitchen and the corridor. Food preparation during the three mealtimes of the day in the common kitchen was a conspicuous activity of high interpersonal density. After mealtimes, the women often sat around in the corridor chatting. Information about self, others and recent happenings within the community was often exchanged and discussed. The significance of these social occasions in the public place seemed to lie, therefore, not only in acquiring information through exchange concerning living in general, but also in engendering in the women a collective feeling of in-group cohesiveness and security. Each

individual felt that she belonged socially and psychologically to the group and the neighbourhood; she felt secure as part of a larger unit. The availability of social occasions to acquire and share information about life and living was of strategic importance in view of our earlier finding that almost none of the twenty-six women used public or non-Chinese media. As one of the women reported:

> I should say people who live on this floor are quite close to each other. The younger and more healthy women look out for and try to take care of the older ones. We lend each other chairs and tables when one of us suddenly has a lot of visitors. We all have our own cooking utensils though – these are things we don't lend out as readily. When problems, such as a medical emergency, arise, we all help to call up a Chinese doctor. We often approach each other for suggestions or help on things we can't do or manage on our own. I won't go as far as saying that we are a family here, but neither do we turn our back on those who need immediate help. I often ask my neighbours if there's a sale in the nearby supermarkets, or where one can go for a free TV or movie show, and things like that. It is always nice to know what's happening around here. If there is a theft or robbery in the neighbourhood, everybody would know the next day. We'll then be a little more careful and watchful.

Use of services

Densely crammed into the small Chinatown district are a multitude of family and clan associations, medical and dental clinics, churches, the headquarters of the Nationalist and Communist parties, cultural and socio-recreational associations and a social service agency. In general, our respondents seemed to have a sufficient knowledge of what Chinese organisation was situated where, delivering what kinds of services. Mainly because of their accessibility, services in Chinatown were often used. There is evidence that these women identified strongly with the service agencies. It was through the mediation of these agencies that these women were able to make contact with governmental bodies, and to obtain assistance in filling out applications for federal and provincial subsidies. Our data, however, provide no evidence of the women having knowledge of services and resources available at institutions and agencies outside the Chinese community. As a result, they virtually never used these services.

The women were asked to rate the extent to which seventeen community services and facilities were necessary in providing for their needs. Services and facilities deemed by at least eight (30 per cent) women as 'very necessary' were: medical and dental clinic; pharmacy; employment and job training centre; Chinese language school; Chinese parks and gardens; club or centre for the elderly; Chinese cinema; and daycare centre. Community services and facilities that at least 50 per cent of the women deemed 'quite necessary' were: elementary and secondary public schools; English, French and Chinese language classes; Chinese school; kindergarten; Chinese library; Chinese cultural and recreational centre; club or centre for the elderly; women's club; sports centre; Chinese parks and

gardens; childcare centre; employment and job training centre; and amusement park.

When asked to name one community service most lacking in Chinatown, nineteen women mentioned a club or centre for the elderly while thirteen mentioned childcare. The respondents were also asked to name, other than restaurants, grocery and variety stores, the business most needed in Chinatown. Nineteen women mentioned a pharmacy and five mentioned a medical and dental clinic. What seems to emerge from the data is that the medical and social-recreational needs of the elderly women residents were most pressing. Similar questions phrased in different ways and asked at different moments in the interviews generated answers indicating a persistent consensus that such integral services and facilities as a medical clinic, a pharmacy and an elderly club were necessary in the neighbourhood.

Five Chinese physicians have offices in Chinatown. Many of them keep long office hours throughout the entire week. That our respondents expressed a persistent need for yet another medical clinic in the district seems perplexing. There are two possible explanations. First, the need might be a reflection of their dissatisfaction with the medical services they have hitherto received from the five Chinese physicians. Second, interviews with two of the five Chinese physicians in Chinatown reveal an interesting pattern. The physicians we interviewed reported that their Chinese clientele do not seem to feel inhibited from visiting two or three physicians within the same week to verify the diagnoses made by the other physicians. This pattern of medical help-seeking is made possible by two factors: the physician's physical accessibility and the women's plentiful leisure hours.

Owing to the demise of traditional Chinese clan associations after the Second World War, coupled with the fact that the few social agencies in the area confine themselves to such basic services as interpretation, information and referral (because of inadequate governmental funding and lack of local community support), Montreal's Chinatown has deteriorated into essentially a commercial and tourist district with much of its physical space taken up by restaurants, grocery stores and art and craft businesses. The area is extremely low in community resources and services. As a community, it lacks a comprehensive social service support system and is very far from being institutionally complete. Chinatown does not have a single cultural and recreational centre. In the past five years, parks and patches of green space were expropriated to make room for urban renewal, thus depriving the area of the only remaining public space for leisurely gatherings. That there is a need for a public gathering space for residents in the area, especially the elderly, is reflected in our data. Our respondents rated the provision of such services and public amenities as a club or centre for the elderly and for women, an amusement park, a Chinese cultural and recreational centre and a sports complex as both necessary and lacking. One social worker gave the following account of the problem:

> These elderly women spend a lot of their time and do most of their own things inside their own room or building. This is especially true during wintertime

when it's slippery and dangerous outside. I think the weather condition of the day affects directly whether they're staying indoors or not. There is no place in Chinatown for them to go to. There is a club for the elderly not too far from where they live, but it's all gambling, mainly mahjong. Some of my clients don't go there because they either don't know how to play mahjong or they hate the game. I always have this idea of finding a room in Chinatown and install a video machine and TV monitor in it. We can help organise these elderly women such that they will work out among themselves a schedule to show Chinese movies or TV variety shows regularly. I am sure that these women are healthy and enthusiastic enough to initiate, develop, and implement their own social programmes. All they need is a bit of support and guidance from us. It's very important that they know there is a place nearby they can go to and feel at home. A place to sit and chat, and meet their peers. An elderly club or centre like the one I just described will certainly give a bit of spice and variety to their daily routine. They need a place to go to when they feel like it, a place organised by and for themselves. Besides, this will give them a potent source of social stimulation, which, I think, will be conducive to their mental health and psychological well-being.

In a study of community leaders' perceptions of the needs of Montreal Chinatown (Chan 1983), we have found that the lack of low-income and senior citizen housing and the need to relocate existing clan associations and cultural groups into a single, unified community and cultural centre are the two most pressing community needs. In view of this finding, a set of questions was constructed to elicit data on the elderly's housing needs and their perceptions and evaluations of their living environment. All our twenty-six women respondents lived in rooming houses one or two floors above stores and restaurants. Each floor can be divided into as many as fifteen rooms costing from $40 to $80 per month depending on the location, size and condition of the room. Ten of the twenty-six women have lived in these rooming houses in Chinatown for six years or more, while the rest of them have moved there more recently from other parts of the metropolitan area.

All the rooming houses where we found our respondents are owned or leased by Chinese persons. None of them has undergone any major renovations or electrical and plumbing repairs in the past fifteen years. Most of the rooms are small. On each floor, the women share one common kitchen, thus necessitating considerable adjustment during food preparation times; they also share one or two washrooms depending on the number of rooms on a particular floor. Most windows in individual rooms are sealed during the winter to prevent heat loss. When asked to comment on the conditions of the rooming houses, four reasons for dissatisfaction were cited: perpetual fear of injuries and death caused by fire; the rooms being too small and restricting; too much or too little heat; and poor air ventilation. Five women stressed the need for a larger, more roomy and brighter unit with more privacy, especially when they wanted to entertain their children and grandchildren, or keep them for supper when they came to pay their weekly or biweekly visits. As pointed out by two respondents, the fact that close to fiifteen

women had access to only one common kitchen during the three meal preparation times often led to conflicts.

All the twenty-six women expressed a keen interest and a sense of urgency in applying for either new or renovated housing units for the elderly. All would like this housing unit to be built within the Chinatown area, preferably within one or two blocks from where they presently live. Low- rather than high-rise apartment buildings were preferred, reflecting a basic need of the elderly persons for security and accessibility to the ground. Fifteen of the women expressed an interest in moving into the housing unit together with their present neighbours, preferably taking up apartments on the same floor or at least as close to each other as possible – a finding with implications for public policy requiring mass relocation of elderly residents. It seems that the stress of relocation can be considerably alleviated by ensuring the minimum disruption of the former social fabric. Only eight women indicated that they would not mind sharing a common kitchen with other inhabitants in the new building unit, which might reflect their need for privacy and avoidance of unnecessary conflicts between neighbours.

Managing family conflicts and negotiating identity

Eighteen of the twenty-six women had a history of co-residence with their children and grandchildren within or near the Montreal metropolitan area prior to moving into Chinatown. For them, the death of their husbands seemed to have intensified their desire to move out on their own, preferably in areas with a substantial Chinese population. We have identified several reasons for their decision to maintain a separate residence from their family.

First, there are problems of intergenerational value conflicts and lifestyle differences. These elderly women seem to be very much aware of differences between themselves and their married children, and their sons- and daughters-in-law, over such matters as child rearing, family control and authority, family expenditures and leisure and entertainment. The elderly women, despite years of residence in Canada, still practise the values of the working-class peasantry of the past generations in a tradition-bound, static Chinese society. Their children, having grown up in Canada, have been more westernised and assimilated into the core values of Canadian society. The intensity of value differences is acute between the first and the third generations.

Fierce and intense conflicts between mothers and their daughters-in-law have been a long-standing phenomenon in Chinese families under the impact of urbanisation, modernisation and migration. These conflicts often revolve around how children are raised, who has more access to whose affection and attention, the distribution of control and authority in the family and the desirability of adhering to such Chinese 'virtues' as respect for and support of the elderly. While mothers feel that tradition dictates that they have legitimate and rightful access to their own son's affection and respect, the daughters-in-law believe that their husbands' loyalty and obligations are due first and foremost to themselves and their children.

Second-generation Chinese-Canadians have long realised the need to work hard for themselves and their children in a society where prejudice and discrimination are still very much at work. Educational achievement, hard work, frugality and occupational success have very quickly become the core of a child-rearing philosophy passed on to their Canadian-born children. The sons of our elderly women respondents, like their fathers, were reported to have a long history of hard work and suffering in a wide range of menial jobs in the service and food industries. Many worked long hours, forgoing weekends and holidays, to accumulate savings for future investment in business or their children's education. As a result, they have very little time and energy to spend with their elderly mothers and family, as indicated in this account:

> I and my husband had lived with our son and his family in LaSalle for twelve years. Then four years ago, my husband passed away. All these years, my son often felt sorry that he had to spend a lot of time working in the restaurant (he co-owned it with three other partners) and was not able to spend time with me. There were times I had not seen him for days or even weeks. He worked very hard like his father, to save for his children's education. He worked very hard for the family. I felt sorry for him, and, more so, for myself . . . I didn't get along very well with my daughter-in-law; she didn't like the way I fed and raised her kids. I always wonder where she got the right to be jealous of my own son being nice to me. My grandchildren were still very young and were afraid of their mother. They behaved to me in a strange way. Once in a while they forgot that I am their grandmother. It became worse when half of the time they were speaking English or French with me.

Isolation in suburban homes became a severe problem for these elderly women, especially when communication with members of the household was often difficult and occasionally confrontational. In times of increasing family tension, many felt the need to get out of the home for a walk in the neighbourhood, but were handicapped by lack of transport and unfamiliarity with the environment. One woman respondent remembered those years of living with her children as waiting weeks and even months before she was taken to Chinatown to shop for groceries or visit friends who lived there. While going to Chinatown to spend time sociably with friends and relatives was remembered with fond memories, it also reinforced the elderly woman's acute sense of isolation.

Our data on the elderly women's history of living with their children and families in the suburb reveal a complexity of 'push and pull' factors operating behind their decision to move into the rooming houses in Chinatown. One might want to argue that such factors as intergenerational and familial conflicts and anxiety, isolation and alienation in the suburb as a result of language and cultural barriers 'push the women away' from their former residence. Other factors such as co-residence with and accessibility to peers, familiarity with the neighbourhood, a sense of belonging to an ethnic community and its institutions, availability of

community resources and services and freedom of movement are strong 'pull' forces to make living in Chinatown an attractive alternative.

When asked to cite the advantages of living in Chinatown, 'convenience for the shop' was cited by twenty-three of the twenty-six women. Other perceived advantages cited included: convenience and safety to walk around; ease of communication with other residents; meeting people of the same culture and background; proximity to Chinese friends and neighbours; cheap rent; and accessibility to church, community and social services. None of the twenty-six women, irrespective of their level of satisfaction with the living conditions in Chinatown, expressed a desire to move outside the neighbourhood in the near future. This respondent's comment was typical:

> It's safe here. I am not afraid to walk around anymore. I have a lot of friends who live within a few blocks from each other. I don't have to ask anybody to give me a ride to shop or to see a friend or relative. My family used to think I am blind, deaf and dumb – we didn't talk much to each other. We all speak the same language here; we talk among each other a lot. Am I really that deaf and dumb?

At the time of the study, all except five of the elderly women were on federal and provincial old-age pensions, which together brought in a monthly income of close to $500. Except for two women, all revealed that they were given some pocket money by their children every once in a while, particularly during such Chinese festivals or holidays such as the Chinese New Year and the Autumn Moon Festival. We were told by our social worker informants that some women had inherited a modest sum of money from their dead husbands. While these women were prudent enough not to reveal their finances precisely, one could quite safely assume that their lives were not difficult. In view of their frugal living, careful management of finances and low rent, many of these women reported that their lives were comfortable. Some even managed to send $300–$400 per year to close and distant relatives in China. Others still considered it a familial and moral obligation on their part to aid their families in Canada when special circumstances necessitated it or to bring them food and gifts when they were paying their periodic suburban visits. One woman revealed in the interview that she had recently loaned her son a sum of $4,000 to aid his faltering restaurant business.

It is important to point out that frugal living, half a century of self-care, hard work and saving, and a steady income from government allowance have combined to give these women a sense of financial and psychological independence and a sense of control over their own lives. That they are still able to render financial assistance to family in China and Canada, thus continuing to fulfil their moral and familial obligations as the elder kin members, might have engendered a strong sense of personal satisfaction. It is also through playing the role of a helping matriarch in the larger extended family that these women manage their identity and safeguard their sense of continuity with the family and kin. For these women,

dignity and identity are managed by striving for independence, and rendering help where it is most needed.

The decision to move away from children and grandchildren and join their peers in the Chinatown rooming houses is a courageous one. It utterly shatters a woman's fantasy of three generations of the Chinese family living under the same roof with the older members being cared for, loved and respected by the younger ones. By deciding to move into Chinatown, a woman is admitting to herself and to everybody else that things are not working out very well in her family, that she herself might be partially to blame for this 'family failure' and, finally, that the traditional virtue of filial piety is a far cry from reality. Once she does so, however, she can see that a separate dwelling will give her the autonomy and freedom she needs. It is also an arrangement whereby intergenerational friction and power struggles are avoided. Cordiality and intimacy are maintained when family members acknowledge that they cannot live together, but still strive to keep in touch with and help each other, as in this description:

> This client of mine is quite bitter about the way she was treated by her family when she was living with them. She moved into Chinatown three years ago. Now she is happy with her neighbours and housemates. Twice a week she calls her son and grandchildren in St Laurent. They call her a lot, too. Sometimes they talk for more than an hour on the phone. She always spends Christmas and New Year with her family. Her son comes to Chinatown every Monday afternoon to do grocery shopping, and he will go up to see her. Monday is his day off. Sometimes, during the weekends, he will bring his children and wife to visit grandma. The two kids stay overnight with their grandma every now and then, and their father will come back the next morning to pick them up. The two kids seem to like their grandma a whole lot more now than before. I think it's kind of nice.

Conclusion

In the gerontology literature, two contradictory views are expressed about the elderly Chinese. First, they, like other members of ethnic minorities, suffer from the 'double jeopardy' (Dowd and Bengston 1978) of age and being a minority, and therefore are much worse off than their Canadian counterparts. Second, they are protected by filial piety, a much-admired Chinese virtue.

By learning about the social world of the elderly Chinese women, we have attempted to debunk the long-held negative stereotypes in the gerontology literature, which portray elderly persons of the ethnic minorities as vulnerable to isolation, poor health and poverty. The application of the identity constructionist view (Lofland 1969, 1971, 1976; Matthews 1979) to the Chinese elderly women, by focusing on the women's own definition of the situation, has indeed generated insights into how the women in our study manage their 'spoiled identity' and how they strive to maintain their sense of self-worth and personal efficacy despite adversity and limited resources. Findings reported here, particularly those on social

participation, kin and peer interaction, social networks and help-seeking behaviour, point to the desirability of seeing ageing as a process of active coping and adaptation characterised by maximal use of available resources. This chapter has also examined and tested a long-held myth that the Chinese elderly are respected and cared for in a three-generational family structure. For the twenty-six elderly women we have interviewed, the answer to the question (asked by many Chinese parents in North America now) 'Will my children provide for me when I am old?' is a negative one. Such a reality is indeed considerably different from the many idyllic accounts of the Chinese family. In managing familial conflicts, the women we studied opted for independence to safeguard their sense of self.

Disengagement theory (Cumming and Henry 1961) sees ageing as a gradual process of reduced social participation, thus assuming a history of more intense and frequent engagement with life prior to old age. Our study, by focusing on the unique historical circumstances under which the Chinese immigrated to Canada and the work histories of the elderly women, demonstrates the weakness of such an assumption. In the case of these women, as of other Asian-Canadians, certain historical events and structural forces had severely disrupted their earlier lives (Ujimoto 1980) and made voluntary social participation virtually impossible. Paradoxically, these elderly Chinese women do not start engaging in the social world until their retirement!

5 Racial discrimination and social response

While there is abundant documented evidence of historical racial discrimination against the Asians in Canada, little is known about how they react to and cope with racism. The perception of Asians since the early 1970s as 'model minorities' in Canada, and the stereotypes of the Chinese in particular as polite, economically self-sufficient, hard-working and law-abiding citizens, among other consequences, serves to divert public attention from the difficulties they have encountered. In a sense, they have become the 'invisible' visible, not seen, not heard and, therefore, not attended to by the public.

Based on popular estimates, the Asian community in Montreal (Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Japanese, Korean and Filipino) numbers about 60,000.[1] The community has grown considerably and steadily following the waves of immigration in the 1970s, notably the influx of Indochinese refugees in Quebec in 1975 and 1979 (Chan and Indra 1987). In spite of the stereotypes of Asians 'integrating well' in all social and economic sectors of the Quebec society, several facts indicate a possibly different situation due to this group's distinct culture and skin colour. These facts include a visible absence of Asians from the civil service and other para-public services; a noted channelling of Asians into specialised fields such as science and commerce, leading to job ghettoisation; governmental encroachment and infringement on Montreal's Chinatown; and Asians' lack of access to health and social services due to linguistic and cultural barriers (Chan 1987). However, in spite of these facts, there has been only a handful of complaints of racial discrimination filed by Asians at the Quebec and Canadian Human Rights Commissions. This may be due to either a lack of discrimination against Asians, a dubious notion rejected by many, or other as yet unidentified factors, including lack of information and sensitisation regarding human rights protected by the Quebec Charter and the nature of discriminatory practices (for instance, hiring criteria based on height and weight).

Are the Chinese and the Indochinese in Montreal subjected to racial discrimination because of their status as a visible minority group? If yes, do they utilise the services of the Canadian and Quebec Human Rights Commissions to protect their rights? How do they typically react to incidents of racial discrimination? Why do they react to discrimination in the way they do? Do they utilise public

institutions such as the police, the media and the human rights bodies to protect their rights and redress wrongs done to them? What is the nature of relations between the human rights commissions and the Asian communities in Montreal? This chapter is a report on a study which attempted to answer these questions by examining racial discrimination against the Asians in Montreal as perceived and appraised by their leaders, and by examining their behavioural response. It is thus a study of *perceptions* of racial discrimination, not the actual acts of racial discrimination as objectively measured or tested.

In this study, we follow the definition of racial discrimination adopted in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discriminations (Lerner 1970: 38). The definition stated in Article 1, Clause 1, and adopted by the General Assembly, reads as follows:

> In this Convention the term 'racial discrimination' shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

On the basis of the UN definition, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms created its Article 10 (Chapter 1.1), which defines discrimination as follows:

> Every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap.
>
> (Section 10)

> No one may harass a person on the basis of any ground mentioned in section 10.
>
> (Section 10.1)

Research methods

In this study, we interviewed a sample of thirty persons, eight each from the Chinese and Vietnamese communities and seven each from the Cambodian and Laotian communities. All thirty persons had participated in the past five years in voluntary organisations and associations in these communities, and were knowledgeable about affairs, events, issues and problems in their communities. A reputational sampling technique was used, by which representatives of the four target communities who sat on a committee that advised this study were each asked to

construct an initial list of community informants.[2] These informants were each contacted by telephone, told of the nature and objectives of the study and asked to nominate three to five leaders of their communities. Persons who were thus nominated were then requested by telephone to nominate more community leaders. Through this procedure, those leaders who received the most nominations in their respective communities were contacted and solicited for interviews.

This sampling procedure yielded forty-two informants on the first list and sixty-two nominations on the second list. A total of eighteen persons cited various reasons for declining the interview, such as 'too busy with other things', 'not up to date on community affairs' and 'going on vacation'. The Vietnamese had the most refusals (nine) whereas the Cambodians had the least (two). There were four refusals from the Chinese and three from Laotians.

The main instrument of the study was a thirteen-page questionnaire consisting of both open- and close-ended questions. It was designed to elicit data on biographical and demographic characteristics; perceptions of community problems in relation to racial discrimination; perceptions of frequency of racial discrimination in different areas experienced by different types of community members, and patterns of community reactions and responses; perceptions of attitudes towards governments and public institutions, and degree of familiarity with the human rights commissions; and suggestions for managing future transactions between human rights commissions and Asian communities.

The interviews were conducted in various places, often according to the preference of the respondents: ten at work, eleven at home, seven in community centres and two in public places. An average interview took about one hour to complete, ranging from thirty minutes for the shortest to an hour and a half for the longest interview.

Apart from the thirty interviews, we initiated and completed eleven in-depth, unstructured interviews with the staff of the Quebec and Canadian Human Rights Commissions. These were conducted to understand how the two commissions discharge their functions as mandated. All eleven interviews with the staff of the two commissions were conducted in their offices. A typical interview lasted approximately two hours. Most interviewees complemented these sessions with pertinent institutional documents and records.

Some demographic characteristics

The average age of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians was 51, 46.7, 41.8 and 35.8 years respectively. Slightly more than half the three groups of Indochinese respondents (56 per cent) fell within the range of thirty-six to forty-five years of age, while the Chinese as a group were slightly older (25 per cent were between forty-six and fifty-five years old and 50 per cent were fifty-six years old or more).

All twenty-two of the Indochinese respondents were born in South-east Asia (five Vietnamese were born in South Vietnam and three were born in North Vietnam). Other than two Canadian- and US-born Chinese, the other six were foreign

born (four in Hong Kong and two in China). The average number of years since first arrival in Canada for the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians was 31, 17, 14 and 10 respectively. In addition to being relatively older, the Chinese had been in Canada the longest time. A close examination of data on number of years since arrival in Canada indicated that two-thirds of the twenty-two Indochinese respondents came to Canada prior to the 1975 and 1979 influxes. Having been in Canada longer than the majority of their own communities, our Indochinese respondents found themselves participating in the public affairs and furthering the welfare of their communities. In actual fact, our thirty respondents maintained active membership (as president, vice-president, consultant, advisor or board member) in a total of fifty-six different groups and associations. Among the thirty respondents there were only six women, one each among the Cambodians and Laotians, and two each among the Chinese and the Vietnamese. That our sample was over-represented by men was, in our estimation, a reflection of the actual composition of the leadership elite in the Asian communities in Canada.

All twenty-two Indochinese respondents indicated that they had a working knowledge of French. Four Chinese said they spoke French, and three said they could read it, although none claimed a working knowledge in written French. As expected, all eight Chinese claimed that they spoke, read and wrote English; the other three Indochinese groups claimed a more modest ability in English than in French.

We collected data on the main occupations our respondents had held before arrival in Canada and at the time of the interview. Our analysis of this set of data revealed that, with the exception of the Laotians, almost all of the three groups of respondents had experienced little or no displacement or discontinuity from their former occupations and were, at the time of the study, holding professional and skilled jobs. Among the twenty-three Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodians, there was a very high representation of doctors (four), social workers (three), engineers (five) and civil servants (two). As a group, the Laotians seemed to have experienced the most job displacement. Formerly skilled workers or professionals, four out of the seven Laotians were at the time of the study holding manual jobs (one maintenance worker, two factory workers and one helper in a chocolate pastry shop). As a whole, the thirty respondents were settled in occupationally and may well represent the elite of their respective communities.

Perceptions of discrimination

The thirty respondents were asked to gauge how commonly a list of twelve community and personal problems were experienced by members of their own communities. The twelve problems were: unemployment; adjustment to Canadian values and society; getting appropriate jobs for which one is qualified; family conflict and instability; discrimination; difficulties with immigration bureaucracy; bad weather; access to social and health services; access to educational services; relations with police; loneliness and social isolation; and difficulties stemming from language problems. Only eleven of the respondents (43 per cent) saw dis-

crimination as 'common', while 77 per cent cited 'difficulties stemming from language problems' as common, and 63 per cent cited 'loneliness and social isolation', 'getting appropriate jobs for which one is qualified' or 'adjustment to Canadian values and society' as a common problem. Many respondents saw bad weather as a problem as common as discrimination. Nine respondents saw getting appropriate jobs as a very common problem, and eight respondents saw language difficulties as a very common problem.

There are differences between the four Asian groups in their perception of the frequency of discrimination in their communities. While as many as five out of eight Chinese saw discrimination as 'common', only one Vietnamese did so compared with three Laotians and four Cambodians. As a matter of fact, seven of the eight Vietnamese assessed discrimination as either 'not common' or 'extremely uncommon', thus setting themselves apart from the other three Asian groups. Problematic relations with the police were looked upon as either 'not common' or 'extremely uncommon' by twenty-five respondents, a finding consistent across all four Asian groups. Placed in the context of a host of community and personal problems, discrimination was *not* seen as a frequently occurring problem and elicited considerably lower scores than problems related to adaptation and adjustment to Quebec society.

When asked whether discrimination against their communities was more or less common at the time of the study than five or six years ago, the thirty respondents gave mixed responses: five said it was 'somewhat more common', nine said the level of discrimination remained the same, and thirteen thought it was 'somewhat less common' or 'much less common'. Out of the five respondents who indicated that discrimination was becoming somewhat more common, three were Vietnamese, who attributed the fact to the relative increase in the Vietnamese population in Montreal.

The respondents were also asked to gauge the frequency of discrimination in thirteen different areas: setting up a small business; setting up a large-scale industry; job hiring; job advancement; access to education; media portrayal of own community; outside evaluation of one's education and skills; relations with police; access to health and social services; access to immigration services; exposure to vandalism; exposure to name-calling; and exposure to physical assault. Discrimination in job hiring and job advancement were seen by the highest proportion of the Asians as 'common' (60 per cent and 53 per cent respectively), followed by discrimination in evaluation of education and other skills (43 per cent), in media portrayal (37 per cent) and in name-calling (23 per cent). Seven of the eight Chinese saw discrimination in job advancement as 'common', compared with five Cambodians, three Vietnamese and three Laotians. As many as five Chinese also pointed to the common occurrence of discrimination in media portrayals of their community.

The more revealing data pertain to the finding that a very large proportion of specific types of discrimination was perceived as 'not common' or 'extremely uncommon'. More than half the thirteen areas of discrimination (access to health and social services, exposure to physical assault, access to immigration services,

the police, access to education, exposure to vandalism and setting up a business) were seen as either 'not common' or 'extremely uncommon' by about two-thirds of the thirty Asians.

Types of discrimination

To probe further the specificity, diversity and subtlety of discrimination, the respondents were asked in a series of open-ended questions about particular problems their communities encountered with respect to discrimination in employment, education, housing, name-calling, vandalism and physical abuse, access to government services (health, social, immigration, etc.), the police and the media.

With respect to employment discrimination, there seemed to be an overall tendency among the thirty respondents either not to perceive discrimination as a major problem or to admit a lack of awareness or concrete knowledge about the amount of discrimination encountered by members of their communities. Instead, they emphatically pointed to other major difficulties encountered in their employment area, such as language deficiencies, communication or cultural barriers, lack of Canadian experience, educational qualifications and other work skills not recognised by potential employers, as well as an inability to pass professional tests.

One Cambodian said that 'it is normal to be chosen after the Canadians when applying for a job'. A Vietnamese rationalised the situation as follows: 'If a Vietnamese asked for a job here [travel agency], I would have to choose a Quebecois who can speak English and French, and do the job well. Is that discrimination?' A similar kind of perception was shared by a Chinese respondent: 'Someone who was an accountant in China may not be able to work as an accountant in Canada due to the language barrier and, therefore, inability to pass tests. This is not discrimination'.

In the eyes of a large majority of the thirty Asians, difficulties that communities faced were more likely to be related to personal or cultural handicaps than to discrimination per se, a perception often accompanied by rationalisations and justifications.

The overall perception of little or no discrimination in employment also applied to the area of education. Difficulties encountered by the Asian communities, like those in employment, were seen as arising from problems of cultural adaptation, such as personal language handicaps, the school system not being familiar with the 'Asian culture and character', the relative invisibility of Asians in school textbooks and the lack of special services for specific ethnic groups. One Cambodian pointed to difficulties encountered by his community in being admitted into professional schools such as medicine and dentistry.

Several Chinese and Vietnamese took pride in the younger members of their communities being at the top of their classes, a fact often met by the resentment of classmates and their parents. One Chinese denied the existence of discrimination in education against his community, making a distinction between personal handicap and discrimination: 'Handicaps are different from discrimination in that a handicap is an individual, personal problem, not an act of injustice [discrimination] done to another party'.

Although the general perception of little or no discrimination continues in the area of housing, a considerable portion of the respondents alluded to specific problems. The Chinese talked about the whites dumping garbage on their lawn, knowing the Chinese would not complain; they also mentioned their non-Chinese neighbours not liking the smell of Chinese cooking or complaining about the Chinese being dirty. Both the Cambodians and the Laotians talked about landlords not leasing to members of their communities because of an impression that the Indochinese often have poor and dirty families with many children, thus confining the Indochinese to basement living in 'refugee neighbourhoods' and other 'ethnic ghettos'. One Laotian provided this testimony: 'Often arrangements [to see the apartment] have already been confirmed on the phone, but, on arrival in person, the landlord changes his mind'.

Unlike the other three groups, all eight Vietnamese said their community had encountered no discrimination in housing. One Vietnamese and one Chinese saw discrimination in housing as a thing of the past. Another Vietnamese rationalised by suggesting that the Vietnamese, being recently arrived immigrants, 'would not expect to live in the biggest or best places'. One Chinese did not consider discrimination in housing as a major problem, adding that discrimination in this area is normal social behaviour as the Chinese discriminate against their own people too. Another Chinese thought that, if they were rejected for housing, it was for reasons that also apply to other ethnic groups, a thought shared by a couple of Laotians. One Cambodian thought his people tried to cope with discrimination in housing by choosing an area where they would be accepted: 'If the whites don't like us, we won't go there. Unlike the blacks who fight back, the Cambodians avoid trouble'.

While name-calling, vandalism and physical abuse were not seen as happening often to members of the Asian communities, remarks made by several of our respondents about discrimination in these areas were serious enough to warrant attention. The Chinese alluded to the fact that children in grade school often call the Chinese names, an act sometimes resulting in physical assaults. Five of the eight Vietnamese said their community experienced no discrimination with respect to name-calling, vandalism and physical abuse, although a couple of them pointed to racial conflicts ('Quebecois and the blacks against the yellow race' in the St Henri area). Another Vietnamese talked about the defacing of the Guan Yin statue in front of a newly erected Vietnamese Buddhist temple a few years ago. The Vietnamese believed the act was not discriminatory as it was committed by young delinquents; thus, no formal complaint was lodged with the authorities. One Vietnamese respondent mentioned the incident of a young Vietnamese man being physically assaulted on the street and being shaken badly enough to need hospital treatment for shock.

The Cambodians and the Laotians shared the experience of being called 'Chink', 'Chintok' and 'Chinoiserie', and were concerned that they were mistaken for another ethnic group, the Chinese. One Cambodian recalled how his neighbour installed a 'holy cross' in plain view of one of his windows upon seeing a Buddhist statue in his house in Brossard. He did not feel 'the planting of the

cross was such a horrible thing'; the incident did not offend him. The Cambodians seemed to believe that verbal discrimination and physical violence against their community were no more serious and rampant than against the black community in Montreal. Name-calling is not an evil, wicked thing, although racist.

Our Asian respondents attributed difficulties encountered by the Asian communities in accessing government services (health, social, immigration, etc.) not to racial discrimination, but largely to their own language deficits and communication and cultural barriers between government agencies and themselves. These same linguistic deficits (i.e. not speaking enough French) were used by our respondents to explain the lack of representation of the Asians among government civil servants. The virtual elimination of Indochinese interpretation staff in several key government agencies since 1982, three years after the influx of the Indochinese refugees into Quebec, worsened the problem of accessibility to government services. As a consequence, the Asians in Montreal had no choice but to turn to social service groups within their own communities for support.

There were other isolated complaints by respondents about various government departments. One Chinese social worker spoke of a CLSC (a government social services centre) not hiring a single Chinese full-time worker although it is located in a district with a considerable concentration of residents whose sole language is Chinese. In the meantime, the CLSC, in the past twelve years, increased its full-time staff from twenty-five to 100 persons. A Cambodian respondent spoke of differential treatment by the provincial and federal governments: 'It is difficult for Cambodians to immigrate here. I don't know why. Go ask the government. Somehow, the Vietnamese have an easier time to come here'.

Largely consistent with responses to an earlier question on police discrimination, all but two of our respondents reported virtually no police discrimination, a response often quite apologetically qualified by their lack of precise and concrete knowledge of interactions between the police force and members of their communities. All eight Vietnamese respondents thought members of their community had no particular problems with the police, although one added that the police 'did not act enough with the Vietnamese community as with other ethnic communities, thus giving their community little or no protection'. One Cambodian thought that their community often received more severe penalties than appropriate for the violations of the law, and also said that the police had a negative image of them because they came from a communist country. Another Cambodian complained of the police not understanding or appreciating the cultural distinctiveness of the Cambodians.

The Chinese described their relationships with the police as cordial, co-operative, yet remote, believing that the police force is no more (or less) discriminatory than the community it serves. One Chinese thought some police officers lacked firsthand knowledge and understanding of the ethnic groups and, therefore, often relied on stereotypes and generalisations in making judgements and decisions.

The Chinese thought that the media, like the police, were often vulnerable to negative cultural and ethnic stereotyping. One Chinese made this observation:

> In the movies, Chinese are portrayed in menial jobs or have their worst elements, such as tong fights, exaggerated. In the movie *Year of the Dragon*, Chinese men are portrayed as drug dealers and Chinese women as prostitutes. In the news, once in a while, a reporter will slip and call someone a Chinaman. But this is due to ignorance.

This observation was shared by another Chinese respondent who thought that actors such as Bruce Lee and characters such as Charlie Chan 'were often painted as exotic, mysterious and foreign'. Another Chinese respondent, a community activist, saw the media as the community's 'best ally' and the journalists as liberal-minded, worldly and generally supportive. Other than one Vietnamese who also saw the media as an ally that often came to his community for stories, the Vietnamese respondents were unusually critical of the press. They complained that the media did not give sufficient coverage of their community, and published biased and sometimes prejudicial reports of events concerning the Vietnamese. Another complaint was that members of their community could not find jobs in either the French- or the English-speaking media, citing Radio Canada as an example.

The Cambodian respondents complained of the media having forgotten 'the Cambodian issue'. The Indochinese refugee phenomenon is a thing of the past, and that the media have long since moved on to other stories. Another Cambodian thought that the media often tended to give folkloric treatment of the Indochinese communities, thus conveniently bypassing the more important community issues.

The Laotians joined the other groups in their concern with their lack of accessibility to the media as well as with the media's lack of knowledge about them. The Laotian respondents attributed these problems to the virtual absence of Asian staff in the press and the electronic media. One Laotian complained about the tendency of the media to lump all Asians into one racial group 'along with the Chinese'.

The thirty respondents were also asked if particular members of their communities (women, men, children, youth, elderly and recent immigrants) have specific problems with discrimination. In the case of Asian women, eighteen respondents (60 per cent) answered in the affirmative, while the other twelve thought there was no discrimination. Those who responded affirmatively alluded to women from their communities being subjected to sexual harassment at work; exploitation in the clothing industry; negative stereotyping (i.e. submissive, passive, weak, incapable, too nice, pliable, inferior, non-complaining and docile); as well as confinement to menial and low-paying jobs. Other respondents, having alleged little or no discrimination against women, preferred to talk about women's problems in general: language deficits, communication and cultural barriers in the workplace and the stress and strain caused by sustaining a multiplicity of roles within and outside the family. In the words of a Vietnamese respondent, these problems are personal and have very little to do with discrimination: 'I don't see any problems due to discrimination. These problems are our own [due to language, age, etc.], not due to actions of others'.

One Laotian respondent qualified his affirmative answer concerning discrimination against Laotian women by a commentary: 'There may be problems, but I don't know what they are because problems are usually dealt with from within the family. Problems stay within the family. It is rare for them to complain'. Another Laotian thought the treatment accorded to Laotian women was in no way differential as 'they are treated as other ethnics'.

There was an almost equal spilt in each of the four Asian groups with respect to whether the male members of their communities were subjected to discrimination. Those who thought Asian men were discriminated against provided detailed commentaries. The Chinese spoke of their men being stereotyped as passive, non-assimilative and mysterious. One Chinese respondent related that, in his childhood, 'some barbers would not cut Chinese hair, and Chinese students in schools were called names like "pigtail" '.

The Vietnamese respondents were relatively distressed by their fellow countrymen's job status in Canada. Along with the difficulty of finding work, there were complaints of Vietnamese professionals not being able to find work at their level and working instead in manual jobs. One respondent spoke of a Vietnamese engineer receiving a technician's salary although he 'did everything in the company from administration to technical work and had fifty years of experience behind him'.

Four of the seven Laotians said that men in their community were subjected to discrimination, the bulk of which was work related, such as finding a job, getting their diplomas and experience gained in Cambodia recognised or prejudicial evaluation of their technical competence by the Quebec society. One Cambodian spoke of 'often being chosen second for anything, everything, and being considered as a second class citizen'. He mentioned that he had become so habituated to this kind of treatment over the years that he considered it normal.

A Laotian respondent suggested that 'each person wants to help one's own kind, to use one's own connections at work. If there is a Laotian in a company making good, more Laotians will be hired, thus bringing in more workers of their own kind. Is this discrimination or simply helping your friends?' Another Laotian spoke about the difficulty in proving objectively that discrimination was committed although he often felt discriminated against.

The thirty respondents also drew attention to problems encountered by the male members of their communities, which were associated with their language deficits, the impact of changing sex roles on marital and parent/child relationships and the devaluation of Asian men in western society.

Seventeen of the thirty respondents (57 per cent) thought their children had problems with discrimination. There were more Chinese and Laotians than Vietnamese and Cambodians alleging that their children had experienced discrimination; six out of eight Vietnamese denied special discrimination against their children. The Chinese and Laotian respondents said their children were subjected to name-calling, as well as ostracism, verbal and physical abuse (insinuations, insults, ethnic jokes, teasing and physical beatings) by their peers at school, facts often neglected and overlooked by the teachers. Some Indochinese respondents

maintained that their children were 'all lumped together into the yellow race' and seen 'along with the Chinese'. Being 'a new guy on the block', the Indochinese children were confused and troubled and had difficulty fitting in and adjusting. Having heard many cases of 'racism against our children at school', a Laotian respondent advised other Laotian parents that 'we must keep our children close to us':

> Our children were being ostracised by their peers at school. A few of our children were being called names. I heard about quite a few cases. At the daycare centres, the teachers do not pay attention to the Chinese students. They got beaten up and hurt by other kids. I know this kid who was asked at school by other kids: 'Are you Chinese or yellow?' At school, our children are treated as one community along with the Chinese. It is not easy to get help. When a white kid does something there is no reaction. But when an Asian kid does the same thing, the teachers would curse 'Maudit Chinois!'

Responses to discrimination

The thirty respondents were asked to rank seven different responses to discrimination (report incident to the media; report incident to community association; challenge the person discriminating against them; call the police; do nothing; call human rights commissions; and get together with friends, co-workers and relatives) by indicating how commonly each response is adopted in their communities. Eleven respondents chose 'get together with friends, co-workers and relatives' as the most common response. Eight respondents chose 'do nothing' as the most common response. Five chose 'challenge the person discriminating against them' as the most common response, and another five chose it as the second most common response. Five respondents chose 'report incident to community association' as the most common response while another six respondents chose it as the second most common response.

None of the thirty respondents chose 'call human rights commission' as the most common response in their community. Out of the seven responses to discrimination, seven respondents ranked it as the sixth most common response; two saw it as the least common response. Seven respondents chose not to rank the response at all and saw it as 'definitely not a common or good response', with an additional nine indicating 'unable to judge' or 'not applicable'. 'Call the police' and 'report incident to the media' were also judged by few respondents as the most common response (only one respondent each), but by many as 'definitely not a common or good response' (six respondents).

The seven responses to discrimination can then be ordered according to the level of frequency of adoption in the four Asian communities, i.e. from the most common to the least common as a response: (1) get together with friends, co-workers and relatives; (2) do nothing; (3) report incident to community associations; (4) challenge the person discriminating against them; (5) call the police; (6) report incident to the media; and (7) call human rights commission.

There are differences among the four Asian communities. For example, 'do nothing' was chosen by five out of eight Chinese, two out of eight Vietnamese, none of the seven Cambodians and one out of seven Laotians. There is a slightly more ready inclination among the other three Indochinese groups than among the Chinese to rank 'report incident to community associations' as a most common response.

The rank ordering indicates a considerably higher propensity of the Asians to cope with discrimination by resorting to resources within their close interpersonal networks (friends, co-workers, relatives and associations within their own communities) than those available in public institutions (police, media and the human rights commissions). In other situations, the Asians coped with discrimination by either doing nothing, a response coming second only to 'getting together with friends, co-workers, relatives', or directly challenging the person discriminating against them, a more common response than those involving the police, the media and the human rights commissions.

Additional comments by the respondents shed some light on why the seven behavioural responses to discrimination were ordered as such. Concerning the media, the respondents had the following to say:

> We almost never report the incident to the media. Media people laugh at your complaint. The English media here is more open whereas the French media is more discriminatory. This is odd since so many Vietnamese are Francophones. We would never do this [report incident to the media]. We have never done this.

About the police:

> It is common for the Chinese not to make problems. Besides, the police can't do anything. We do not like the police. We would need to simultaneously adopt several other responses (such as report incident to community associations, and get together with friends, co-workers and relatives) in order to make an effective complaint to the police. If the problem is serious, they will contact the police on the advice of the community.

About the human rights commissions:

> People do not know what a human rights commission is. What is it? We don't bother with the commissions. The Chinese don't know the commissions exist. They should [report to the commissions]. They rarely contact the commissions. They might report to the commissions by suggestion of the police. We contact associations in our own community.

About doing nothing as a response to discrimination:

> There are roughly two kinds of people in our community. One group would

> file a complaint, and the other would do nothing. If it is not a serious problem, we would just consider the offender a fool. We accept [the fact that] they are our own problems due to language and age, not due to others. It is often too much trouble. We just ignore it and don't do anything. It is our nature to protect our opinion and keep it private.

Governmental measures to reduce discrimination

The respondents were asked to rank eight different government responses in terms of their relative effectiveness (from most to least effective) in reducing discrimination. Eighteen of the thirty respondents rated 'expand multicultural programmes' as among the top three most effective measures. Sixteen respondents chose 'provide the public with more information about your community' as among the top three most effective measures, thirteen respondents favoured 'create affirmative action programmes' and twelve favoured 'expand media advertising against discrimination'. On the other side of the scale, eleven of the thirty respondents considered 'make discrimination a criminal offence' and 'make discrimination a public issue' the sixth or seventh most effective measure out of the seven measures listed.

The seven responses are thus ranked according to effectiveness (from most to least effective) in reducing discrimination as follows: (1) expand multicultural programmes; (2) provide the public with more information about your community; (3) create affirmative action programmes; (4) expand media advertising against discrimination; (5) conduct research to expose discrimination; (6) provide schools with more information about your community; (7) make discrimination a public issue; and (8) make discrimination a criminal offence.

An analysis of respondents' comments in relation to what Asian organisations and communities can do to combat discrimination provides some insights into the rationale behind the rank ordering of the eight governmental measures to reduce discrimination. All four Asian groups seemed to favour highly an essentially educational approach as opposed to confrontational tactics. They felt that their communities could go a long way in reducing discrimination by mounting a diversity of multicultural programmes to educate and sensitise the public about their communities, their cultures and their concerns, as well as their problems. Their preference was for programmes and events that facilitate intercultural understanding and appreciation. One Chinese respondent offered the following commentary:

> Have programmes that help others feel close to us and understand our community. Education is the key to public sensitisation. Teachers have major responsibility in transmitting values to their students. Help sensitising the public and promoting understanding between cultures through workshops and the media. By educating people, we eliminate the opportunities for discrimination. Try multicultural programmes. Show interesting things about the communities through the media and events so that we won't be strangers to them. But you must prepare the public with other programmes first or else the opposite may happen [it might promote discrimination]. Use 'soft sell'.

> Don't shock people. Through different programmes, prove that our community is one of the best ones here: hardworking, integrated, non-violent and pacifist. Create opportunities for ethnics and the Quebecois to meet and approach each other. Use themes of interest to both parties. Appeal to the public and make them aware of social equality. Organise multicultural programmes to promote understanding, develop tolerance and thus diminish racism and discrimination.

Two Laotian respondents made an emotional plea to the public to understand and empathise with their community:

> Let people know us better, that we are normal people. Let them know where we came from, why we didn't stay home [South-east Asia], our customs, etc. Let people know we wanted to come to Canada. Let people know our mentality so that they understand we are not savages and we can do good things here. Let the media talk about the value of our race.

Two Cambodian respondents pointed to the need to collaborate with other minority communities for solidarity:

> Try to regroup different ethnic groups. Together, they will find a way. All ethnics together will make a strong voice. A single ethnic group cannot get results. Collaborate with other organisations and communities, and work together.

Several respondents felt a need to do more work in their own communities, mobilising and assembling internal resources, as well as informing their community members about the existence of discrimination, their rights and the mandate of the human rights commissions.

Attributions by commission staff

In addition to interviews with respondents from the four Asian communities, we conducted a series of unstructured, in-depth interviews with eleven staff members from the Canadian and Quebec Human Rights Commissions to examine how the two commissions process complaints, as well as to identify and evaluate services and activities for Asian communities in Montreal. More specifically, these interviews sought to identify factors that the staff members of the two commissions have attributed to the relatively small number of complaints from the Asian communities.

Members of the four Asian communities in Montreal in the past ten years have filed no more than half a dozen complaints of discrimination with the two commissions; neither have they been active in utilising any of their services. Our interviews indicate no evidence of the Asians, either as individuals or as groups, having made any demands that the commissions 'take human rights issues to'

the Asian people. This lack of relations between the human rights commissions and the Asian communities in Montreal is a curious fact, given the public outcry against government encroachment upon Montreal's Chinatown in the past fifteen years and the recent protest by a group of Chinese businessmen against a municipal bylaw that forbade commercial development in parts of Chinatown.

In interviews with the staff of the human rights commissions, several possible explanations emerged. The most popular explanation was an ethno-cultural, psychological one: Asians, particularly the Chinese, were seen as polite, nice, disciplined persons who wanted to keep a low profile, not 'make waves', and who disliked creating any more trouble for themselves by filing a complaint or by exposing incidents of racism. A variant of this ethno-cultural, psychological explanation was that Asian social organisation was seen as disorganised and dispersed, which hampered their ability to file complaints as a group; and as preferring to keep problems within their communities and trying to solve them there. This perception of the Asian communities as weak in organisation was coupled with the idea that they lacked structural and social integration into the mainstream society in general, thus rendering them unlikely to benefit from the many human rights advocacy groups in the city. By distancing themselves from the major institutions (human rights bodies included) of mainstream society, it was believed that the Asian communities remained unknown and, therefore, unattended to. Unlike, for instance, the black community, which organised itself and made persistent demands on the commission, the Asian communities remained 'out of sight and out of mind'.

A second mode of explaining the lack of relations between the Asian communities and the commissions was a spin-off from the ethno-cultural, psychological explanation, in that the cause was seen to result from the cultural distance between the Asians and the staff of the two commissions. The Asian culture was perceived as qualitatively different from the culture proper of Quebec society. This lack of 'cultural' as well as 'linguistic' affinity between the two cultures was seen by several staff members of the Quebec Human Rights Commission as a fundamental barrier that has yet to be overcome.

While the ethno-cultural, psychological explanation locates the cause within Asian individuals and their culture, an institutional explanation focuses on the human rights commissions themselves. In accounting for the lack of Asian complaints, several members of staff of the Quebec Human Rights Commissions pointed to the public image and credibility problems of the commission, particularly in terms of the commission generally not being seen as an effective and useful remedial measure by the ethnic communities, partly because of the seeming inevitability of long delays in the investigation process, and partly because of difficulties in proving racial discrimination. Several staff respondents on both commissions pointed to the increasing sophistication of employers 'in managing race relations', thus 'disguising and hiding' racial discrimination and making racial incidents 'too subtle' to prove.

Also, a large majority of the staff respondents pointed to the commissions' lack of personnel and heavy caseload, with the staff of the Canadian Human Rights

Commission claiming that this situation is particularly acute for them. It is not entirely clear whether this problem is as severe at the Quebec Human Rights Commission. Two staff respondents there mentioned the lack of community outreach in general, the virtual absence of communication with the Asian communities and the education division not being given a clear sense of direction and priority. Consequently, individual staff members charged with education were given considerable latitude and freedom in interpreting the education clause of the commission mandate, which almost inevitably resulted in individual officers making entry into cultural communities depending on their own personal background, preference, interests and expertise, and not the needs of the communities. In the resulting distribution of limited organisational resources, the Asian communities came out of this scuffle with the short end of the stick.

Another variant of this explanation focused on the racial composition and the range of linguistic competencies of the staff of the two commissions. One staff member on the Quebec Human Rights Commission suggested that the lack of Asian staff further widened the linguistic and cultural gulf between the commission and the Asian communities.

It would then suffice to conclude that both commissions have essentially been reactive rather than proactive in their contacts with the city's Asian communities. Communities that do not make demands on the commissions for various reasons thus generate no situations to which the commissions can react. Hampered by either a lack of clear priority on education (as in the case of the Quebec Human Rights Commission) or the excess of caseloads over resources (as in the case of the Canadian Human Rights Commission), proactive community outreach work is thus seriously curtailed. In the case of the Asian communities in Montreal, their lack of relations with the commissions can be understood in terms of the commissions not doing enough proactive work because of limited resources, as well as being relatively inactive in doing reactive work because the communities neither file complaints nor request services.

Attributions by community respondents

One of the most common explanations given by the thirty Asian respondents of the inordinately small number of complaints filed with the human rights commissions is that Asians have a tendency to resort to accommodation or avoidance in dealing with differences or conflicts, or that they are culturally 'non-activist' in character, thus not typically complaining or 'creating yet more trouble' by filing a complaint.

Several Chinese respondents volunteered the following variety of an essentially cultural-psychological explanation:

> Asians are less inclined to go to public bodies. They do not want to create further trouble. Culturally, they are non-activists. It is also part of the Chinese mentality believing 'all things will pass', kind of 'I can't be bothered' outlook, often resulting in 'complete inactivity'. Chinese are afraid of 'mah-

> fan' [complications, unnecessary worries and troubles]. They don't want to get themselves into more trouble [by complaining to the authorities]. The Chinese personality is quiet and passive. Chinese are notorious for not being trouble-makers. You [referring to the interviewer, a Chinese] should know that!

A few other Indochinese seemed to concur with the Chinese:

> Asians, in general, have a peaceful character. They don't like to tell stories or to complain. It wastes time. It is part of the Asiatic nature to be quiet. We do not complain much and we accept the new environment, trying to adapt. It is because of the Asian mentality. They avoid confrontation and do not like to testify in court or have anything to do with court matters. It is the oriental attitude to accommodate, not fighting. Asians like to leave problems aside. They don't like to complain much. Laotians are not aggressive: they are quiet and gentle by custom. It is part of the 'laissez-faire', 'let it be' mentality of the Asians. They are not interested in problems even when someone else takes care of them. We try to solve problems amiably. We are pacifists and do not like scandal.

While some respondents attributed the lack of complaints filed with the commissions to a 'roll with the punches' outlook, others believed that members of their communities prefer to keep their problems within their close interpersonal networks, or 'in the family': 'If Laotians encounter unacceptable problems, they rarely complain to authorities. The problem "stays in the family" '.

This set of findings is consistent with data reported earlier indicating 'get together with friends, co-workers and relatives' and 'do nothing' as the two most common responses to discrimination; and complaining to the police, the media and the human rights commissions as the three least common responses.

Several respondents noted the 'problematic' staffing of the human rights commissions and a lack of information about them:

> Human rights commissions are staffed and organised by French Canadians who do not know how to deal with the ethnics. The commissions should be staffed by ethnics if they want to deal with the ethnics. The commissions have a low profile. The public does not know the organisation. It is a chicken and egg problem – which comes first? People cannot use the commissions if they are not known. The commissions cannot be known unless people use it. We don't know what the human rights commissions are. We do not know about the services offered by the commissions. Our community lacks information about them. People do not know how to contact the commissions, the laws; they cannot communicate due to language barriers. There is nobody like us at the commissions. We are strangers to them.

One Cambodian expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of the human

rights commissions in redressing social wrongs. A Vietnamese respondent thought that his community did not believe the commissions would be able to solve their problems, and thus preferred to take their cases to organisations within their own community or to friends and relatives, or they would try to avoid the problems altogether.

A Chinese community activist spoke of the legacy of a century of racism on the part of the Canadian government, citing internment of the Japanese and confiscation of their property during the Second World War, the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923, the $500 'head tax' levied on the Chinese in 1903 and the disfranchisement of the Chinese. The Chinese fought but lost each and every one of these litigations. As a consequence, the Chinese community simply does not believe that the human rights commissions, seen as part of the federal or provincial government, will now make a difference.

The scarcity of complaints may also be due to the recent arrival of the Indochinese communities in Montreal. As a group, the Indochinese seem, at present, more preoccupied with economic survival and a variety of adaptation and resettlement problems than with racial discrimination. This is consistent with data reported earlier that Asian respondents do not see racial discrimination as a major problem compared with other problems, such as 'difficulties stemming from language problems', 'loneliness and social isolation', 'getting appropriate jobs for which one is qualified' and 'adjustment to Canadian values and society'.

Interpretation and conclusion

Among the main findings of this study, one seems particularly significant, namely eleven of the thirty Asian respondents reported discrimination against members of their communities as 'common'. More specifically, a majority of the Asian respondents reported discrimination in job hiring, job advancement and in evaluation of educational qualifications and other skills. Racial discrimination is thus seen as a social malady that limits and undermines Asians' chances of obtaining meaningful work and aggravates their economic adaptation.

Our analysis also indicates a serious problem of discrimination in schools and in the media. Our Asian respondents reported that their children were subjected to ostracism and verbal and physical attacks that, on most occasions, were ignored by the teachers and the school authorities. The infiltration of prejudicial stereotypes and political biases (maintaining that the Indochinese are economic, not political, refugees) in Montreal's media portrayal of them concerned our Asian respondents considerably. The data we collected on discrimination in the school system and the media may be only the tip of the iceberg.

Another important finding lies in our Asian respondents' perception that racial discrimination is less of a problem than adaptation issues such as language difficulties, lack of Canadian experience, loneliness and social isolation, and adjustment to Canadian values. Upon closer scrutiny of our respondents' answers to open-ended questions, we detected a complex range of personal rationalisations and justifications which, taken together, may well account for the level of racial

discrimination as reported. We found that a large majority of our Asian respondents attributed their adjustment difficulties to personal deficits (e.g. linguistic handicaps, communication barriers, lack of Canadian experience) rather than to discrimination per se. The blame is personalised and internalised; or discrimination is minimised.

Some see themselves as new immigrants, who therefore deserve less. Others see discrimination as a thing of the past. Still others have learned to accept discrimination as part of the life of an immigrant. The normalisation of discrimination looks somewhat like this: as everybody practises discrimination, even against members of their own community, it is a normal human tendency and, therefore, should not be a matter for alarm. Several Asian respondents maintain that their communities have actually been accorded better treatment by the larger society when compared with, for example, the black community. The rationalisation goes something like this: I shouldn't complain because others are worse off. As a consequence, the only viable remedy for their present predicament is self-improvement, mainly in terms of overcoming or 'doing something about' their personal deficits.

Our Asian respondents reported that members of their communities tend to resort to resources within their close interpersonal networks (relatives, friends, co-workers and ethnic associations) rather than to such public institutions as the media, the police and the human rights commissions – a fact that might also explain the relatively low level of perceived discrimination. Asians want to keep their problems to themselves, and they lack trust in the public institutions. That 'do nothing' and 'directly challenge the offender' (who discriminates) are ranked the second and fourth most common reactions to discrimination, respectively, led us to suspect that the flight or fight response to discrimination is quite common among members of the Asian communities. That 'call human rights commissions' is ranked the least common reaction to discrimination among seven predetermined responses is also explicable in that Asian respondents thought members of their communities were not familiar with the mandate, functions and services of the human rights commissions.

Both Asian respondents and commission staff put an inordinate emphasis on an ethno-cultural, psychological explanation: it is not within the 'culture' of the Asians to make trouble and to complain. (An extension of this explanation is that the Asians much prefer to keep problems within the family and strive to solve them there.) Also, both parties were quick to attribute part of the problem to the commissions. One such factor is the public perception of the commissions' effectiveness. While the Asian respondents were critical of the commissions for being aloof and remote from the constituencies they are mandated to serve, the commissions' staff cited limited organisational resources and heavy caseloads as problems.

While both Asians and commissions' staff agreed that the commissions have been reactive rather than proactive in their transactions with the Asian communities, they parted company in their explanations. The Asian respondents located the roots of the problem in the commissions' prejudicial allocation of resources. The staff of the commissions traced the problem to the lack of organisation in the

Asian communities, as well as their allegedly self-imposed isolation from mainstream society.

That the Asians placed a high priority on 'expand multicultural programmes' to provide the public with information about the Asian communities points to the significant role of the governments in reducing discrimination. The preference for the educational/informational approach over strategies that are confrontational or punitive in nature (e.g. making discrimination a criminal offence) is sadly underlined by a message that the Asian communities want to deliver to society at large: they want to be accepted, understood and appreciated. At the moment, they are not, and the situation may be remedied by public education and sensitisation.

This chapter is a report on a study of subjective perceptions of racial discrimination, not its actual, objective incidence or prevalence. The data have led us to believe that how racial discrimination is perceived is ultimately intertwined with how it is handled, cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally. All in all, research (of the kind we have undertaken) on personal and collective strategies of coping with racism focuses on the importance of putting racial discrimination in context with other major community problems faced by the victims. Such a perspective will, by necessity and logic, engage the researchers in the exercise of identifying the various psychological defence mechanisms and coping strategies victims adopt while 'cushioning and softening' the immediate deleterious effects of racism. From the point of view of research on racism, it is as important to examine racial incidents (the stimulus) as to dissect the intervening appraisal that precedes reactions to such incidents (the behavioural response). Recent research on the social psychology of stress and coping, while disputing the simplicity of a stimulus/response paradigm, has paid increasing attention to the intervening perceptual or appraisal process. There is plenty of empirical evidence pointing to the importance of a host of personality, culture-specific and situational factors associated with reactions to stressful life situations. The same factors, to a large extent, determine the specificity of defence mechanisms and behavioural responses individuals adopt in adapting to stressful life events. Such research may have implications for future theoretical thinking on racism.

Are Asians in Montreal subjected to racial discrimination, or are they not? Out study showed that, while denying, minimising, normalising or downplaying the overall level of racism, leaders of the Asian communities, almost to the extent of contradicting themselves, were quick to describe graphically specific racial incidents in a wide diversity of areas. Somewhere and somehow, they are managing to ignore racism and maintain their ethnic identity while being fully aware that they live in a society which is at best ambivalent about them.

6 Unemployment, social support and coping

The recent economic downturn in Canada has generated a national concern with unemployment and its psychosocial and economic costs; such a concern is also shared by social science analysts and researchers (Muszynski 1984). The sudden influx of thousands of Indochinese refugees to Canada coincided with the economic recession and, among other things, has spurred a number of studies of the various facets of their adaptation during resettlement. Several of these studies focus on the refugees' economic adaptation (Neuwirth 1981; Lam 1983; Deschamps 1987; Samuel 1987; Woon 1987), believing that successful economic adaptation is vital to overall adjustment and central to attaining self-sufficiency and autonomy. However, none of these studies actually examines how Indochinese refugees cope with unemployment and its psychosocial costs. In the USA, analyses of the unemployment of Indochinese refugees are few and far between (Kelly 1977; Montero 1979; Stein 1979; Finck 1983).

A national longitudinal survey (EIC 1982) found that the unemployment rate among Indochinese refugees in March 1982 was 10.4 per cent while the Canadian unemployment rate was 8.5 per cent. By 1982–83, the worsening economic situation in Canada not only continued to raise the overall unemployment rate, but also caused a sharp increase in the refugee unemployment rate. For example, the unemployment rate among Indochinese respondents to a Quebec government study (Deschamps 1987) grew from 18 per cent in 1981 to 32 per cent in 1982. Half the refugees in this survey had been unemployed at some point between June 1981 and June 1982.

A growing social science literature has focused on unemployment and job loss, primarily on the 'psychosocial costs' for the unemployed. Increasing empirical evidence indicates that being unemployed has consequences for one's physical health (Kasl *et al*. 1975; O'Brien and Kabanoff 1979) and mental health, ranging from mild psychological discomforts to such emotional disorders as depression, anxiety and aggressivity (Eisenberg and Lazarfeld 1938; Catalano and Dooley 1977; Coyne *et al*. 1981; Feather and Davenport 1981). It has also been reported that the unemployed are more likely than the employed to suffer self-inflicted injuries or injuries inflicted by the close family and to attempt suicide (Brenner 1973). High rates of crime and violence have also been found in areas where high

unemployment induces risk-taking and delinquent behaviour (Hartman 1976; Lodge and Glass 1982). Other studies, concerned with the impact of unemployment on family relations, have pointed out that joblessness leads to intrafamilial tensions, arguments and physical violence; it may also result in separation and divorce (Clarke and Clissold 1982; Riegle 1982).

However, when analytical attention is shifted from the psychosocial consequences or costs of unemployment per se to the diversity of patterns and modes of coping with unemployment, several intervening variables seem to be consistently critical for stress management. One of these is the availability of support in social networks. How one responds to life crises and transitions depends on, among other factors, the availability and degree of supportiveness of the social milieu comprising family and kin, friends, peers and voluntary organisations within the community (Chan 1977). Antonovsky (1973) argues that profound ties to concrete others and to the community constitute the significant 'resistance resources' in one's attempt to deal with different kinds of life crises. For example, Lowenthal and Haven (1968) suggest that the presence of an intimate relationship with a 'confidant' serves as a buffer against the traumatic social losses accompanying both widowhood and retirement. In a sense, social support protects the individual under stress and renders him or her less vulnerable to loss. Also, a number of studies in the sociology of the family, as pointed out by Nguyen's (1980) work on the Indochinese refugee experience, have shown that persons and nuclear families without social support are especially vulnerable to life stresses. In the sociological literature on child abuse and marital violence, social isolation ranks as one of the better predictors of which families are liable to resort to physical violence in intrafamilial interactions while under stress (Chan 1978).

The sample and research methods

In April 1984, 119 then unemployed Indochinese refugees were randomly selected from a total list of clients who, since 1979, had used the services of a local refugee resettlement agency in Montreal, Quebec. The sample of 119 Indochinese refugees consisted of thrity-one ethnic Chinese, twenty-five Vietnamese, thrity-two Cambodians and thirty-one Laotians, thus yielding a similar number of respondents from each of Montreal's four Indochinese communities. A questionnaire was prepared on four areas: work history in South-east Asia and Canada; job-seeking techniques and use of social support networks; impact of unemployment on family and social relations; and perceptions of future employability and job market needs. With a team of interviewers who were also on the staff of the refugee resettlement agency, and therefore spoke all four Indochinese languages, the questionnaire was administered in the homes of the respondents in their native language. Each interview took approximately an hour and a half.

The sample of 119 respondents consisted of an approximately equal representation of males (58 per cent) and females (42 per cent), although there was a considerably higher representation of males in the Laotian group (68 per cent vs. 32

per cent). Most respondents (74 per cent) were in the twenty-five to forty-five age group, and 19 per cent were between twenty and twenty-four years of age. The average age of the total sample was thirty-three years. Seventy per cent were married, 25 per cent were single, and 5 per cent were separated, divorced or widowed. Half (50 per cent) of the respondents were government sponsored, while 31 per cent and 13 per cent were sponsored by a group or relatives respectively. Slightly more than half (54 per cent) of the respondents arrived in Canada between 1978 and 1980, and 43 per cent after 1980. About a third of the sample (34 per cent) had already become naturalised citizens.

Contrary to mass media portrayals of the Indochinese refugees as an immigrant group formerly immersed in French or American culture and therefore proficient in the French and English languages, almost half (45 per cent) of the respondents had no or very little knowledge of the French language, while 44 per cent reported that their understanding of French would not enable them to carry on a sustained conversation. Only 11 per cent rated their proficiency in French as good, and none considered themselves as excellent in French. Proficiency in English was even poorer: 66 per cent had no or very little knowledge of the English language and 25 per cent rated themselves as quite poor. The Chinese group seemed the most proficient in both English and French.

As far as their educational background was concerned, more than half the sample (60 per cent) had had six to twelve years of schooling in South-east Asia, and another 18 per cent had had thirteen years or more. Only 22.5 per cent had had five years of schooling or less.

Work history in South-east Asia and Canada

Our analysis of the work history of our respondents prior to their entry into Canada revealed a disproportionately high representation in three categories: student (21 per cent), business (20 per cent) and farmer (11 per cent). The representation of businessmen was particularly high among the Chinese (50 per cent). That military personnel and seamstresses were also among the most highly represented (27 per cent each) was an interesting finding. The exceptionally high representation of farmers among the Cambodians (32 per cent) and the Laotians (12 per cent) was due to the fact that many of these refugees had been expelled by their government from the city to the village; farming or development of the new economic zones was the only allowable activity. Farming had been a forced occupation for them.

When asked whether they had other work skills besides those required for the jobs held longest in South-east Asia, a limited range of manual and semi-technical skills was mentioned: cabinet-making, dressmaking, bookkeeping and equipment maintenance. One suspects that some of these skills were honed during their first few years in Canada.

This brief sketch of our respondents' pre-Canadian work history provides a 'historical baseline'. All our respondents reported that their last job in Canada required virtually no work skills or training. More than two-thirds either worked

in a factory as labourers (40 per cent) or operated a machine (34 per cent), while the rest flowed in and out of a wide range of manual and unskilled jobs (e.g. janitor, kitchen help, waiter).

At the time of the study, the majority of the respondents (56 per cent) had recently become unemployed (less than six months previously); 27 per cent had been continuously unemployed for seven to twelve months, and 18 per cent had been unemployed for thirteen months or longer. More importantly, more than two-thirds of the sample (71 per cent) had been unemployed at least once, and about a third had been unemployed at least three times since coming to Canada.

Being laid off and the termination of seasonal work accounted for 64 per cent and 14 per cent of unemployment respectively. The workplace being too far away and other work-related factors, such as hard and demanding work, bad work conditions, low salary, odd work hours, ill treatment at work or racial discrimination, and sickness, were the reasons eighteen of the respondents gave for why they had terminated their employment.

Other respondents had the following to say about their work conditions:

> The overall economy is not bright. We can see that production in the factory has been decreasing.

> In cases of layoff, the employer calls back only those with the lowest pay (usually the newcomers) and forgoes those who have been there longer and have better pay, like myself.

> In a small factory, the owner can do whatever pleases him. The employer trims the number of workers down and forces those who stay to work harder.

> There is so much competition in this field that the choice ultimately belongs to the owner. Those who stay in the production have to work extra hard with the lowest possible pay.

Unemployment and financial predicament

At the time of the study, the majority of our respondents (61 per cent) were still receiving unemployment benefits ranging from $100 to $150 a week. A considerable amount of this money was then paid out in rent or sent back in cash or as drugs and clothing to South-east Asia to support family members left behind. This low level of income dictated a life of subsistence below the poverty line and often required many households to seek low rental lodgings or to share accommodation with relatives, friends or acquaintances.

When asked to express their feelings about receiving unemployment insurance, the following responses were given: I need it (33 per cent); it is acceptable (32 per cent); I resent it (17 per cent); I am entitled to it (12 per cent); I deserve it (6 per cent); I like it (1 per cent). That a large majority of the respondents saw receiving unemployment insurance as acceptable during a time of desperate economic

need reflects the severity of their current financial predicament. When asked to compare their financial well-being with that of other Indochinese refugees they knew, more than a quarter (28 per cent) thought they were the same as others and 5 per cent thought others were worse off. Only 17 per cent thought other refugees were in better financial shape than they were.

In anticipation of further reductions in family income because of continued unemployment, 14 per cent of our respondents actually reported that they had made several residential moves in a perpetual search for more comfortable but less expensive housing. Eight of the 119 respondents moved in with relatives or friends to save on housing costs.

Job-seeking and social support networks

An analysis of the actual and preferred job-seeking techniques of our Indochinese refugees reveals some interesting patterns of transaction between Indochinese refugees and their social milieu. An overwhelming majority of our respondents (70 per cent) found their last job before unemployment through personal networks consisting of friends (54 per cent), relatives (9 per cent) and sponsors (7 per cent). An additional 13 per cent reported having got their last job through direct visits to potential employers. None of the 119 respondents managed to get their last job through such conventional job-seeking means as the employment section in the newspaper or employment agencies and services within or outside their own ethnic communities. The Canada Manpower Centres were reported to have been successful in getting jobs for only 11 per cent of our respondents. As far as actual job-seeking techniques are concerned, no significant variations between the four ethnic groups were found.

When asked which job-seeking techniques they were actively using since termination of their last job, the utilisation of personal networks (friends and relatives) was mentioned by close to half the respondents (45 per cent), although there seemed to be a more ready inclination this time around to scrutinise newspaper advertisements, to visit the Canada Manpower Centres and to use community resources. About one-quarter of the respondents (24 per cent) reported that they were making frequent visits to potential employers.

Our respondents were also asked to identify the one most effective means of finding employment. Friends were mentioned by a large majority (62 per cent), followed by visits to potential employers (14 per cent), relatives (11 per cent), Canada Manpower Centres (9 per cent) and community services (0.8 per cent). The data also indicate that the Chinese (84 per cent) seemed to be the most inclined to rank using contact with friends as the most effective job-seeking technique. When asked how most of the refugees that they knew found jobs, the ranking remains essentially the same: personal networks consistently compared more favourably than the formal, institutional means.

On the relative merits and liabilities of various job-seeking techniques, the following comments were made by our respondents:

I am sick and tired of having to go through the bureaucratic jungles at the Canada Manpower Centres. I don't think I would ever go back there waiting one long day only to have a 20-minute interview with a counsellor there. What I get out of this is some advice that doesn't work anyway. All I want is a job.

I don't go to the associations in our own community because I don't think they'll be able to find me a job. There is not much they can do.

I was often told the jobs advertised in the morning newspaper were filled when I called up as soon as I saw one. Sometimes I thought I was told lies and it's so frustrating.

A lot of employers do not like to find workers through the Manpower Centre – it simply takes too long this way. Most employers like to tell their Indochinese workers that there will be a job opening soon, who'll then bring in their friends or relatives whom they think are appropriate for the specific job in mind. It's much quicker this way, normally not longer than one or two days and the employers like it. Besides, friends or relatives brought into the factory as new workers have been pre-screened as to their suitability for the job. In this way, the employer can always count on a good reference or recommendation.

The minute I step into the Manpower Centre, I feel so out of place, so scared of it. It is basically a power institution and the officers there don't seem to have done anything for us. However, I have learned to be diplomatic with them – I want my cheque.

Soon after finishing my French course, a neighbour let me know of an opening in a supermarket near where they lived and I got a job as a cleaner there. That lasted four months. The supermarket changed owners and I lost my job. The next morning I started job hunting. I went to the Canada Manpower Centre and joined in the line to see a counsellor. Communication with the counsellor was not easy despite my one year of French course. Frustrated, I decided to go on my own. A Cambodian friend referred me to a leather factory downtown and I got this job as a general helper at the minimum wage.

To whom do the refugees turn for financial help in times of unemployment? Answers to this question provide us with additional data on their help-seeking behaviour and the availability of support in the social networks. Almost half (47 per cent) the respondents got financial help from their parents, brothers or sisters. A total of 21 per cent reported that they turned to friends for financial help. Financial institutions and sponsors were mentioned by 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This additional piece of data points to the saliency and importance of members of the family and the intimate, personal networks as resources and instrumental support when help was needed.

Unemployment and family relations

In an attempt to assess the relationship of unemployment and family relations, data were collected to determine whether the fact that either parent (especially the father) was unemployed at the time of the study decreased his or her authority over his or her spouse, children and other members of the family. Contrary to our expectations, almost all our respondents reported little or no decrease in familial or marital authority, a finding typical of the Chinese, the Cambodians and the Vietnamese. However, 'a little' decrease in authority over one's spouse and one's children was reported by 32 per cent and 14 per cent of the Laotians respectively. In addition, 28 per cent of the Laotians reported a considerable decrease in authority over brothers and sisters.

Unemployment meant an increase in leisure hours at home. Almost half the respondents reported a new sharing of household work and duties among family members during the duration of the father's unemployment, and all of them indicated that such sharing of household chores came about voluntarily. More importantly, it was also reported by unemployed fathers that they were spending more time than before with children (helping them with their studies), or were attending to such household duties as doing repairs, home furnishing and gardening. Quite surprisingly, only a small minority used the extra leisure hours to learn a new trade or improve work skills.

One of our interviewers provided the following description of the division of labour in an Indochinese family with an unemployed father:

> A formal and rigid pattern of household sharing among the family members does not exist. However, there is a mutual agreement in the family whereby the mother assumes the most important role of feeding the family; the children are assigned to such trivial chores as doing the dishes, cleaning the house or running errands. The father is left – respectfully – with bigger responsibilities involving decision-making. When he is unemployed and has more time, he does whatever needs to be done around the house and the family simply benefits from it without the hassle of asking or coercing him.

A large majority of our respondents (77 per cent) reported that they had to trim down their clothing budget because of lower income, a tendency especially conspicuous among the Chinese (84 per cent) and the Laotians (81 per cent). However, only a third of the sample actually trimmed down their food budget by compromising on the quality of food.

One of the interviewers made the following observation on a family curtailing the food budget:

> Most of them think that they can continue to have the same kind of basics at a lower price, simply by watching closely for food items on sale. They skip some 'luxury' items (such as shrimp, cakes, chocolates, soft drinks . . .) and exercise their culinary talents to garnish the dining table at a cheaper price.

About 34 per cent of all respondents compared with 50 per cent of the Laotians reported that the schooling of their children suffered a little because there was less money available. Only three (Chinese) actually said their children quit school to work either full time or during weekends to support the family.

How, then, did the family accept the reduced budget in food, housing, entertainment and schooling due to the unemployment of either parent? Reluctant or resentful acceptance of the reduced budget for diet and housing was reported in only one Cambodian family. The data indicate a co-operative, collective attempt on the part of all members of the family to accept and to adjust. Our respondents were also asked to indicate which areas of family entertainment were affected the most as a result of reduced income. The interview data seem to indicate a deliberate attempt at self-discipline and restraint with respect to expensive entertainment such as going to the movies, going out for meals at restaurants, attending organised sports events and going on holiday. The following excerpts are from profiles of Indochinese families prepared by our interviewers:

> They tried to live as simple a life as they could. They would not think of buying new clothes or new furniture. They would not eat out in restaurants; they would not go to the movies. Occasionally, they would have some Laotian friends over, and some Laotian dishes would be prepared. They would talk and talk about old times in Laos. A few packs of beer, some bottles of Coke and 7-Up and a sweet creamy cake would make a social occasion quite festive!

> They have a one-bedroom apartment and have never moved anywhere else. The rent is $170 per month, and he found out that it was the cheapest available in this part of the city. He tried to find another apartment, around $140 per month, so that he could have a few dollars extra for pocket money. So far, he has not been successful. The thought of leaving this familiar street with so many Laotian children playing in the summertime on the sidewalk made him abandon the idea of moving.

> The family diet did not change much; they were used to a meagre amount of meat, and his wife, with her culinary talent, can always turn a cheap meat into a delicious dish! And old clothing did not bother him that much either. When they were in the refugee camps, they did not have decent clothes for years.

Unemployment and social relations

While about two-thirds of the respondents (61 per cent) reported that unemployment had no negative effects on their family's social relations in terms of voluntary and self-initiated isolation from friends, relatives and neighbours, about a third (37 per cent) saw unemployment having 'a little' adverse social effect, and only 2 per cent a 'considerable' effect. Significant intergroup variations were found: 48 per cent of Cambodians and 84 per cent of Laotians reported unemploy-

ment having 'a little' negative effect on their social relations. Major reasons cited to explain this tendency toward social withdrawal were: lack of money and time; and a host of psychological barriers such as guilt, shame and sense of personal incompetence stemming from continued unemployment or underemployment, which became particularly acute when those one was to socialise with were active in the labour force.

It is also important to point out that, while unemployment did not seem to 'change' the relationship with relatives, it did have some negative effects on relationships with former colleagues and ethnic associations and organisations. This tendency towards withdrawal from some parts of the social network was particularly severe among Laotians, who reported that unemployment had significant negative impact on their relationships with relatives (48 per cent), friends (81 per cent), colleagues (84 per cent) and ethnic associations and organisations (77 per cent).

When asked to make an overall evaluation of whether it had been difficult for themselves and their families to adapt to the altered family and social life incurred by unemployment, almost half the respondents (45 per cent) admitted to 'a little' difficulty and 8 per cent reported 'considerable' difficulty.

Employability and the future job market

The most disturbing data in our study pertain to our respondents' perceptions of the probability of getting a job of any kind, of re-entering their own chosen field and of returning to jobs from which they had been laid off. While a large majority (72 per cent) reported that they were ready to accept the first job available irrespective of whether it was related to their field, and 82 per cent were actively looking for employment at the time of the study, the chances of obtaining a job of any kind were seen as 'none' by 9 per cent and as 'thin' by 81 per cent. Only 10 per cent believed their chances were good; the Chinese and the Vietnamese were more optimistic than the other two groups in their estimation of their occupational future.

More than half our respondents (59 per cent) did not believe that they would be called back to their former jobs; a much higher proportion of Laotians (84 per cent) manifested such a sense of pessimism. Reasons cited for believing they would not be called back to their former jobs included: knowing their former employers had closed down, sold out or declared bankruptcy; or seeing a gradual reduction in production at times of worsening economy, thus generating more and more layoffs or permanent termination of employment opportunities in the future. Moreover, the chances of getting a job in one's chosen field of occupational pursuit were perceived as 'none' by 37 per cent of the respondents and as 'thin' by more than half (58 per cent). A large majority of the Laotians (87 per cent) thought such chances were virtually non-existent. When asked how long it would take them to re-enter their chosen field, 40 per cent of the respondents said they had no idea, almost a quarter said never, and another quarter said one to four years.

Another important piece of data bearing on the respondents' evaluation of the

job market at the time was that 85 per cent actually replied that they had less chance of getting a job at the time of the study than they had before. All the Laotians compared with only 47 per cent of the Chinese thought that their chances of obtaining a job had actually lessened.

Months of unemployment punctuated by alternate periods of job seeking, rejection by employers and depression gradually began to solidify a set of perceptions of the job market. By rank order of frequency of responses, our respondents cited the following factors to explain their unemployment and unemployability: no Canadian experience (25 per cent); lack of a licence to work (22 per cent); language difficulty (21 per cent); lack of a licence to practise (14 per cent); and work being seasonal (6 per cent). Discrimination as a factor of unemployment was cited by only 4 per cent of the respondents, and 3 per cent reported they didn't know where to look for work.

When asked to identify three kinds of jobs they thought would be most likely to be available, 75 per cent of the respondents cited three categories of menial work: factory work (44 per cent), restaurant/general work (15 per cent) and sewing machine operator (15 per cent). Other jobs mentioned were those with characteristics shared by menial, low-paid, marginal jobs: cleaning and janitorial service, unskilled office work, door-to-door sales and kitchen help. Skilled or semi-skilled jobs such as mechanic, nurse, electrician and chef were rarely mentioned.

Coping with the stress of unemployment

In coping with unemployment and a drastic and abrupt reduction in family income, as well as with shame and resentment over dependency on unemployment insurance and other government assistance, the Indochinese refugees in our study have dug deeply into their psychological, cultural and social resources.

Many years of wars, political and economic prosecution, poverty and famine in South-east Asia, coupled with a stay in a refugee camp that was characterised by anxiety, frustration and helplessness, have, so to speak, 'seasoned and weathered' the refugees. These experiences have made the refugees pragmatic and resilient, and perhaps resistant to socio-economic deprivation.

The following is an excerpt from a family profile prepared by our interviewer:

> According to Mrs Ung's own assessment, the last five years in Kampuchea and another year in the refugee camp taught her family endurance, patience and a practical sense of life. The gradual transition from near death in Kampuchea to temporary survival in the camp then to physical security in Canada helps the family to keep their expectations in perspective – they enjoy what little they have and keep watch for sudden, unpleasant changes.
>
> At present, she accepts being unemployed as a fact of life over which she has no control and, therefore, for which she is not responsible. So she accepts what is available and makes the best of it. Mrs Ung is a realist.

An underlying philosophy of pragmatic realism enables the Indochinese refugees to readily accept stresses and strains from life changes; unemployment and the transition from autonomy to dependency seem minor when set against the many life changes brought about by war and exile. These refugees have developed a vast reservoir of 'internal resistance resources', which prevent them from becoming easy prey to personal disorganisation and pathology.

The literature on the social effects of unemployment often stresses that unemployed persons are particularly vulnerable to social withdrawal and isolation, which, in turn, lead to demoralisation and personal disorganisation. The data of this study do not follow these trends. While the literature indicates that unemployment usually has deleterious consequences for the family, our data lead us to believe that, in this instance, unemployment actually intensifies family relations, demands the gathering together of all resources and, consequently, contributes to family cohesiveness. Unemployment demands redefinition and reorganisation of family roles, which, as our data indicate, are undertaken by the refugee families with considerable co-operation from all members.

Reduced family income means cutting back on family entertainment such as going to movies or having meals in restaurants. On the other hand, it also means the family is more ready to play together to fulfil each other's socio-emotional and recreational needs. The Indochinese families have developed a low-budget family entertainment: a set of interlocking families bonded by friendship, kin relations or geographic proximity take turns hosting dinner parties. In difficult economic times, when the majority of the Indochinese refugees are without work, these rotating dinner parties not only keep entertainment expenses low, but also, perhaps more importantly, keep individuals and families together and in touch with and in support of each other. These parties may even add strength to their ethnic identity while fulfilling social, emotional and economic functions.

Not only does unemployment per se not seem to result in personal and family pathology, our data suggest that quite the opposite is taking place. To the extent that unemployment of the father (or the mother) is defined and viewed as a family rather than a personal matter, coping with new realities created by unemployment has become a family task. Unemployment strengthens family cohesiveness while family members cope, adapt and play together and, as a consequence, keep the unemployed individual from feeling isolated.

Participation in social networks of friends and kin not only serves expressive-emotional functions, as we have suggested above, but is also of practical utility. In our earlier analysis of patterns of the actual and preferred job-seeking techniques, we have concluded that refugees not only actually obtained employment through personal, social networks, but also preferred to do so.

One refugee family profile recorded the following observation:

> The social circle of the refugees has been restricted to a few relatives and friends. Friends are often asked to keep a sharp eye out for possible openings in their workplace as most jobs are found that way. A worker on the site

would know immediately when additional workers are needed and what type of personnel would be appropriate to meet the demand. This peer-referral system is deemed most effective both by refugees seeking work and by the employers themselves.

Having all been refugees serves to lessen status differences among the Indochinese. Being unemployed further augments this process of equalisation. By participating in a network of interlocking unemployed families, the jobless person knows the stigma of unemployment is considerably reduced. He or she can count on the social support of 'the similar others'. From an instrumental and functional point of view, the unemployed person's accessibility to such a support system is often an invaluable link to the job market out there. The social network with its supportive resources thus serves both its expressive and its instrumental functions. Unemployment initiates a series of life changes and demands constant adjustment and re-adjustment. Unemployment remains stressful, and the unemployed person is not without difficulties and dilemmas. However, one knows that one is not alone.

Studies of the refugees' psychological adaptation during the early phases of resettlement suggest that refugees are more inclined than they were before uprooting to take risks and to be aggressive towards and punitive of intimate others (Chan 1984). When asked whether there were any signs of maladaptive coping with unemployment, 10 per cent of the 119 respondents replied affirmatively. One case of self-reported wife abuse was discovered, and another unemployed father admitted having become quite withdrawn and passive in personal and family affairs, expecting his wife to undertake all sorts of household duties. A few cases of parents becoming increasingly critical of children's performance in school and behaviour at home were also reported. Partly because of under-reporting of the incidence of personal maladaptation in order to present a socially desirable self, and partly due to unemployment having been a recent phenomenon and perceived by refugees as something temporary, our expectation that unemployment generates a chain of maladaptive symptoms and behaviour does not seem to be borne out by our data. That there is substantial evidence of refugees feeling pessimistic about the job market should be interpreted in the light of their awareness of the realities of a worsening national economy.

An excerpt from a family profile recorded some symptoms of psychological strain:

> What made him uneasy was the worry that when his friends came over, he could not offer them beer and soft drinks as he used to and the amount of special Laotian dishes that his wife was so good at preparing was shrinking to a pitiful portion. He did not ask them to come over as often as he would like to any more because he can't afford to further strain the food budget. And he became hesitant when his friends asked him over to their places for meals. He still liked their company and he needed them, but the thought of not being able to return their favours gave him an odd feeling. He used to have this

urge to go to a Chinese movie, one of his favourite pastimes – it gave him a deceptive feeling of being back in South-east Asia, seeing familiar trees, houses, streets and Asian faces on the screen. But now he is worried that he'll soon have to forgo this luxury.

Conclusion

When the analytical attention of unemployment studies is shifted from its effects or consequences to personality and situational variables associated with how an individual or a family copes with the stresses and strains of unemployment, the researcher has taken the first step in conceptualising coping with unemployment as a dynamic and changing process marked by phases of development. Such a conceptual shift will avoid the usual pitfalls of a preoccupation with the pathology and deviance of individual responses to unemployment. The analytical focus becomes instead: what seems to matter as far as coping with the stress of unemployment is concerned?

The Indochinese refugees have a long history of coping with life changes of varying severity. Past experiences have made them more resilient, more hardy, more realistic and pragmatic and more accepting of the 'slings and arrows' of life. We suggest that such personality attributes do have an effect on the refugees' perception of the meaning of unemployment and on their adaptation to it.

Our study confirms a close relation between social support and coping with stress. Traditional Indochinese culture accentuates familism, sociability with members of the immediate social networks and mutual aid. These cultural values seem to be accentuated by the experience of being a refugee. While the refugee experience has disrupted many family and social relations, it has also, ironically, strengthened many families. The strengthening of family relations means parental unemployment is looked upon and dealt with as a family rather than a personal issue, which in turn enables a more flexible definition of sex roles and family duties. The data in our study suggest that not only has unemployment not yet resulted in family disorganisation, it has actually made some refugee families more cohesive and more adaptive in coping.

The Indochinese refugees, partly because of cultural beliefs and partly due to circumstances, have formed a coalition or network of interlocking families to serve both expressive-emotional and instrumental-pragmatic functions for the unemployed. In the company of 'similar others', the stigma of unemployment is reduced and the socio-emotional needs of the individuals are being met. Equally important, such social networks have become the unemployed person's link to the job market. The refugees in our study invariably found (and preferred to find) jobs through personal contacts with kin, friends, neighbours and former co-workers. Unemployment does not lead to social isolation; instead, it increases and intensifies participation in social networks for support and aid.

However, the conclusion that Indochinese refugees have been adaptive in coping with unemployment does not disguise some symptoms of psychological strain and emotional distress stemming from unemployment and family role change

and resocialisation. The more disturbing findings of this study point to a growing sense of pessimism regarding their future job prospects and their employability. The important question to ask is: how much longer will it take before the personal resistance energies and the resources of the social networks are depleted to the point where the next straw would break the camel's back?

The findings and conclusions of this study have several practical implications. One has to do with the development of long-term and preventative measures to maintain the mental health and psychological well-being of the Indochinese by way of nurturing the social support systems at the family, kin, friendship and ethnic community levels. Our attention ought to be focused on building up the resourcefulness, supportiveness and efficacy of the Indochinese community. Such a strategy not only serves the immediate goal of providing appropriate and effective services when and where they are needed, but also meets the broader objective of building community morale and cohesion, increasing social participation of individuals in community-wide activities and fighting individual withdrawal and isolation. Continued attempts ought to be made to keep refugees in touch with each other, with the voluntary organisations and agencies that serve them and with their community as a larger social unit that provides them with a primary source of ethnic identification and with a link to the Canadian society.

7 Adaptation of refugees

While there has been a steadily growing interest in research on resettlement and adaptation of the Indochinese refugees in Canada, resulting in two monographs (Adelman 1980; Tepper 1980), a survey of the literature indicates that, other than a few isolated case studies dealing with the mental health needs of these refugees (Suh 1980; Nguyen 1981, 1982; Cote 1982), little analytical attention has been paid to the psychological aspects of the refugee experience. Adelman *et al*. (1980), Howard (1980) and Lanphier (1981) examine and assess the evolution of Canadian refugee policy; Neuwirth and Clark (Neuwirth 1981; Neuwirth and Clark 1981) focus on the impact of modes of sponsorship on the socio-economic adjustment of refugees; Indra (1980) is interested in the patterns and processes of social organisation of Indochinese communities during the resettlement process in the host country; and Buchignani (1980) and Siu (1979) turn to the process of refugees' occupational adaptation.

Researchers interested in the psychosocial and mental health aspects of the resettlement behaviour of the Indochinese refugees in Canada can benefit by reviewing and drawing upon the literature on bereavement and mourning (Parkes 1964a, 1964b, 1969a, 1969b, 1970a, 1970b), on disasters and natural calamities (Wolfenstein 1957; Linton 1967) and on uprooting and forced dislocation (Kraepelin 1921; Fried 1963; Zwingmann 1973, 1977; Keller 1975; Coelho and Ahmed 1980).

Central to the refugee experience is a sense of shock and grief similar to that suffered by bereaved persons or survivors of natural disasters. For numerous Indochinese refugees, a chronic feeling of anxiety about the loss or a lack of knowledge of the whereabouts of close family members seems to constitute the essence of the refugee experience. Compounding this feeling of bereavement is a sense of uprootedness from a socio-cultural milieu within which one was born and reared, of forced dislocation from a social network comprising kin, neighbours, friends and acquaintances. Like a bereaved widow, the refugee manages grief by crying and pining, by 'finding' and 'searching for' objects and experiences that once provided pleasure.

Studies on the mental health implications and consequences of uprootedness and forced migrations occasioned by natural disasters and wars have long identi-

fied a persistently recurring behavioural syndrome of the victims: an obsessive fixation with past experiences and events, an excessive preoccupation with and idealisation of the 'good old days' prior to the mishaps. Such a mental set is captured by Zwingmann's (1973: 19–47) concept of 'nostalgic illusion', defined as 'a symbolic return to, or psychological reinstitution of, those events of the personal (real) past, and/or an impersonal (abstract, imagined, suggested) past which affords optimal gratification'. In an operative sense, the past is systematically and sometimes unconsciously idealised, while the present is ignored and the future devalued. A nostalgic illusion of this kind helps to maintain affective continuity and psychological equilibrium while the victim is experiencing the crisis of loss and uprooting. While temporary and short-term nostalgic illusion serves compensatory and protective functions for the uprooted, clinical attention and monitoring is warranted in cases of a 'nostalgic fixation' (Zwingmann 1973; 1977: 10–16) 'where the duration, frequency and intensity of nostalgic episodes exceed the norm, where critical and self-critical judgement of the present and progression toward a future is blocked, and where the inflicted person starts exhibiting aggressive and antisocial behaviour to the social milieu'. The victims begin to impose upon themselves self-withdrawal and isolation, which in turn generate feelings of loneliness and marginality to the social environment. Kraepelin (1921) states that self-isolation and nostalgic reaction to the stress of adapting to a new life in a new country constitute the two major forms of uprooted behaviour.

This chapter attempts to analyse and interpret interview data collected during phase three of our longitudinal study of patterns of psychological and socio-economic adaptation of Indochinese refugees in Montreal, Canada, between 1975 and 1981. Phase one of our study examined the structure and values of Chinese families in Vietnam before 1975, and phase two analysed demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the total Indochinese refugee population (Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese) in Quebec until 1981. Phase four, the last phase of the study, will focus on the occupational and social adjustment of Vietnamese-Chinese refugees one year after their settlement in Montreal.

Three specific areas have been identified for this phase, phase three: sponsor–refugee relations, dream contents and preoccupation with the past. Marking a departure from most immigrant and refugee studies in the United States and Canada, we have adopted a different theoretical and methodological approach by focusing on the social psychology of our refugee respondents, and on the dynamics of their interpersonal relationships with their sponsors. An attempt is also made to examine the concept of sponsorship and its pragmatic implications for both sponsors and refugees.

The data were collected over a four-month period between August and November 1980. We conducted intensive and semi-structured interviews with twenty-five Vietnamese refugees of Chinese origin who resettled in Montreal in 1978–1979. All interviews were conducted in Cantonese, a dialect spoken by many Chinese in Vietnam. Each interview took about two hours to complete. The two-person research team format allowed one of us to concentrate on making notes in English, a language we both feel more comfortable with and are more proficient in

than Cantonese, thus adopting a free and instant translation procedure while the interview was in progress, and the other to pose questions to the respondents, to establish trust and rapport between the interviewer and the respondents and to maintain the continuity of the interview. This arrangement gave us the flexibility to pursue issues and concerns as they emerged during the interview.

Demographic characteristics

Our sample consisted of seven married men, six single men, six married women and six single women. Their ages were: ten between twenty and twenty-five, eight between twenty-six and thirty, two between thirty-one and thirty-five, three between thirty-six and forty, and two over forty-one. Twenty-two of the twenty-five respondents were second-generation Vietnamese-Chinese born in Vietnam. The other three were born in China but migrated to Vietnam when they were young. All our respondents left Vietnam between 1978 and 1979.

In response to the question about their religion, twenty-three respondents combined ancestor worship with Buddhism. One respondent was Catholic and one Protestant.

Two respondents had finished elementary school in Vietnam; seventeen had completed high school; five had matriculated; and one had a university education with a degree in business. Only four respondents said that they had a rudimentary knowledge of English or French.

Other than four housewives and one student, the rest of the respondents were active in the labour force prior to their departure from Vietnam. The occupational distribution of these respondents was: one noodle factory owner, one movie house owner, one grocery store owner, eight in such professional occupations as teaching, nursing, supervisory management, bookkeeping and business administration, two truck drivers, two machinists and ten skilled and semi-skilled workers. All twenty-five respondents, including the one who owned two factories and two houses, insisted that they belonged to the middle-income category.

Regardless of their previous occupations in Vietnam, the majority of our respondents were employed in Montreal in menial jobs with minimum wages: eight garment factory workers, three janitors, one dishwasher and six factory labourers. Only a few found jobs above the minimum wage: one hairstylist, one underwriter in an insurance company and two machinists. Two women remained as housewives, and another two were enrolled in language classes.

This comparison of jobs previously held in Vietnam and presently held in Montreal points to the emergence of two phenomena: occupational dislocation and dual-income families.

Sponsor–refugee relations

In general, our respondents rated their relations with their sponsors as satisfactory and pleasant, although church and private sponsors seemed to be perceived as better and more caring than government sponsors. There were indications

that church and private sponsors maintained closer interpersonal ties with those sponsored and were more active in ensuring that their immediate socio-economic and physical needs were met. More specifically, those sponsored by church and private groups reported that they were relatively well provided for as far as accommodation, household furnishings and winter and summer clothing were concerned. They were also more often given assistance in seeking employment and coping with various job-related problems. There were also more frequent mutual visits between the church and private sponsors and the refugees on special and festive occasions.

A sense of indebtedness and gratefulness was emphatically expressed by our refugee respondents. Many added that they were indeed looking forward to a future when they would be in a better and more settled position to repay their sponsors in some capacity. Others stated that they would be readily prepared, if economically feasible, to sponsor other refugees in the future.

In spite of apparent and sometimes frustrating communication difficulties in sponsor–refugee relationships, because of the lack of a common language, our respondents in general emphasised that a minimally adequate level of mutual understanding existed. They thought their needs were properly understood and, on most occasions, met by their sponsors.

Nevertheless, over a period of time, spanning eight to twelve months, a general decrease in frequency and intensity of sponsor–refugee interaction was detected. The number of phone calls and mutual home visits was reduced towards the last six months of sponsorship.

An attempt to probe the reasons for this gradual lessening of contact leads us to an examination and analysis of the intricate and subtle interpersonal dynamics of sponsor–refugee relationships. While both sponsors and sponsored would not readily admit it, their relationship is essentially a mode of master–dependant relationship in which one party provides and the other party is provided for. Especially in the early phases of resettlement, the refugees were cast in a situation of utter dependency with a focus on such immediate needs as housing, clothing, food, employment and children's education. While there could well be a positive affective bond reciprocated between the sponsor and the refugee, as indicated above, there is still an economic and status difference, a language problem and a cognitive gap in perceiving and interpreting social realities, which the affective connection cannot bridge. The disparity between the affective bond and the cognitive status difference may be a real source of discomfort. This apparent cognitive gap between the sponsor and the refugee points to the need in future studies to interview the sponsors as well.

There are many sources of strain in the sponsor–refugee relationship. Both sponsors and refugees enter into the relationship as total strangers, with whatever existing personality and temperament differences between them accentuated and sometimes dramatised by a virtual lack of understanding of each other's ethnic and cultural background. While Vietnamese-Chinese have acquired only a rudimentary knowledge of the political system, ideology, geography, climate and social etiquette of Canada through reading books and information pamphlets distributed

by the Canadian Embassy to refugee camps, what the average Canadian knows about Vietnam consists primarily of mass media presentations of stereotypical, exaggerated and overgeneralised images of the country and its people.

It is not only that sponsors and refugees enter into a relationship first as strangers in an interpersonal and cultural sense, but also that the relationship is at best one of ambiguity as a result of objectives and rules governing interpersonal dynamics not having been clearly articulated and properly understood. The lack of government or social science literature on the social psychology of sponsor–refugee relations has driven many sponsors to rely on common sense and goodwill.

There is also a general lack of understanding of the roles, duties and obligations of both parties in the relationship. Without an awareness of the norms of the relationship or a clear notion of what constitutes an 'adequate' sponsor, many groups or persons acting as sponsors, having limited knowledge of the upper and lower limits of personal responsibilities and duties, have tried either too hard or not hard enough. Often, they simply have to test the limits and parameters of the relationship on a day-to-day, trial-and-error basis, very often with hazardous results.

Our interview data indicate that our respondents often found it difficult to bring their daily physical and economic needs to the attention of their sponsors, and that they would seek their help only when their needs became urgent. Our overall impression is that the refugees felt generally satisfied with what they were provided with and, therefore, found it hard to ask for additional assistance. To them, gratitude towards and appreciation of their sponsors often meant making the most of what had been given and minimising intrusions on their sponsors' privacy. At the same time, one can imagine sponsors feeling frustrated and hurt when their repeated offers of help were not accepted gratefully.

An added source of tension in the relationships has to do with the Vietnamese-Chinese having a long history of being benefactors and givers, rather than dependants and recipients of social welfare and assistance (Chan and Lam 1983). To many, being cast in a situation of utter dependency is a novel and humiliating experience. A deep sense of personal and ethnic pride may have propelled the refugees to struggle for autonomy and independence; but this may be interpreted by sponsors as rejection and non-appreciation of their earnestness and goodwill.

We observed that none of the refugees we interviewed seemed to grasp the ideology and motivations behind the concept of sponsorship. Many of them even suspected that the money the sponsors spent on them would have been paid out in taxes to the government anyway and, therefore, questioned the extent to which they should feel 'genuinely' and 'earnestly' indebted and grateful to their sponsors. Others argued that sponsors might have ulterior motives aside from a desire to help others. This underlying sense of suspicion may breed distrust in the sponsor–sponsored relations.

Evidently, dependants under different types of sponsorship do not seem to hesitate to make comparisons among themselves of what they are given and how they are treated in general by their sponsors. Inevitably, there is always a nagging feeling that another family seems to have a better deal, is more adequately and

comfortably accommodated, fed and clothed. One possible consequence of this comparison is that a refugee family sees flaws and inadequacies in the care they have received.

Dreams

We undertook an analysis of dreams as told to us by our Vietnamese-Chinese refugee respondents for several reasons. First, we subscribe to the general psychoanalytical principle of dreams as indicative and representative of someone's subjective reality and, more specifically, of the feelings, preoccupations, hopes and fears that constitute the dreamer's socio-psychological state. Dreams interest us because they extend our comprehension of a person's inner life, and reveal what would be difficult to learn except by psychotherapy (Hall 1966). We are in basic agreement with psychoanalysts who see dreams as representations of the fulfilment or attempted fulfilment of wishes, as well as of outer conflicts and internal struggles. A systematic analysis of dreams provides important cues to unresolved psychological and emotional problems that the dreamer may conceal in ordinary sociological interviews.

Following Hall's methodology of dream study, we posed such questions as where the dreams usually took place (dream settings), who appeared in the dreams (dream characters), what took place (dream events), and which emotion, or combination of emotions (dream emotions), prevailed.

Some people refused to tell their dreams; others said they couldn't remember. What was revealed by those who felt comfortable and inclined enough to do dream-telling? First, there were those who were non-specific about their dream content. They vaguely remembered seeing non-specific but known faces of distant family members, friends, relatives and neighbours, and doing things with them, the details and particulars of which were beyond recall. In spite of the fact that many of these respondents had been in Canada for at least a year, they reported that they rarely had dreams that took place outside Vietnam. We discovered that these same respondents had managed to come to Canada with their immediate and, in some cases, three-generational family intact. The fact that they had not left a significant family member in Vietnam or lost one during the journey between Vietnam and Canada may explain why the dream contents were non-particularistic in nature. The sense of loss was diffuse and blunt.

Then there were those respondents who, by choice or by force of circumstances, had left one or more immediate family members either in Vietnam or in refugee camps in South-east Asia; they reported that their dream contents were recurring. They remembered exactly the characters in the dreams, the kinds of activities they were engaged in and the dominant emotion that prevailed in those dream episodes. One woman recalled repeatedly seeing and actually doing things with her parents and older brother, who had all been left behind. The settings were either in Vietnam or in Canada, and the physical landscape in the background was a large, expansive plain with an aeroplane, suggesting the possibility of a long-distance journey and a departure from Vietnam. The emotion was one of

expectant bliss that is normally associated with the hope and optimism of liberty soon to be gained for good.

One young male respondent, who had been imprisoned for months in hard-labour camps in Vietnam after trying to flee the country, reported that he persistently dreamed of 'barbed wire' or images of dark, long, unending tunnels and of fear of persecution. Another young man dreamed many times of swimming in extreme desperation and fear in torrential storms, and being chased by pirates and soldiers in motorboats and ships. Both respondents reported waking up violently in the middle of these nightmares. Still another young man, who had been beaten up many times by local police officers in the presence of his parents during his early settlement in a Hong Kong refugee camp, dreamed repeatedly of being subjected to physical threats and brutality.

It seems to us that the dream contents as told by our respondents in general reveal a predominant and overwhelming preoccupation with the past, whether the past refers to life in Vietnam or to the boat journey and the sojourn in refugee camps. This preoccupation with the past is contrasted with the relative scarcity of dreams taking place in Canadian settings.

Those who have their family relatively intact in Canada tended to report that the characters they saw in their dreams were familiar acquaintances with whom they engaged in pleasant, routine usually day-to-day activities. They recalled 'having a good time' with those relatives in their dreams. While a sense of loss might have been present, it lacked specific content and focus.

Specific and recurring dreams were told by those who had undergone one or several traumatic and stressful experiences. Dreamers of this type were unable to come to terms with an experience that was frightening and/or psychologically degrading; so much so that images of these past experiences kept reappearing in the unconscious mind. It is our speculation that the degree of specificity of dream contents then seems to be a direct function of the level of stressfulness of past experiences.

The wish for family reunion emerges as a dominant theme. This is especially true for those who left one or more family members behind in Vietnam or in refugee camps. As a matter of fact, we would argue that our respondents' dreams unmistakably reveal that their foremost concern is the physical and psychological well-being of the rest of their family. The overwhelming wish is for family reunion in Canada which, in view of prevailing economic and political circumstances, can be fulfilled only in dreams.

Do some daytime events trigger a specific type of dream at night? Several of our respondents attempted to answer the question by quoting a Chinese saying: 'What one ponders during the day is what one dreams about at night'. Some respondents recalled seeing faces of relatives and friends in their dreams on the same day they received letters from Vietnam, or when they heard news about their whereabouts and well-being from the new refugee arrivals in Montreal, or from using the mass media. Others reported having dreams in which they actually talked or did things with their relatives after having heard nothing from Vietnam for weeks or months. One woman recalled travelling all the way on her own to

Vietnam to bring her brother a parcel containing food and other household utensils that were requested in a letter she had received the day before. As the dream proceeded, she suddenly became terrified by the fact that she was in Vietnam with her brother. At that point, she was awakened and was relieved to see that she was sleeping in her Montreal apartment.

It was also the general opinion of our respondents that the more occupied they were with work or with language classes, the less often they had dreams. They reported a much higher frequency of dreams of a wide diversity of contents during the first three months after arrival in Canada; some attributed this fact to their disturbed sense of time, to the cold weather and to cultural shock.

Two of our respondents recalled having a series of violent and traumatic dreams weeks before the May Referendum in Quebec, 1980, the specific contents of which they had forgotten. While reporting these dreams, they added that they were extremely apprehensive about the possibility of yet another political independence movement in Quebec, which might mean that they could become refugees for a second time within a span of 12 months. We were also told that the fear of political instability, prosecution and imprisonment by the party in power in the Quebec government was indeed a widespread and real one among many recently arrived refugees in Montreal. Perhaps the only relief was that, this time, they might not have to flee the province via a precarious boat journey.

Past, present and future

We have hypothesised in this study that our refugee respondents' excessive mental and socio-psychological preoccupation with the past would in one way or another interfere with their socio-psychological and economic adaptation to the present social milieu of the Quebec society. The interview data collected during phase one of our longitudinal study of the socio-economic adaptation of Vietnamese-Chinese refugee families in Quebec, 1975–1981, indicate that refugees were explicit about how their preoccupation with the 'eternal and omnipresent' past in Vietnam with its attendant feelings of guilt and shame has become an obstacle to a constructive adaptation to the immediate present, or to a logical and systematic planning for the future.

One woman, who apologetically reported that she might have learned only six or seven French words after having been to language classes for five months, lamented upon the amount of money and energy spent on her and many others in similar circumstances by the government. She attributed her poor performance in language to the fact that she simply could not keep her mind from wandering, often back to the past in Vietnam. Another woman who now works as a sewing machine operator in a hat manufacturing factory reported a persistent split and incoherence between her body, which was engaged in manual labour in Canada, and her mind, which was filled with random and directionless thoughts about past events and experiences. Still another male respondent said that, on Sunday afternoons when the streets were quiet and the neighbours stayed home, he could spend hours sitting alone in his apartment reliving a series of episodes of past

happenings in Vietnam, during the boat journey and in the two refugee camps he had been to. There were moments when his mind went so far back into the past that he was convinced that he was actually anywhere other than in Canada. The distinction between present and past, here and there, was so blurred that he thought he was hallucinating.

We found some significant age differences in the nature and degree of preoccupation with the past among our refugee respondents. The older the refugee, the more time he seemed to spend pondering past events, usually in an obsessive but painful lamentation about what had been left behind in Vietnam. Our question was: what had been lost, and what meaning did refugees attach to what had been lost?

First and foremost, refugees had lost the familiar milieu in which they had been born and raised, and consolidated their sense of personal and ethnic identity, as well as their sense of competence, agency and self-esteem. They had lost the feeling of being active and functional participants in a meaningful universe. They had lost their place in the world.

They had also sustained a loss in materialistic terms: loss of homes, businesses and possessions. Our sample of respondents included some middle-class people who had started out on their own at an early age as street hawkers, transportation workers and self-employed family businessmen. They felt they had come a long way through hard work, and had just begun to find life comfortable and enjoyable when disaster struck. The sudden loss of all personal belongings remained a nightmare, which many still found difficult to come to terms with. This was felt not only as a loss of material objects, but also as a loss of personal pride in their own achievement.

A devastating sense of loss accompanies the refugees' sense of uprootedness – they have lost a closely knit and cohesive social network comprising kin, neighbours, friends and acquaintances. We have argued elsewhere (Chan and Lam 1983) that a Vietnamese-Chinese is such an integral and inseparable part of a larger social network of family, kin and community in both emotional and economic terms that the disintegration of this social network has immediate impact on the individual. As it is the social context that gives the individual a sense of meaning and a justification for his or her being, the individual ceases to be himself or herself as a coherent whole with a direction and a purpose when the social context is fractured and destroyed (Antonovsky 1973; Mechanic 1974; Chan 1977). This sense of loss and social dislocation is perhaps most acutely felt by those who do not have their immediate family intact in Canada.

Given that loss has occurred in material, emotional and interpersonal terms, we asked how different age groups adapted to the radical change in their life. For the older persons, forty years old or over, the sense of loss was multifaceted. While they were all born in China, they spent their early childhood in Vietnam and had therefore gone through their primary and secondary socialisation there. Their emotional and psychological identification with the community where they were raised, educated and socialised was strong and deep. They might not have developed any sense of civic allegiance to the political regime in Vietnam, nor

the sentiments and ideology underlying it, but they had been able to carve out a universe for themselves within the ethnic Chinese community, where they had a role and a place.

A forced departure from a familiar social milieu generates an acute sense of dislocation. In the older refugee respondents, the loss of their identity often gives rise to a feeling of personal powerlessness and hopelessness. This is compounded by the loss of property and personal belongings and a well-established and promising business, which, as emphasised by our older respondents, was often the end-product of over half a lifetime of toil and thriftiness. This loss is a nightmare, and it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to accept that their past counts for nothing, and they must now begin all over again.

Because our older refugee respondents lost more and also attached deeper meaning to their loss, they have experienced a more acute sense of dislocation and disorientation than younger refugees during their resettlement in Canada. This factor alone poses a significant obstacle to adaptation to life in Canada. Our older respondents attributed their disorientation, wandering thoughts and inability to concentrate in language classes to a haunting preoccupation with the 'good old days'.

One phenomenon that many of our older respondents did not anticipate was that they have had to live in a state of economic and socio-psychological dependence upon the younger members of the family. When younger family members are required by circumstances to become not only independent and self-sufficient, but also responsible for the daily functioning of the family before they are ready to do so, much tension and conflict occurs in the family, and no one knows how to cope with it. A seventy-two-year-old man who had been in the Vietnamese navy acted as the chief pilot of a boat carrying about 200 refugees. He steered the boat through many mishaps and perils in the journey and brought the entire crew and the passengers to safety by landing in an Indonesian refugee camp. But upon his arrival in Canada, he developed a range of psychosomatic diseases. When we interviewed him in his Montreal apartment, he was in such bad physical and mental shape that he could not walk or talk. There was a medical suspicion that he had lost all his mental and intellectual abilities and his bodily organs had also started to fail him. His twenty-two-year-old son, the only other male in the family in Montreal, suddenly had to take on the role of economic provider, nurse, decision-maker and head of the family.

In comparison with respondents in the forty-year-old and above category, those between twenty and thirty-five seemed to feel a considerably less acute sense of loss or deprivation. As a matter of fact, several of our respondents in the younger age cohort, especially the men, seemed to see Canada as a land of new opportunities. Their optimistic vision of the future in a society perceived as promising equality, liberty and democracy is understandable in view of the absolute lack of educational, occupational and economic opportunities in Vietnam, a country where the younger generation had lived for years in fear of death, family break-up, exile, military conscription, starvation and political persecution by the Communist party.

Our younger refugee respondents had a background of intense technical training and had worked for years as technicians or skilled workers in transportation and industry or had been involved in family business with their parents since graduation from high school. This group manifested pride in the technical skills they had acquired in Vietnam and, perhaps more importantly, tended to see themselves as capable competitors in their own fields. This same group was the most motivated in language and orientation classes and, consequently, they benefited the most. We witnessed one young respondent, who did not speak a word of French the first time we met him, carrying on a twenty-minute telephone conversation in French with ease and confidence ten months later. We also noticed the emergence of a spirit of entrepreneurship among those young persons who had a history of apprenticeship in a family business in Vietnam. When asked about their future plans in Montreal, they distinguished between immediate and long-term planning. Their immediate plans were to achieve enough verbal proficiency in English and French to conduct business, to work hard at their present jobs to accumulate capital for future business investment, to seek relatives and friends as future business partners and to investigate business opportunities in Canada. Three of our younger respondents remarked that they had been talking to relatives and friends for some time about business propositions and opportunities for investment. As a matter of fact, their collective interest in business has provided them with a reason to get together regularly. This common interest may well form a basis for community feeling within the group. The idea of business partnership and the solidarity it implies is most needed at a time of social dislocation; each and every one of our refugee respondents desperately needs to build and consolidate a social network. To those within this group, every other member is a friend, a resource person and a potential business partner. In a general attempt to reconstruct a universe in which they can have a meaningful place, the young refugees have found within the business group a haven, a base for emotional identification and a source of psychic energy to deal with an otherwise cold, unfamiliar and sometimes hostile world. Most importantly, the group provides the individual members with a project, a sense of direction and orientation and the energy to endure the suffering they are getting through. Deprivations in the past and the present become tolerable when there is hope that the future will be better.

Discussion and conclusion

Our analysis of the dreams and daily thoughts of the refugees reveals their profound sense of loss. For some of them, the idea of a family reunion has become a primary preoccupation, consuming most of their time and energy. For others, family reunion is what 'planning and preparation for the future' is all about; family reunification would provide the individual with a meaning, a justification and a direction for the future. For some of the refugees, every attempt to articulate their vision of a future in Canada includes their urgent desire to bring to Canada the family they left behind.

The refugees are not unaware that their preoccupation with family reunification

and the past in Vietnam will become futile exercises without a concerted effort to adapt themselves to Canadian society. While they invariably recognise the need for proficiency in French and English as a prerequisite to economic adaptation, they are less certain about the probability of finding the kinds of jobs they held in Vietnam. The situation is perhaps worsened by a diffuse sense of powerlessness in dealing with the Canadian occupational system. We would argue that this observation is particularly applicable to persons with a long history of working at professional or skilled jobs. Many of our respondents stated that they would be more than willing to enrol in job upgrading and retraining courses if they knew which one to choose and what the chosen course would eventually lead to.

Our interview data also revealed a phenomenon occurring within some families during their early phases of resettlement that deserves further theoretical and empirical attention: a sudden role reversal between husband and wife, and parents and children. There are cases where women who have long been housewives, and children who were still in school in Vietnam, have suddenly become the primary economic providers for the family simply because they were able to find a job, either because they were more willing to do low-paying, unskilled work or because they were easier to hire for such work. In contrast, the husband–father, while still lamenting the loss of belongings and property, finds his sense of competence further eroded as a result of unemployment or seasonal employment. That these men have had to accept the most menial and underpaid jobs in the labour force has had a severe negative effect on their overall self-esteem and on the traditional balance of power in the family.

Our study has taken the first step in probing the interpersonal dynamics of various modes of sponsor–refugee relationships. We have observed that our refugee respondents largely perceive sponsor–refugee relations as master–dependant relations: they are underlined by a fundamental status difference, which makes friendship difficult. The situation is worsened by a lack of clear definitions of the roles and obligations of both parties and the ambiguity about the concept of sponsorship in general. Our refugee respondents' suspicions of their sponsors' motivations, whether the sponsors are a government or church organisation or a private group of families or individuals, are not dealt with at the onset of the sponsor–refugee relationships and seem to have been further complicated as the relationships proceed. We have found that our refugee respondents would suddenly decrease the frequency and intensity of their interactions with their sponsors, which probably frustrated a good number of well-intended sponsors.

Our study also focused on the refugees' patterns of help-seeking behaviour. Several interesting findings emerged. Indochinese refugees invariably sought help from community and social service agencies within the Chinese community in Montreal, and from friends, relatives and neighbours, which together form an ethnic enclave they have begun to see themselves as part of. When asked which agencies or institutions they had sought help from since their arrival in Canada, they repeatedly mentioned three Chinese community organisations, while their knowledge of other agencies and institutions with a mandate to aid refugees was vague or non-existent. The result is that the few agencies in the Chinese com-

munity either have their resources overtaxed whenever there is a sudden influx of refugees into the city or are asked for services they cannot provide. Considering the amount of attention given to the South-east Asian refugees by mass media and various governmental departments since the Hai Hong episode, the fact that there is a seemingly unbridgeable gulf between public institutions as service agencies and refugees as clients is a disturbing finding.

All our respondents, irrespective of age, sex or marital status, indicated that they have benefited from their French classes in one way or another; they were regretful when they could not continue in language classes either because of schedule conflicts with their work or simply because they were worn out physically and mentally after work. When forced to choose between economic survival and learning a new language, the choice is obvious but also frustrating.

Our study has also detected a couple of cases in which refugees aged fifty and over were suffering from mental health problems traceable to their inability to come to terms with material loss or with the death of or separation from loved ones. We would expect to find a higher incidence of mental illness and maladjustment within the larger refugee population had we attempted to identify the 'loners' or survivors who have left or lost their family members in Vietnam.

8 Voluntary associations and ethnic boundaries

According to a 1979 estimate by Willmott (1980), there were 10 million Chinese in various countries of South-east Asia and about two million in the region of Indochina. With more than a million in Vietnam, they accounted for only 3 per cent of the country's total population, and the vast majority of them lived in southern Vietnam, mostly in Saigon. Numbering more than 400,000 in 1970 (Duiker 1983), the Chinese represented 6.8 per cent of the total population of Cambodia, and they were descendants of settlers who came to South-east Asia from the southern coastal provinces of China several centuries ago. Owing to factors such as slow economic and commercial development, lack of seaboard and the inconvenience of internal communications, Laos had the smallest population of Chinese, estimated at 30,000 in 1958 (Purcell 1965).

The two million Chinese in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were ethnic minority groups despite their dominant economic position in the region. For centuries, the Chinese in Indochina had been middlemen, specialising in the trade of manufactured goods and local agricultural produce (Willmott 1980). The basis of Chinese trade was rice, spices, retailing and import–export. Field research done in 1962–63 in Cambodia (Willmott 1980) found that eight out of the ten big import–export companies were Chinese, and some 95 per cent of the internal trade was in Chinese hands. Furthermore, 99 per cent of the 3,500 privately owned industrial firms were Chinese, representing about 90 per cent of total private capital investment. The Chinese had thus developed a strong leaning towards a culture of commerce and a trade mentality that marked them as distinct from the indigenous Indochinese populations. It was said that every Chinese in Indochina aspired to own a trade, and many did; but their economic predominance contrasted dramatically with their virtual exclusion from political power, which put them in a precarious position, highly vulnerable to discrimination and political persecution.

The fact that the Chinese in Indochina were more likely to be Confucianists than Buddhists, whereas people in much of South-east Asia (except Vietnam) had adopted the Indian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, has contributed considerably to the socio-cultural separation of the Chinese from their host countries. Escaping from famines, poverty and political unrest in the southern provinces of China during the colonial period (1800–1945) and after the Second World War,

the Chinese came to the Nanyang (the Chinese term for South-east Asia, meaning 'South Sea') to make money that they could send back to China. A system of complex and interlocking Chinese voluntary organisations based on a common locality or surname quickly proliferated, making self-protection and mutual aid possible among the Chinese sojourners (Chan 1983; Chan and Lam 1983). These networks of organisations became the cornerstones of largely self-sufficient, self-governing and autonomous Chinese communities throughout South-east Asia, reinforcing their separation from the host societies of the region.

Before 1975, leaders of the local Sino-Indochinese communities estimated that there were fewer than 100 Chinese from Indochina in Montreal, and many of them were university students. Between 1975 and 1978, Canada took in 9,060 Indochinese refugees through the Special Vietnamese and Cambodian Programme. In 1979–1980, through the Indochinese Refugee Programme, a total of 60,049 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were resettled in Canada (Employment and Immigration Canada 1982: 32). The Canada census of 1981 recorded (by place of birth) 11,345 Vietnamese in Quebec, 3,370 Cambodians and 2,445 Laotians, making a total of 17,160 Indochinese in the province (Statistics Canada 1981). It was estimated that just over 30 per cent of these 17,160 Indochinese were Chinese by ethnic origin.

As in other major metropolitan areas in Canada, the Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians and Chinese from Indochina have, in the past 10 years since their arrival in Canada in 1975, established their own voluntary associations, thus slowly giving shape to four distinct and separate cultural communities. While the North American mass media continue to portray the Indochinese refugees as 'boat people', it is important to point out that, while the bulk of the 'boat people' were indeed refugees from Vietnam, the majority of those from Cambodia and Laos should more correctly be called 'land people' who took the land routes and ended up in refugee transit camps in Thailand.

Individual adaptation and community organisation

A few social scientists in Canada (Indra 1979b, 1980; Buchignani 1980; Woon 1985) have very quickly reacted to the overall ethnic labels (by the media and government officials) of 'boat people', 'Vietnamese refugees', 'Indochinese refugees' and 'South-east Asian refugees' by pointing out the regional, cultural and historical differences between the peoples of North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, as well as the Chinese from the three countries of Indochina. Sociologists of Chinese descent in Canada have focused on various aspects of the adaptation of the Chinese from Indochina (Siu 1980; Chan and Lam 1983; Chan 1984; Woon 1984, 1985).

North American research on the Indochinese refugees has been primarily concerned with the psychosocial and economic adaptation of the refugees during their initial phase of resettlement in the host country. The important research question has been: how are they coping, emotionally and occupationally? The focus has been on the degree and extent of economic success and social adjustment of the

refugees as individuals rather than as collective units. Attempts to examine how the Indochinese refugees organise (or fail to organise) themselves, on associational and community levels, to provide a collective and organised response to their individual needs have been scarce. This preferential attention to individuals rather than to social institutions may be due to at least two research assumptions. The first is that refugees, upon arrival in a culturally different host society, often function first and foremost as individuals, and are preoccupied with their own emotional and economic needs – they struggle for survival and economic self-sufficiency. The second assumption, related to the first, is based on a scholarly perception that casts the Indochinese refugees as new ethnic groups who are in their initial phase of organisational and community development, a phase in which individuals have only very recently begun to immerse themselves in organised social collectives. Both assumptions have failed to take into account two important premigration characteristics of, in this case, the Chinese from Indochina: first, the high degree of rootedness and embeddedness of the Chinese in family and kin networks and in their own communities; and, second, the predominant need of the Chinese to belong to a community to develop a sense of ethnic identity (Chan 1984). Attempts at understanding the maintenance of ethnic identity and ethnic boundaries on the group level (Barth 1970; Indra 1980; Woon 1985) not only serve to shift attention away from individual adaptation, but also help to focus research attention on the relationship between pre- and post-migration characteristics, on the refugees' need to belong to a community (Weinberg 1961) and on differences within and between various ethnic groups from Indochina. In her case study of the Sino-Vietnamese in Victoria, British Columbia, Woon (1985) argues that such subjective sentiments as emotional needs for self-esteem, a sense of identification with the past and the need to belong are fundamental to understanding how the Chinese establish group boundaries and set themselves apart from other ethnic groups in the host society.

The study and the sample

This chapter is a report on a study of the history of the establishment and maintenance of voluntary associations among the Chinese from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, focusing on historical as well as structural factors associated with attempts by leaders of the three communities to organise their own people. The study also examines how the three communities went about constructing and maintaining ethnic boundaries while making transactions among themselves, with the local Chinese community and with the external milieu.

The data of this study, collected in 1985, were based on in-depth individual and group interviews with twenty adult males who were past or current directors of the boards of three voluntary associations established by the Chinese from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. These data were supplemented by additional interviews with six informants, two from each of the three communities. Lasting about three hours, all except two interviews were conducted in Cantonese, a dialect either spoken or understood by most Chinese from Indochina.

The Chinese from Vietnam

In Montreal, a small group of Chinese students from Vietnam then attending the city's French and English universities responded in 1978 to the media's graphic portrayal of the Hai Hong episode and met at Wing's Noodles[1] to set up the 'Group of Sino-Vietnamese Volunteers'. The group consisted of fifteen persons, mostly university students or recent graduates; its objective was to help the city's newly arrived Sino-Vietnamese refugees in their resettlement.

Without a formal organisational structure of its own and lacking understanding of the social service delivery system in the city, the group turned to the three then newly established community service agencies in the Chinese community for consultation, resources and leadership. Several members of the group soon joined the board of directors of one of the agencies, The Chinese Family Service of Greater Montreal, located in the heart of Montreal's Chinatown, which consequently spearheaded a series of front-line, first-aid refugee resettlement programmes. These programmes included receiving incoming refugees at the Mirabel International Airport, directly sponsoring refugee families then sojourning in Indonesian camps, escorting new arrivals around the city and translating and interpreting for them. In the winter of 1981, the group, pulling together its own financial and human resources, published its first directory, the *Annuaire des Sino-Vietnamiens au Québec, Canada*. Relying on personal referrals and a snowballing technique, the group was able to compile listings of persons of Chinese origin from Indochina (mostly from North and South Vietnam). As stated in the directory's first edition, its objective was to facilitate the speedy reunion of family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances otherwise scattered and dispersed by the sudden flight from Indochina. The directory has been updated and published annually; the number of listings has increased from 200 in its 1981 edition to 770 in 1984. The entry of these Sino-Vietnamese university students and recent graduates to the board of the Chinese Family Service has helped redefine the agency's working priorities. The immediate availability of federal and provincial funds for resettlement and adaptation of Indochinese refugees has shifted the agency's priorities from the socially disadvantaged in the local Chinese community to the Indochinese refugees, particularly those of Chinese origin. Also, as a result of this active involvement in the resettlement of Indochinese refugees, the agency, with extra, special funding from the government, has actually increased its staff, extended its contacts with other pertinent constituencies within the mainstream social service system, enhanced its organisational visibility and credibility and, perhaps most importantly, achieved an identity that the agency's board of directors had been searching for since its inauguration.

By 1983, all three social service agencies (Chinese Family Service, Chinese Neighborhood Society and Chinese Volunteers' Association) in the Chinese community of Montreal had been very much involved in delivering refugee resettlement and adaptation services. With a grant from Employment and Immigration Canada, three board members of the Chinese Family Service (one of whom was the pioneering member of the 'Group of Sino-Vietnamese Volunteers') worked

jointly with leaders of Montreal's Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian communities to create the Service des interprètes auprès des réfugiés indochinois (SIARI) to meet the increasing demand for front-line refugee settlement services. With a board of directors consisting of representatives from the four Indochinese communities in Montreal and a staff proficient in various Indochinese native languages and in French and English, SIARI played the role of alleviating the workload of existing voluntary agencies in both the indigenous immigrant communities and the city's social services system.

Models of organisation and intergenerational conflict

Among the Sino-Vietnamese refugees in Montreal was a class of elderly persons, formerly merchant elite and leaders of the Chinese community in Saigon, who in 1980 began to hold banquets in Chinatown restaurants to reunite with lost friends and relatives, meet new people and re-create the feelings of community and neighbourliness. At their peak, such banquets would attract 1,000 people in a single evening, which seemed to begin the process of transplanting the lost Sino-Vietnamese community in Saigon to Montreal. The original 'Group of Sino-Vietnamese Volunteers', while continuing their refugee relief work, contributed much to the consolidation of the community's organisational skeleton by working jointly with this class of elderly merchant elite. Between 1980 and 1983, a number of community-oriented, folkloric activities were sponsored as a result of this joint effort. There were celebrations of the Chinese New Year and the Autumn Moon Festival, in addition to regular events such as outings to cities outside the province, picnics and cultural evenings. The accent of these activities seemed to be on preserving a cultural heritage, a way of life, a shared experience of having been politically persecuted and subsequently forced to leave Vietnam.

There were at least two models of community development at work. One model was favoured by the original Group of Sino-Vietnamese Volunteers, which advocated a more temporary organisational structure created to respond to a particular need or crisis and disbanded when the need had been met or the crisis had been resolved. The other model, favoured by the elderly, formerly merchant class promoted the establishment and nurturing of a permanent organisational structure capable of adapting and responding to the emerging needs of the Sino-Vietnamese community in Montreal and Quebec. The conflict and tension between the two organisational models was due to very different beliefs. The temporary model enjoyed organisational adaptability, flexibility and freedom from bureaucratic and status position constraints typical of permanent organisations. The model was underpinned first by a dislike of duplicating services provided by the other social service agencies in the Chinese community and, second, by a desire to integrate the Sino-Vietnamese and, eventually, all Indochinese of Chinese descent into the city's Chinese community. The permanent model opted for organisational autonomy and freedom from other Chinese organisations, a necessary condition for safeguarding a separate, distinct identity and heritage.

In February 1983, the elderly merchant class seemed to have prevailed, and the outcome was the official disbanding of the voluntary youth group and the setting up of the Sino-Vietnamese Sports and Recreation Center in Chinatown. In March, a public forum in the Center examined the need to further organise the Sino-Vietnamese in Montreal; this resulted in the creation of a twenty-person task force charged with drafting a constitution for the organisation and recruiting candidates for a general election. Within three months, a forty-member board of directors was elected. In June, the Center was officially registered with the Government of Quebec as the Association des Chinois du Vietnam Montréal.

There were several ways in which the organisational structure of the Association modelled those of the Chinese community in Saigon. One was the distinction between the thirty-one board members in direct, executive roles and those of the other nine in monitoring and supervisory roles; the other was the division of organisational activities and events into five categories: welfare, sports, recreation, public relations and general affairs.

An analysis of the activities sponsored by the Association since its creation in 1983 indicates a preoccupation with catering to the different socio-emotional and cultural needs of the two generations: table tennis, soccer, basketball, dance and disco parties and folkloric performances for the younger generation, and chess and card games, mahjong, picnics, outings and Chinese dinner gatherings for the elderly. In terms of actual functions and activities, the Association operated no differently from its predecessor, the Center. While it was their desire to self-organise so that they would be in a strong position to continue to offer services to the Sino-Vietnamese community, as well as to maintain and nurture their cultural heritage, the actual scarcity of functions and events towards these ends seemed to reflect the internal problems of the Association.

The Group of Sino-Vietnamese Volunteers, which was at the forefront in assisting the resettlement of refugees in 1980, was made up of young university students, recent university graduates and professionals. They had been in Quebec before 1975 and the 'boat people' phenomenon and were proficient in Canada's two official languages. They were capable of organising the community and communicating with the governments and the mainstream social service system. They seemed to favour a mode of operation whereby the group would disband upon the resolution of the refugee resettlement crisis. This group then came into conflict with a class of older Chinese men, most of whom were former businessmen who had been influential in the Chinese communities in Saigon before 1975. These men felt a strong need to rebuild in Montreal their lost community, and one important step in this direction was to establish a long-standing organisation with a structure that would be autonomous and relatively free from external constraints. The conflict and tension between these two incompatible models of community organisation underlined the relationship between the two generations.

In the Chinese community of Saigon, successful business entrepreneurs were often expected to contribute to the Chinese community by taking on executive or honorary positions in key community organisations (Chan 1983). Often, this com-

munity expectation was translated into a moral matter in that there was an obligation on the part of the entrepreneurs to repay the community from their economic gains, and any refusal to do so would be looked upon as an act of selfishness. The entrepreneurs were usually more than happy to oblige. It was also customary that those who had contributed the most financially occupied influential positions in the community's major organisations. The president or chairman of a community organisation had usually made the largest donation.

Within the Association in Montreal, due perhaps more to circumstances than to choice, an interesting division of labour emerged. The older generation concentrated on raising funds by soliciting donations from the rapidly increasing numbers of owners of grocery stores, arts and crafts stores and restaurants, and professionals, while the younger generation, with their education and language skills, took on the role of interacting with the governments and constituencies external to the community. Handicapped by deficiency in language skills, the elderly, in spite of their strategic fund-raising roles, found themselves dependent on the young people and often resented it. These feelings were compounded by their lamentation over the demise of the traditional practice back in Vietnam, which respected the elderly and recognised financial power as the sole determining attribute of community leadership. The young people in the organisation considered that leadership should be given to those who could manage the transactions between organisations and communities. In the North American context, these are often 'cultural and political brokerage skills', dependent upon education and language competence. As a result of this different emphasis between the two generations, no leader could be regarded as legitimate by both generations.

The two generations have not reached a consensus on the current or future needs of the Sino-Vietnamese community. The preoccupation of the Association with sports and recreational activities (upon the initiative of some younger members of the executive) was criticised by the older members as superficial, narrow-minded and neglectful of the psychological and emotional needs of the elderly. Their preference was for the organisation to develop into a full-fledged community-based social agency offering a comprehensive range of cultural, social and legal services, a goal that seems unrealistic given the limited financial strength of the organisation.

Transactions with external organisations and communities

It is very explicitly stated in the constitution of the Association that it is non-political and non-religious in nature; the organisation's participation in federal, provincial and municipal politics has hitherto been virtually non-existent. However, the non-participatory stand of the organisation seems to have more to do with the relative instability of the organisation, as well as a lack of understanding of Canadian politics, than with political apathy or indifference, as was traditionally the case among the Chinese in South-east Asia. As a matter of fact, there has been considerable explicit public expression by both the young and old members of the

Association about the importance of involving themselves in the host country's politics and public affairs.

Lacking a permanent, professionally trained staff to supply social and community services, the organisation continues to make referrals to the three social service agencies within the Chinese community, particularly the Chinese Family Service because of its physical proximity. Consistent with its commitment to political neutrality, the organisation has been particularly cautious in its stance towards the long-standing political duality of pro-communist and pro-nationalist affiliations within the local Chinese community. On the other hand, given the fact that the large majority of Sino-Vietnamese in Quebec were once victims of political and/or economic persecution by the communist regime, there seems to be, especially among the older generation, an implicit but strong sentiment of anti-communism as well as a leaning towards the nationalist government of Taiwan. Such political sentiments are less clearcut among the younger generation.

While the Association has only minimal and superficial contact with other organisations within the local Chinese community, it also has very little to do with those in the city's Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian communities. Selected executive members of the Association occasionally attend their festive events, and there have been reports that a handful of elderly Sino-Vietnamese have been regularly participating in gatherings organised by the elderly club of the Vietnamese community. Emotionally, they do not differentiate between the Vietnamese in Quebec and the Vietnamese communist government that persecuted them and made them into refugees, which might explain the continuation of a social distance between the Vietnamese and the Sino-Vietnamese communities on both individual and organisational levels.

The Chinese from Cambodia

In 1979, like the Group of Sino-Vietnamese Volunteers, about twenty students of Chinese descent from Cambodia, who were then studying in Montreal universities, formed a temporary group to aid in the resettlement of incoming Chinese refugees from Cambodia. The accent of the group's work was on introducing the refugees to Canadian and Québécois lifestyles. By late 1980 and early 1981, this group of university volunteers was joined by about twenty older refugees who were mostly former merchants, restaurant owners, teachers, school administrators and small business owners with considerable experience and expertise in community service within the Chinese community in Cambodia and who were sensitive to the cultural and psychological needs of an ethnic minority, whether in Cambodia or in Quebec.

Three years after the initial shock of resettlement, the refugees felt the need to reunite globally scattered relatives, friends, acquaintances and neighbours, and the expanded core group of university students and refugee volunteers created the Union des Chinois du Cambodge au Canada (UCCC) in early 1981. In December of the same year, they published the first edition of a directory of about 400 persons who had resettled within and outside Canada.

With sporadic donations from the Chinese refugees from Cambodia and a major financial contribution from a second-generation Chinese grocery store owner from mainland China, the UCCC opened an office in Chinatown in 1982. In late 1983, with small, short-term grants from the federal government's job creation programme and private donations, the UCCC hired two full-time workers, who were versed in Canada's two official languages and various Chinese dialects, to provide a range of community services.

Between 1983 and 1985, the UCCC's commitment to providing community services was severely curtailed by the termination of government funding. Without a full-time staff, the organisation consciously took on a social and cultural orientation, focusing on Chinese language classes, sports and recreational events, cultural and musical evenings and the celebration of a few major Chinese festivals. Since 1983, with free access to weekend classroom space in the Chinese Catholic church in Chinatown, volunteer teachers have been offering Mandarin language classes to about 200 children and adolescents from Cambodian Chinese refugee families.

Elimination of elite and leadership vacuum

Following a model typical of most community service organisations in the Chinese communities in South-east Asia, the UCCC's board of directors undertakes five disstinct categories of functions: welfare, sports, recreation, public relations and general affairs.

It has been estimated that a large majority of the Chinese from Cambodia, unlike those from Vietnam (many of whom were from Saigon), were originally from rural villages and small, provincial towns. Chinese Cambodians from Phnom Penh, the capital city, invariably came from the upper, wealthy class, were more educated and skilled and were either killed in Cambodia or resettled in France or other European countries. Despite the dramatised media portrayal of the 'boat people', the Cambodian Chinese believe they have suffered and lost more, both economically and psychologically, than the Sino-Vietnamese.

The Cambodian refugees believed that the communist regime in Cambodia since 1975 had obliterated much of that society's economic and intellectual elite; the virtual absence of an intellectual elite and a merchant class in Canada seems to have serious implications for the future development of the Chinese Cambodian community. Out of the twenty directors on the UCCC's board, only five have an elementary command of the English and French languages, and none seems to have the necessary experience and resources to perform the cultural and political brokering for the organisation or the community.

Bringing people together and social distancing

Between 1982 and 1985, the UCCC published three annual editions of their directory, increasing from 400 to 700 names and addresses in North America and Europe. To a considerable extent, the publication of the directory reflects a con-

tinuing need for reunification with familiar and significant others, a need that the board of directors of the UCCC has felt obliged and proud to meet. It cannot be overemphasised that this need for reunification has long-term implications towards rebuilding a lost community in an international context. From an organisational standpoint, such measures signal a first step towards the development of immigrant communities in the host societies.

The UCCC, being thus far the only formal organisation among the Chinese from Cambodia in Montreal, as well as in Quebec, has been maintaining a low-profile, non-participatory and inward-looking stance as far as transactions with other community agencies and organisations are concerned. Without a full-time staff to deliver direct community services to its own people, the UCCC, often with reluctance, continues to refer its own clients to the three service agencies in the Chinese community, and this is the extent of its relations with these organisations. The UCCC's cautious transactions with the politics of Chinatown allow them to maintain considerable social distance from the institutional infrastructure of the Chinese community in Montreal. Such purposeful isolation may well be integral to developing and nurturing a distinct organisational identity.

In the city of Montreal, there are several organisations run by and for native Cambodians, which have sponsored social and cultural activities since their establishment in 1979. The few members on the board of the UCCC have at best maintained a casual and superficial relationship with the other organisation; they respond to each other's invitations to such public functions as banquets, festive celebrations and annual organisational assemblies.

While continuing to identify themselves as ethnic Chinese both in Cambodia and in Quebec and Canada, the Chinese from Cambodia, as victims of political and economic persecution, often harbour covert feelings of resentment and distrust towards the native Cambodian refugees. These feelings stem from a reluctance to differentiate and separate the communist regime in Cambodia from the native Cambodian people in general.

The Chinese from Laos

Unlike their counterparts from Vietnam and Cambodia, who have been able to set up offices for their associations within years of their arrival in Montreal, the small group of four or five active organisers from Laos, known as the Association des Chinois du Laos à Montréal (ACLM), have been rotating their business meetings since 1981 between their own homes, because of lack of funds. Although not yet officially registered as an association, this group of volunteers has made continuous efforts to assemble Chinese compatriots from various parts of Quebec and as far away as Ottawa and Toronto for picnics, dinners, dancing parties and basketball games. Major Chinese holidays such as the New Year and the Autumn Moon Festival have provided them with occasions to celebrate with kindred spirits.

Since 1982, with the intention of publishing their first directory, the ACLM has been collecting the names, addresses and telephone numbers of Chinese from Laos who are in Quebec, the rest of Canada, the US and European countries. The

older generation seem to have supplied much of the organisational initiative and energy, which the youth respond to with enthusiasm. This group has not shown the intergenerational rivalry that was found in the Sino-Vietnamese group.

Like the Chinese from Vietnam and Cambodia, the ACLM would like to set up an office in Chinatown, to be near the Chinese community and its institutional network. The awareness that agencies within the Chinese community should not duplicate each other's functions and services has kept the Association from running Chinese language classes for their children, who for years have gone to a weekend Chinese language school run by Chinese teachers from Taiwan and Hong Kong.

In general, the few executive members of the ACLM seem to have only limited knowledge and understanding of the history, organisational structure and operational dynamics of the institutional infrastructure of the Chinese community in Montreal; as a result, they have been essentially uninvolved and non-participatory in the latter's affairs. Their transactions with the one community service agency in Chinatown, the Chinese Family Service, remain making referrals to them of Chinese clients from Laos. Sometimes, only the elderly members of the Laotian Chinese community would participate in functions organised by the elderly native Laotians, because of cultural incompatibility and general distrust; the ACLM rarely attends formal public functions of the Laotian organisations. Neither has the ACLM been actively involved in public affairs and activities in the larger Montreal community, and it seems that the ACLM is content to maintain its isolation.

In comparing themselves with their Sino-Vietnamese counterpart, the ACLM is quite aware that its own community is smaller and lacks financial and leadership resources. However, the organisation seems to be contented with its rate of evolution, which may be slow, but is steady, following a clear path.

On the other hand, the ACLM's lack of political and cultural brokering skills will continue to limit its access to governmental funding, which in turn will hamper its future financial growth. Its lack of understanding of the social service system in the mainstream society means that the Association can only make referrals to the already overloaded social agencies within the Chinese community. The lack of knowledge of the emerging and changing needs of the Chinese people from Laos perhaps, to a considerable extent, explains the absence of both short- and long-term planning on the part of the ACLM.

Like the Chinese elite in Cambodia and, to a lesser extent, in Vietnam, the elite of the Chinese community in Laos was made up mainly of merchants and businessmen, as well as a small representation of school teachers and newspapermen. What was conspicuously absent from such an elite were skilled technical people and middle-class professionals, due to long-standing Laotian policies limiting Chinese entry into professional training programmes and, consequently, into the professions. This resulted in a Chinese elite class of merchants dominating the affairs and politics of the Chinese community in Laos.

These Chinese businessmen and merchants, speaking neither English nor French, knowing very little of the workings of the public and government institu-

tional networks of the host society, and lacking skills and resources in mediating the transactions between their own community and the surrounding milieu, have found themselves in a weak position. Only one executive member of the ACLM has a rudimentary command of the English and French languages, and none seems to know how the city's social service system is organised; neither do they seem to know what government programmes are available for their own community.

Ethnicity, social distance and refugee status

For decades, the Chinese in Indochina have been identifying themselves, as well as being identified by both the Indochinese governments and the native peoples, as Chinese, Chinese nationals or ethnic Chinese sojourning in a host society. Thus, they also distinguish themselves from the offspring of Chinese who have intermarried with the indigenous people of South-east Asia. Known in Cambodia as Sino-Cambodians, Sino-Khmer or metis, most of these half-Chinese have been assimilated into Khmer society and rarely speak Chinese dialects or participate in the local Chinese communities.

The Chinese in Indochina have organised themselves into five communities called *bangs*, in accordance with their dialect and/or province of origin: Teochiu, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka and Hokkien or Fukienese. Called *congrégation* in French to designate and identify a body of Chinese embraced by a language or speech group from a specific province of origin, the term *bang* owed its origin to the Vietnamese government as far back as 1802, which ordered the Chinese to create *bangs* to self-govern, mediate internal disputes and assist the government in implementing laws and collecting taxes. In the past forty years, the Chinese in Vietnam, with little financial help from the government, created and financed within the five *bangs* their own family and clan associations, mutual aid societies, sports clubs, professional groups, schools and hospitals. It was customary for the Chinese merchant elite to occupy strategic positions in these voluntary associations. Under the overall organising principle of 'Chineseness' or being Chinese in a host society, these *bangs* together constituted the larger ethnic entity known as the 'Chinese community'. The idea of being Chinese contributed to the solidarity among and mutual co-operation between the five *bangs*, and a willingness to settle among themselves inter-*bang* rivalry and disputes.

The term *bang* also corresponds to a different but identically pronounced Chinese word that the Chinese in Indochina use to identify their country of origin. Thus, within Indochina, the Chinese differentiate themselves into three *bangs*: one from Vietnam, one from Cambodia and one from Laos. It is on the basis of at least three different sources of ethnic identification (language or dialect, province of origin and country of origin other than China) that an overseas Chinese constructs his or her identity. In a broad sociological sense, the Chinese in Indochina are far from being a homogeneous group.

While the experience of being a refugee has served to attenuate, at least temporarily, many of the economic, cultural, provincial and linguistic differences among the Chinese from the three countries of Indochina by casting each and every one

of them into the singular status of an Indochinese refugee, it seems to have had little effect on how they identify and organise themselves. Chinese from different parts of Indochina continue to establish separately their own organisations and immigrant communities. Within less than five years of their arrival in Montreal, the Chinese have created the ACVM, the UCCC and the ACLM, and have been working relatively independently from each other. Apart from attending each other's public gatherings, such as annual meetings, banquets and celebrations, the relations between thesse three organisations remain at best polite and superficial.

Within the ACVM and, to a considerably lesser extent, the UCCC, rivalry for leadership between older members of the Teochiu and the Cantonese *bangs* was rather intense during the early phase of development. The disputes focused on whether members of one *bang* or another had better organisational skills and financial resources. In the UCCC, the board found it necessary to reaffirm, both to themselves and to their members, the importance of their common origin from China over and above allegiance to the five *bangs*. Incidentally, there does not seem to be evidence of a similar conflict among refugees from Laos. The ACVM, while marked by intense organisational tension since its pioneering years as a result of intergenerational and inter-*bang* conflicts, appears to be the most developed and best organised of the three associations. Compared with the other two associations, the ACVM has, in the younger members of its board, more abilities and resources for community organisation and for interacting with external constituencies. While the ACVM in the past three years has already participated in the institutional infrastructure of the Chinese community, the UCCC seems to be in considerable difficulty due to financial and human resources constraints. In a pure, absolute sense, the ACLM, without a constitution, an office as a base of operation and a publicly recognised board and staff, is not an association yet, and its lack of financial and human resources continue to constrain its organisational development.

From the standpoint of the Québécois as well as the local Chinese community, the Chinese from the three countries of Indochina are first refugees or boat people and, second, Indochinese. These labels, constructed by others, bestow a sameness on all Chinese from Indochina, and it is within this framework that their relations with both the local Chinese community and the larger Québécois society are constructed and managed. Although the Chinese from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos have a greater cultural, temperamental, geographical and historical affinity with each other than with the local Chinese community in Montreal, they do not appreciate being thrown into a single ethnic pot.

Towards an 'association of associations'

The common lot of being Chinese from Indochina and having been refugees may serve to unify these people in the long run, in spite of the speech, provincial and national differences that have divided them for more than a century. The Chinese have two expressions that describe their situation very well: 'Help each other

while in the same boat' and 'Be together while in the same crisis'. Both expressions advocate reciprocity and shared sentiments as means of coping with crisis.

In the past two years, during regular board meetings within all three associations, there have been indications of a desire to build an amalgamation or union of the three associations. At least two meetings between the ACVM and the UCCC were held expressly towards this end.[2] It is quite obvious that these discussions were guided by a recognition of the mutual benefits of a union, such as increased political and bargaining power during negotiations with external constituencies for status and funding, avoidance of duplication of services and functions, reduction in organisational overhead and other administrative costs and possibly eventual improvement in organisational effectiveness and financial well-being as a result of pooling resources. Nevertheless, the pathway to union is not without obstacles. The ACVM, being a more visible, better developed and more mature organisation serving a much larger community, has been quite hesitant in sharing its existing skills and resources with the other two developing associations, particularly the ACLM. This reluctance of the ACVM to join forces parallels an equally strong ambivalence of the UCCC and ACLM, to whom such a collective union could mean their subordination to the ACVM and eventual loss of autonomy. In a union of such a nature, the strong party is fearful of having to share its resources with the weak ones, and one way to handle this is to ensure that it has a major share of authority in the union. Merging with the strong party, the weak party is equally fearful of losing autonomy. It is for these reasons that the three associations have not progressed beyond the exploratory stage. It may be that 'being in the same boat facing the same crisis' is not enough to unite the three associations and the three peoples.

Summary and conclusion

Within ten years of their arrival in Montreal, the Chinese from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos have each established a voluntary association dedicated to reunifying scattered family and friends, building a sense of community, providing community services, aiding in refugee resettlement and adaptation and preserving their cultural heritage and ethnic identity. The development of these three associations has been handicapped by factors directly associated with the refugee status of their people. The virtual obliteration of the Chinese merchant elite class in Indochina since 1979, as a result of either political and economic persecution by the communist regimes, has, so to speak, removed the 'cream of the crop' of the overseas Chinese refugee communities. This historical incident has resulted in a real leadership vacuum, a problem persisting for almost a decade in the three communities of Chinese from Indochina. Among those Chinese refugees resettled in the host society, few seem to possess the physical and emotional resources to devote themselves to ethnic group development. Invariably, they are preoccupied with locating lost family members, saving money to send to family or relatives in refugee transit camps or at home, and economic and social adaptation to the

host country. The continued economic marginality and dependence of the Chinese refugees themselves is therefore closely intertwined with the lack of financial well-being in all three associations in the Sino-Indochinese communities. As far as the associations are concerned, this economic precariousness seems likely to continue for at least another decade.

Other characteristics associated with refugee status have hampered the development of the three Sino-Indochinese communities. These include deficiencies in both official Canadian languages and lack of brokering skills and resources among the communities' few emerging leaders. This has had immediate and long-term consequences, constraining their interactions with the governmental bureaucracy and the social service system in the mainstream society. Their inability to make transactions with the milieu is an important reason for the social distance between the Sino-Indochinese communities and the host society.

In the Sino-Vietnamese community, the older and younger generations became rivals for power in the initial phase of community development. Now, they need to resolve conflicts between two contrasting modes of organisation: an 'old' traditional model imported from the Chinese community in Saigon, which stresses organisational and community separation, autonomy, preservation of the cultural heritage and a leadership premised on age-related seniority and respect for tradition and the elderly; and a 'modernist' model, which stresses integration, social and political participation, and a leadership based on competence and eagerness to interact with governmental and public institutions of the mainstream society.

The three Chinese associations have not only maintained considerable social distance from the public institutions in the mainstream society, from the local Chinese community, and from the three Indochinese communities, but their transactions between themselves have remained minimal. This social separation may be partly due to a deficiency in organisational resources (an involuntary factor) and partly to a need on the part of the leaders of the three associations to maximise organisational autonomy and minimise external interference (a voluntary factor). Seen in this light, the rational benefits of an 'association of associations' do not seem to be attractive enough to overwhelm a basic need 'to be able to do their own things in their own ways'.

Underlying the sentiment of an 'association of associations' is the expression of an ideal, on the part of the leaders of all three associations, that all Chinese in Montreal, and eventually in Canada, be united into a common front. This sentiment of ethnic solidarity is consistent with setting up offices in Chinatown, and with having a considerably higher rate of participation in the local Chinese community than in the mainstream society. Although the Chinese from the three countries of Indochina have identified themselves with Chinatown and the local Chinese community, this does not mask their desire for separation from the local Chinese community, and from each other. This comparative study of the history of the development of the three Sino-Indochinese refugee communities in Montreal thus points to the importance of weighing and balancing subjective and objective factors, voluntary and involuntary forces, ideals and realities in our search for an understanding of ethnic groups, ethnicity and ethnic identification.

Like the other immigrants who have been here earlier, the leaders of these three Sino-Indochinese refugee communities are not without ambivalence while facing the dilemmas of tradition and change, separation and integration, cultural autonomy and assimilation. The three associations, handicapped by their lack of financial and personnel resources, have chosen to nurture the need of belonging to a community. The accent has clearly been on family reunification, on 'bringing people together' and on rebuilding a sense of community.

9 The many faces of immigrant business

The literature on ethnic or immigrant entrepreneurship[1], an increasingly popular subfield in race and ethnic relations, grew out of a larger concern with economic achievement and mobility of immigrants and racial minorities in advanced industrial societies. Two observations from these analyses emerged: first, the confinement of immigrants and minorities to the secondary labour market, and their subjection to what economists call 'superexploitation' (Hill 1980); second, the disproportionately high representation of foreign-born persons among the self-employed. In the former observation, immigrants, on the basis of ethnicity or race, suffer from blocked opportunity or, simply, a racial disadvantage. In the latter case, the somewhat contrary suggestion is that migration and immigration give immigrants a sociological advantage in the form of an internal ethnic cohesiveness and collectivism, which appears to be conducive to doing business. These two observations of course are not unrelated to each other. Faced with a disadvantage, immigrants may turn it into an advantage; blocked opportunity opens up new, alternative opportunities. Precluded from entry into the mainstream capitalist economy, immigrants respond by creating their own capitalism (Portes 1981: 297). The greater the disadvantage, the greater the incentive for change (Light 1984: 198).

Right from the beginning, with the publication of Light's classic *Ethnic Enterprise in America* (1972), an upbeat and enthusiastic atmosphere has infused the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship. An edited volume, *Ethnic Communities in Business*, by Ward and Jenkins (1984), retains a similar spirit. The publication of *Ethnic Entrepreneurs: Immigrant Business in Industrial Societies* in 1990 by Waldinger *et al*., arguably the most wide-ranging, single-volume treatment of the subject to date by a study group of diverse interests and persuasions, has in its index fifty ethnic groups, including Asians, Cubans, Greeks and Jews. It is indeed one of the most active subjects in the twin fields of race and ethnic relations and international migration. In fact, substantively and theoretically speaking, the analysis of ethnic entrepreneurship marries the two fields.

Fusion of structure and culture

Sociological attempts to theorise about immigrant entrepreneurship have given rise to a rich conceptual language and vocabulary. One can classify these theories into two approaches: cultural and structural. The cultural approach focuses on the 'supply side' of entrepreneurship or ethnic resources internal and indigenous to the group concerned. Cultural values, such as a belief in solidarity, are invoked to start and to maintain ethnic business. Stressing how ethnicity itself is a resource that is being 'put to use', researchers following the cultural approach emphasise immigrants' 'ethnic advantage' in terms of ready access to start-up capital at rotating credit associations within an ethnic community, the supply of cheap, dependable, loyal family or co-ethnic labour, support and assistance from immigrant institutions for information about business type, size and location, and the ethnic norms and values that infuse employer–employee relations. Ethnic resources also include those distinct cultural and group characteristics that predispose and direct members of an ethnic group towards entrepreneurial activities in the host society. It is obvious to students of sociology that the transplanted culture thesis is essentially a variant of Weber's (1958) Protestant ethic hypothesis of capitalistic growth, which is not without its critics.

A structural explanation of the development and growth of ethnic entrepreneurship focuses on the contextual or external forces of society, the constraints and opportunities, the 'demand side' of entrepreneurship. Structural explanations attribute the emergence of ethnic enterprise to immigrants as a middleman minority (Loewen 1971; Bonacich 1973), filling in a status gap created by dominant and subordinate groups who desire little interaction between themselves but cannot do without it entirely. Li (1976, 1979) locates the structural determinants in the institutional racism that has historically restricted many opportunities for the Chinese in the core economy in Canada. To such a condition of blocked mobility, the Chinese responded by seeking and exploiting other possibilities in the opportunity structure, which are within the total context of social, economic and political forces. Integral to the opportunity structure are market conditions and government policies pertaining to immigration intake, taxes and ethnic business development. In addition, for any business to start, there must be a demand for the goods and services it offers. Some of the first immigrant businesses dealt in culinary and cultural products, serving their own ethnic group. Immigrants have tastes and preferences that cannot be met by the non-ethnic sector, thus the rise of businesses to fill an ethnic niche, itself a structural condition that immigrant businessmen are eager to exploit.

Another niche consists of markets that are underserved or abandoned by the majority business groups, thus leaving vacancies for the ethnic businessman to fill. A variant of the structural explanation, the ecological succession thesis (Aldrich 1975, 1980; Aldrich and Reiss 1976; Aldrich *et al*. 1985a), drawing upon the writings of Park (1936) and Burgess (1928), argues that openings for ethnic business emerge when the older, more established native business group in a residential area no longer reproduces itself fast enough, given a naturally high rate

of failure in small businesses — thus creating vacancies for nascent immigrant entrepreneurs, with one ethnic group after another replacing its predecessor and striving to generate whatever marginal profit is left.

In such markets, economies of scale are relatively low. Ethnic business people can maximise efficiency and profit by engaging in a strategy of self-exploitation: working longer, unsocial hours, offering year-long and personalised service and lowering prices. Barriers to entry into such markets are generally low – the setting up of small businesses, say a grocery store or a hand laundry, requires little start-up capital, small labour size and very little technical knowhow or training. Yet another niche in the general opportunity structure arises as a result of a demand among the majority population for exotic, ethnic goods and services – the immigrants thus seize the opportunity to market ethnic commodities and gradually begin to control a protected, captive market (Aldrich *et al*. 1985b).

In a desire to integrate culture with structure, ethnic resources with opportunity structure and 'supply' with 'demand', the interactive explanation emerged, based on a series of industry case studies in New York (Waldinger 1984, 1985) and several ethnic group studies (Ward 1983; Mars and Ward 1984). It argues that 'ethnic businesses proliferate in industries where there is a congruence between the demand of the economic environment and informal resources of the ethnic population' (Waldinger *et al*. 1985: 591). In this approach, the demand for business and the supply of skills and resources interact to produce ethnic entrepreneurship. The explanation was formulated to move beyond the culture versus structure debate, 'to recognise the artificiality of an either/or framework on whether culture or structure dictates the trajectory of socio-economic attainment' (Nee and Wong 1985: 284). When viewed historically, supply and demand, culture and structure are in a continuous dialectical exchange (Boissevain and Grotenbreg 1986), thus nullifying a sharp division between them. History articulates the dialectical interplay of culture and structure. The market for entrepreneurship having a demand and a supply side (Smelser 1976: 126), Light (1977: 475) concluded from his comparative study of the blacks and Chinese in the vice industry from 1880 to1940 that illegal enterprise, itself a type of entrepreneurial activity, is best viewed as a synthesis of illicit goods and services that the public wants to buy (demand), and what and how much disadvantaged ethnics intend to offer (supply). As Light puts it, 'demand does not, therefore, explain supply because provider culture, social organisation and demography intervene' (1977: 475). It is a more nuanced view that acknowledges that structure provides the context for opportunity, and also insists that culture in terms of group characteristics defines the manner in which supply is provided.

The idea of the fusion of culture and structure was anticipated by Yancey *et al*. (1976), who, in their formulation of the concept 'emergent ethnicity', argued that ethnicity is 'manufactured' in the host society rather than imported or transplanted wholesale from overseas. While immigrants do bring along an 'orthodox' culture with them that shapes their initial orientations and behaviours, it is the structural conditions in the local context that bear significantly on their long-term cultural and economic patterns (Hirschman 1982: 179), although these conditions

are mediated by culture and individual personality. In the long run, culture is rarely transplanted as is, but rather reproduced and produced, deconstructed and constructed, to exploit structural advantages as well as to adapt to structural constraints.

Turner and Bonacich's distinction between cultural and situational variables (1980: 145, 148) parallels Light's (1980: 34–6) distinction between reactive and orthodox cultural contexts of entrepreneurship. The often-observed and much-discussed internal solidarity of many immigrant groups – the so-called cornerstone of ethnic enterprise (Hraba 1979: 374) – is a reactive solidarity, a collective response to new contextual requirements. As Light puts it, 'Immigrants belong to a primary group which did not exist as such in their country of origin . . . a reactive solidarity which required alien status to liberate' (1984: 200). Emergent or reactive immigrant culture is culture adapted; it is 'culture fused with structure' *par excellence*.

A model that represents a more recent attempt to capture the interactive, adaptive and emergent character of immigrant entrepreneurship has been formulated by Waldinger *et al*. (1990). At the centre of the model are various ethnic strategies that result from the interaction between opportunity structure and ethnic group culture – ethnic entrepreneurs adapt to the constraints in the social structure and, building on their group characteristics, attempt to carve out their own niche. Implicit in such a model is a view of migration as an emancipatory process, a positive act (Park 1950: 147, 169; Wickramagamage 1992; Chan and Chiang 1994: 344), one that opens up potential opportunities for social mobility, for growth and development of the immigrants as individuals and as a group. The immigrants grapple with history and social structure, but embedded in their experience is a vast reservoir of resources and opportunities to be exploited. The migrant engages in what Giddens (1976) calls a 'dialectic of control' with history and social structure. What is emerging is thus a conception of the immigrant entrepreneur himself[2] and, with others of his kind, improvising and strategising in the context of the shifting balance of the dialectic of control among history, personality, ethnicity, race, gender, class and social structure. Integral to such a conception is the view that ethnic strategies are changing, dynamic and emergent but, most important of all, that they are social and collectivistic in nature (Waldinger *et al*. 1990: 131–56).

The two sides of ethnic entrepreneurship

While there has been a theoretical debate on the relative explanatory power of culture versus structure in the rise of ethnic entrepreneurship, there has been a corresponding empirical debate as to whether the reality is one of ethnic advantage (culture) or contextual disadvantage (structure). Has culture in fact overcome structure, ethnicity triumphed over constraint? In asking whether minority business development is in fact the much-heralded pathway to economic achievement and social mobility, Aldrich *et al*. (1984: 190) said that academic opinion 'seems

torn between two opposing views', 'two apparently irreconcilable images' in an 'intellectual schizophrenia'.

One image is that of ethnic advantage in terms of internal solidarity; ethnic businesses provide group members with 'the means for escaping minority status and gaining entry into the bourgeoisie' (Aldrich *et al*. 1984: 191). It is a success story played out in many an advanced industrial society, be it England, the USA or Canada. Another starkly contrasting image is one of racial disadvantage, of external and structural exclusion rather than internal and ethnic inclusion, whereby a virtual racial monopoly by the native whites of the mainstream economy continues to present obstacles that the immigrant entrepreneurs only appear to have overcome. While engaging in what they call 'an exercise in deglamorisation', Aldrich *et al*. (1984: 209) conclude that Asian business activity in Britain 'represents a truce with racial inequality rather than a victory over it'. Disguised by a surface gloss of ethnic self-determination (Jones 1979), the facade of Asian business success is little but a story of an exceptional minority within a minority, merely 'exchanging the role of marginal worker for that of marginal proprietor' (Aldrich *et al*. 1984: 209), but remaining marginal, dependent and vulnerable nevertheless.

There are at least two contributions from this 'deglamorisation exercise'. One is a much-delayed need to focus analytical attention on the real structural and structured barriers to ethnic enterprise, granted the initial journalistic and academic euphoria over its rise and success. The other contribution revolves around what Bonacich calls the cost of immigrant entrepreneurship (1988: 425–36) or the 'other side of ethnic entrepreneurship' (Bonacich 1993: 685–93).[3] In her study of the involvement of immigrants in the Parisian garment industry, Morokvasic (1987) offers the timely reminder that, for those not gainfully or advantageously employed, self-employment is merely a means of survival, a disguised unemployment. Relations between the minority entrepreneur and his compatriot workers are often based on fear, dependency and 'expected' employee loyalty – all of which lend themselves to oppression and exploitation (Bonacich 1993: 691; 1988: 431), especially of women's labour, as one of the few ways for immigrant entrepreneurs to accumulate capital (Morokvasic 1987: 453). Besides, native garment capitalists are more than eager to exploit the ambiguity and precariousness of the minority entrepreneur's status as an intermediary: they transfer their production risks and labour oppression to them (Bonacich 1993: 689). These intermediaries are intimately bound to the native capitalists 'not as their competitors, indeed, but as their dependants' – the minority entrepreneurs 'behave as if they had left the proletariat but have to accept a dependent status, *vis-à-vis* the true garment capitalists' (Morokvasic 1987: 460). In the end, it is the minority labour that must absorb much of the brunt of their intermediary employers' precariousness and instability. Morokvasic insists on calling the migrant labourer, not the immigrant entrepreneur, the cornerstone of the survival and revival of the garment industry in the metropolises of the advanced, industrial states.

Bonacich adds to her exposé of 'the other side' of immigrant entrepreneurship by arguing that minority self-employment rarely decreases but rather increases

inequality at the nation state, as well as the world, level. Yet a continued euphoria about the promise of immigrant entrepreneurship, to Bonacich, is itself lending ideological support to free enterprise capitalism. Holding up the few successful immigrant entrepreneurs as role models and even folk heroes seems to make the failures themselves responsible for their plight – in a deep sense, it blames the victims while hiding or denying racism and its role in perpetuating social inequality. The cost of immigrant entrepreneurship also lies in its 'unintended consequence' of the white establishment creating intergroup conflict along ethnic lines, of 'pitting them against each other in a "divide and rule" strategy', adds Bonacich, perhaps a bit overemphatically (1988: 433; 1993: 691).

Bonacich is not oblivious to other personal problems and dilemmas faced by the immigrant entrepreneurs either. She draws attention to the life of hard work and poor health that immigrants must endure: the long arduous hours of self-exploitation create family problems and cause marital breakdowns in the Korean community of the USA (Bonacich 1988: 431). Self-exploitation is a critical ethnic strategy for personal survival precisely because one can hardly do without it (Aldrich *et al*. 1981: 183–6).

Perhaps one of the most visible indicators of the structural disadvantage faced by the Asian enterprise in Britain is the lack of markets and their low rewards – in the long term, with the ratio of customers to entrepreneurs diminishing, immigrant business, as a result of internal competition among co-ethnics, may not be able to escape from its own 'demographic inevitability', a probable cause of its eventual demise (Aldrich *et al*. 1984: 206). Internal competition among co-ethnics within an enclave economy happens when there is an excess of similar types of business cashing in on an ethnic niche and competing for a limited pool of customers.

So, as observed by Aldrich *et al*. (1981: 188), Asian business may have given its owners the autonomy and independence they desire. But, paradoxically, this protection from competition with the white economy is itself the root cause of their disadvantage. Economic isolationism breeds cultural isolation and self-segregation. Continued dependence on segregated ethnic markets will make it unlikely for Asian self-employment to serve as a pathway towards socio-economic parity with the whites in Britain.

New-wave ethnic entrepreneurs

The debate on ethnic entrepreneurship operates at two different levels. On the ideological level, it is between the claim among 'pro-capitalists'[4] that ethnic entrepreneurship provides opportunities for apprenticeship in small business and upward mobility, and their critics' accusation of labour exploitation and maintenance of social inequality. On the conceptual level, theorists argue over which has more influence, culture, structure or a fusion of the two. The theoretical debate necessarily locates itself in larger philosophical concerns and often splits into two camps: the 'optimists' or idealists, who have faith in action and human agency; and the 'pessimists' or realists, who focus on social limits and structural constraints. We thus have two contrasting images of ethnic entrepreneurship: one of

human emancipation and possibility, the other of social entrapment and impossibility. Waldinger, a long-time student of ethnic entrepreneurship, has reached a rather level-headed conclusion: 'My own sense is that immigrant business, like everything else, is a mixed bag, with positive and negative features'(1992: 13).

Of course, there are other factors affecting the problem at hand. For one, the character of the incoming immigrants and the processes of international migration have changed. Some observers have noted the ascendancy of a 'new middle class' among Chinese immigrants in Canada (Li 1983: 13), the so-called new overseas Chinese (Skeldon 1994). Ma Mung (1993: 6) has observed a propensity of Chinese entrepreneurs in Paris for trade expansion, diversification and creation of 'upstream enterprises' that involve trade with an outside community formerly monopolised by non-Chinese businessmen. In articulating their business networks within a larger global 'diaspora economy' and by appropriating 'spatial resources' in a transnational space, Chinese entrepreneurship in Paris has taken on an international, extraterritorial character. The otherwise amorphous structure of such a diaspora economy is given substance by the many localities or poles as networks, be they in New York, Bangkok, Jakarta, Shanghai, Hong Kong, London or Toronto.

Such a global economic system has its own internal as well as external principles of social organisation; the potential for growth can be staggering. The gradual shift from a reliance on ethnic to class resources among the Koreans in Chicago (Yoon 1991), the Chinese in Canada or the Iranians and Israelis (Waldinger 1992) suggests the critical importance of the evolving external elements of an immigrant economy. As Waldinger (1992: 12) puts it, 'recourse to outsiders, it turns out, is one of the fruits of the entrepreneurial success'.

Our foregoing review of the literature on ethnic entrepreneurs provides an understanding of a significant form of adaptation by various ethnic or immigrant groups. Despite differences in the economic milieu presented by the host societies, common patterns of coping exist. However, most of the processes of adaptation studied have been at the level of small immigrant businesses – which are reflected in the structural and cultural models we have articulated. In many ways, these same processes can still be found among recent migrants from, for example, South-east Asia. But, increasingly, one must ask if they are representative of the new migratory developments taking place.

In countries such as Canada and Australia and in the less visible migrant stopping-off points such as Singapore, Malaysia and other South-east Asian countries, policies of attracting high-end ethnic entrepreneurs (sometimes called economic investors or business immigrants) have become the vogue. The basis for immigration is the commitment to invest in the host country in exchange for a passport and permanent residency or citizenship. One result of such selective immigration policies is that the new migrants and entrepreneurs are from a very different social category than the earlier waves (Smart 1995).

The phenomenon of the new middle-class migrants (some are distinctly upper class) adds a new face to the ethnic enterprise. The new immigrants become potential big employers in the host society – which is why they are being pursued

in the first place. Earlier migrants were employed by the host society but, confining themselves in an ethnic enclave, they were unlikely to intrude much into the stratificational structures of that society. However, there are now cities such as Vancouver or Toronto, where the new middle-class immigrants and entrepreneurs have become a significant element and cannot be ignored. No longer ghettoised socially or economically, their integration with the 'older' migrant communities has not been without problems. Vancouver has provided examples (albeit in the journalistic reports) of the newly arrived, financially well-endowed migrants making inroads into the economy as well as imposing new patterns of consumption and lifestyle on the established migrant community. Their sociological impact is thus not just on the settled middle-class segment of the dominant host community – an impact now wider in scope than before – but also on their own ethnic community. The new migrant is culturally similar but economically different. The consequences of this kind of flexibility in migration rules and procedures in the hope of economic gain are still not well understood. Research into such areas is necessary if we are to move forward in this field. In many ways, the future frame of reference for the study of these new entrepreneurs is likely to be found as much in the theories of social stratification as in those of race and ethnic relations, migration and adaptation.

Despite their economic advantage, these new middle-class entrepreneurs still exhibit some of the predilections of the early migrants – especially in their willingness to move further on or even to return to their home country. The notion of temporary migration or migratory transience is back in force in the latest wave – they are not unlike the earliest waves of migrants who saw themselves as sojourners, leaving home to make some money but always anticipating a return. The current wave is open to exploring a third or even a fourth country's opportunities; these migrants have the wherewithal to be mobile and seek out the economic advantage. The ease of international transference of their largely portable assets and resources makes the concept of a multinational migrant an intriguing new sociological phenomenon. The new migrants are likely to shift bases more readily than those who have entered a country seeking permanent residency. It is this latter category of permanent settlers that the existing literature on ethnic entrepreneurship focuses on, certainly not the former one.

Migrant entrepreneurship has now taken on a new 'exploitative' face. In the earliest wave, coolies and migrants were exploited. In the second wave, the advantage of the host society was exploited by those seeking to establish themselves permanently. In the third, latest wave, the attraction of a host society may be a function of the availability of opportunities for entrepreneurship. The fact that there are those who have migrated to Canada and Australia and are now seeking to return to Taiwan, Hong Kong or Singapore, or to move on to another location on account of business rather than social or cultural needs, forces a rethinking of the 'classical' factors of migration. The pull of a social space and the intent to integrate into the society (within the limits of existing constraints) are now not the only factors – there are many more. These are new realities in the migrant equation, which must be factored into a broader explanatory model in the future.

There is thus a disjuncture between the emergent empirical reality and what is offered in the existing literature on ethnic entrepreneurship. The fact that the literature is still focused on the small business is itself a problem. Traditionally, it is the manual workers or small businessmen who get 'interrogated' by sociologists, not the bigger and more global players. Faced with a sociologist's interrogation, a person may lose the ability to safeguard secrets, commercial information and self-interest, and those who have more personal and financial resources will resist such a loss. This has obvious methodological implications for research on businesses, large and small. By and large, the viability of government policies on business immigrants and economic investors' programmes remains understudied. Data on enterprises of high finance, whether ethnic or not, are much less likely to be available, especially those involving multimillion-dollar investments. Sociologists continue to have difficulty in tracking the flows of capital across political boundaries. Also, at this level of financial commitment, governmental policies on migration become more of an economic development programme than a basis for encouraging human resettlement. The end-result is that migration becomes a stratified, two-tiered phenomenon, one that needs to be considered in the development of new explanatory models of ethnic entrepreneurship in particular and migration in general.

Interestingly, the modern equivalent of the 'gold mountain' still appears in the imagination of new-wave migrants, even though they are expected to put in more money than their predecessors did. Those who now enter a country at the upper level of the two-tier system expect to utilise their financial resources to achieve their business objectives. However, in the process, they will fulfil the dream of the development of a 'gold mountain' for the host society. The irony of the turnabout probably escapes them as they pursue dreams not very different from those of the coolies. At the same time, when Canadian immigration officials go to Hong Kong or Taiwan to woo 'big-time' economic investors, the high-end immigrant entrepreneurs, one has to wonder whether the modern-day 'gold mountain' is in the east or the west.

The literature on ethnic entrepreneurship is limited in yet other ways. The focus on small-scale ethnic enterprises is problematic in terms of making comparisons with other societies, those that are culturally and politically different. Most past research has focuses on those who have migrated to established societies where the host is dominant politically, economically, culturally and demographically. The difference between an ethnic minority entrepreneur in a dominant host setting and his peer in a colonial setting is vast. Also different is the current context of the ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the post-independence countries in Southeast Asia. And, where migrants are the majority, as in Singapore, the model of economic development is sociologically and politically different from the other examples. Also, there is a whole gamut of variations in between (Chan and Chiang 1994). These differences need to be recognised. It would leave a theoretical lacuna if research focuses only on the adaptations of migrants in host-dominant economies. Even if studied as special cases, greater sense may be made of these

processes in host-dominant countries when compared with those found in other contexts.

The dialect-based networking in Singapore and South-east Asia presents yet another form of adaptation. The new forms of networking are economically quite different from those under the old dialect-, village-, region-based networking. Well-endowed Asian conglomerates now function across international borders but operate on principles reminiscent of village organisations. The small-group approach to Asian businesses may be compared with businesses in other cultures or societies to ascertain if reliance on family, kinship and clan ties in business is a uniquely Asian characteristic or not.

One of the most pressing questions confronting research on ethnic businesses is concerned with the hows and whys of observed variations in entrepreneurial type, size and performance in different immigrant groups and in different societal contexts, over the long haul. While still in its infancy, the field is too young to offer enough empirical examples or historical experiences for a comparative, cross-cultural and longitudinal analysis. While the impetus for casting a sociological eye on the entrepreneur is based on a fascination with the miracles an enterprising individual can perform, ethnic entrepreneurship has many faces, each revealing a partial truth.

10 Ethnic resources, opportunity structure and coping strategies

For decades, scholarly writings on the Chinese in Canada have focused by and large either on the historical development of voluntary ethnic or immigrant associations or on racial hostility towards and discrimination against the Chinese (Con *et al*. 1982; A. Chan 1983; Chan and Helly 1987; Li 1988; Chan 1991). In comparison, relatively few attempts have been made to examine the development of ethnic businesses among the Chinese in Canada. As this chapter will show, the involvement of Chinese in small business entrepreneurship dates back to the community's early years, before the turn of the nineteenth century. The lack of scholarly interest in Chinese entrepreneurship can be explained partially by the predominantly low socio-economic characteristics of 'old' Chinese immigrants – at worst, for the large majority, as menial labourers in the personal service industry and, at best, as occasional petty owners of hand laundries or Chinese restaurants, striving to carve out a niche for themselves. The work worlds and histories of the majority of the older generation of Chinese immigrants were perceived and portrayed by laymen, the popular press and even social scientists as marginal, characterised by jobs that were menial and insecure, thus not worth considering.

A closer re-reading of the work histories of these early Chinese immigrants in Canada reveals that their attempts at entrepreneurial pursuits and employment in personal service jobs were sometimes followed by self-employment (Chan 1991: 154–74), thus the highly visible archetype of Chinese-owned hand laundries and restaurants in the North American urban landscape. In addition, one needs to be cognisant of Chinese involvement in various 'ethnic vices' such as gambling, the opium trade and prostitution, all of which were illegitimate but entrepreneurial.

In focusing analytical attention on Chinese entrepreneurship in Canada, this chapter attempts a historical–structural analysis and interpretation of the Chinese-Canadian experience.[1] It will articulate the relevance and applicability of Ward's (1984) historical–developmental model and Waldinger *et al*.'s (1990) model of ethnic resources and opportunity structure to the case of Chinese businesses in Canada. Two theoretical arguments will be put forward. First, the two analytical models should be integrated; second, the models need to be made more dynamic than they are. One possibility is to make the concept of coping strategies more

central in the integrated model. The attempts of Chinese businessmen in Canada to deal with competition are a case in point. With this chapter, it is also hoped to stimulate research on immigrant or ethnic entrepreneurship, which would add a new dimension to the field of race and ethnic relations.

This shift in analytical focus also seems to be timely and appropriate given the changing socio-economic characteristics of the Chinese immigrants in Canada since the mid-1980s – as a group *and* as a class, whether from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore or elsewhere, they possess many more resources than their predecessors did. This new Chinese economic elite has been the object of enquiry in several popular books (Cannon 1989; Demont and Fennel 1989; Rafferty 1989; Gutstein 1990), two academic papers (Lam 1991; Smart 1991) and one economic impact study (Nash 1987).

Ethnic business development

Ward (1984), in his study of South Asian self-employment in British cities, proposes that there is a logical, ideal–typical developmental sequence of ethnic business patterns, and that the succession of the four business stages corresponds to changes in ethnic communities. The first stage of replacement minority labour involves new immigrants taking up jobs in the lower stratum of the labour market that are unwanted and forsaken by white labourers. These jobs typically pose little threat to the majority population – as such, this mode of replacement minority labour is sorely needed by the larger economy and, therefore, tolerated.

During the second stage, that of the ethnic niche, the growth of the immigrant population means that the size of the minority market is now large enough to sustain the development of businesses that cater mainly to a co-ethnic clientele. The emergence of ethnic businesses results from the fact that immigrants have special tastes and needs that can be met only by their co-ethnics' shops.

The third stage, that of the middleman minority, emerges when immigrant business owners begin to serve the majority population as well as the ethnic clientele. Typical services include grocery stores, restaurants, laundries and newspaper stores. The development of ethnic businesses that place themselves in a middleman minority relationship to their majority clientele leads to a less concentrated, dispersed ethnic population settlement.

Theoretically speaking, the continued growth, expansion and diversification of the ethnic niche will in time create the potential for ethnic businesses to integrate into the majority economy, thus reaching the fourth and final stage, that of economic assimilation – the distribution of ethnic businesses now matches and fits the distribution of the population proper. As ethnic minorities are more and more residentially dispersed and integrated into the neighbourhoods of the host society, they become more like the others among whom they live – by then, at least theoretically speaking, residential and occupational distributions will complement each other. Yet, in many empirical instances, ethnic businesses have yet to make that transition. The Chinese experience in Canada is a case in point.

Opportunity structure and ethnic resources

Embedded in the developmental sequence of ethnic business patterns is a theoretical explanation of ethnic enterprise, which emphasises the interaction between the opportunity structure of the host economy on the one hand and the resources and group characteristics (ethnic and class) of the immigrant community on the other hand (Waldinger *et al*. 1990).

Ethnic resources pertain to those distinct cultural and group characteristics that predispose, direct or facilitate members of an ethnic group towards entrepreneurial and business activities in the host society. The ethnic entrepreneurship literature (Light 1984; Light and Bonacich 1988) has identified ethnic values, family, communal and kinship ties, collective ethnicity and degree of institutional completeness in an ethnic community as key ethnic resources.

The opportunity structure pertains to the *total context* of social, economic and political circumstances within which the immigrant entrepreneurs operate. Integral to the opportunity structure are market conditions, cultural and social norms governing ethnic as well as business relations and government policies on immigration, taxes and ethnic business development. The most salient component of the opportunity structure is the market conditions. For any business to start, there must first be a demand for the goods and services it offers. Among the Chinese businesses that first developed in Canada were purveyors of culinary and cultural products, as the immigrants had special needs and preferences that could not be met by the non-ethnic sector.

Another niche consists of markets that are underserved or have been abandoned by the majority business groups, thus creating a vacuum for the ethnic businesses to fill in and exploit. In Montreal, the proliferation of hand laundries since the 1880s and, years later, of Chinese restaurants are such examples (Chan 1991: 156). In such markets, economies of scale are relatively small, such that immigrant businessmen maximise efficiency and can profit by self-exploitation: longer hours, year-round and personalised service, and lower prices.

Ironically, the entry of the Chinese in Canada into these markets was linked to their exclusion from the mainstream labour force, especially the primary, upper stratum, due to racism and/or their disadvantage in educational and cultural skills. Barred from full participation in the mainstream occupational structure, the Chinese turned to ethnic businesses as a strategy of survival (Li 1976, 1988: 52). Also, the barriers to entry into such markets were typically low – the setting up of a hand laundry required small capital and very little technical knowhow or training (Chan 1991: 158–9).

Yet another niche in the general opportunity structure arises as a result of a demand among the majority population for exotic, ethnic goods and services – the immigrants may thus seize this opportunity to market ethnic commodities and gradually begin to command a protected, captive, ‘exotic market’. Itself a feature of the opportunity structure, blocked social mobility, because of racial discrimination and/or cultural disadvantage and handicaps, is often closely tied in with the peculiar racial, group characteristics of the ethnic minorities, which,

ironically, spur them to engage in business activities for survival or compensation. Immigrant/ethnic minority status can thus become an advantage as far as this kind of entrepreneurial activity is concerned.

The very experience of being an immigrant in a strange land predisposes the immigrant towards the familiar – co-ethnics gather together as a defence against harsh and hostile treatment by the majority population. Embedded in Chinatowns across Canada is an increasingly sophisticated social structure of friendships, kinship institutions and informal networks that awaits exploitation for business pursuits. Such a closely knit social structure provides the trust, confidentiality *and* social control necessary for running the Chinese rotating credit associations – often an invaluable mechanism to raise start-up capital when access to bank loans is blocked (Chan 1991: 158). Light (1972) attributes the early success of ethnic enterprise among the Chinese in America to such associations.

Chinese hand laundries and restaurants in Montreal were and still are created by partnerships, especially among family and kin (Chan 1991: 158). Another critical component of ethnic resources is labour supply. The informal family and kin networks recruit, supply and replenish labour for the immigrant businessmen. Such labour is likely to be cheap and reliable; kin relations invariably precede and superimpose themselves on employer–employee relations – the latter are thus subject to the social control of the family and kin networks.

Chinese laundries and restaurants in Montreal used primarily co-ethnic labour for reasons of culture, economy and racial division of labour (Hechter 1976). An owner of a Chinese restaurant often had to work as hard as his kinsmen-waiters, thus blurring the employer–employee distinction (Li 1988: 53). He also would invoke ethnic symbols, norms and customs to safeguard his own interests in times of labour disputes (Wong 1979). The emergence of a 'custom of co-operation' (Dei Ottati 1986) ensured the employees' allegiance, which in turn incurred employer obligations to reciprocate, even to the extent of rendering financial and other assistance to workers who wanted to leave and start their own business. There is plenty of evidence that this 'custom of co-operation' was binding on both sides – many Chinese businessmen struck partnerships with their own employees, and the cycle continues.

Family labour was and still is critical to Chinese laundries and restaurants. Family labour is unpaid, loyal and extremely flexible – this is crucial in the beginnings of the business and in tiding it over in both good economic times (when demand for labour is high) and periods of recession when business is slow (Li 1988: 52). Family labour, being resourceful and resilient, has thus proved indispensable to Chinese businesses, many of which are still 'mom and pop' shops.

Postwar demographic changes and Chinese enterprise development

By 1991, the Chinese had been in Canada for over a century (since 1858) – for 133 years, in fact. The 1981 Census of Canada reports that, out of a total of 24.3 million Canadians, there were 224,030 Chinese in terms of mother tongue, and

285,800 Chinese in terms of ethnic origin, about 1 per cent of the total population (Li 1988: 99–100). The number of Chinese in 1981 has increased 2.5 times from that in 1971, largely due to the increase in Chinese immigration to Canada after 1967. About 62 per cent of the Chinese in Canada in 1971 were foreign born; this increased to about 75 per cent in 1981.

According to the 1981 Canadian Census (Table 10.1), out of the 19,260 Chinese in the province of Quebec, 3,550 were from Taiwan, 3,145 from the People's Republic of China, 2,410 from Hong Kong, 2,000 from Vietnam,[2] 695 from Mauritius, 390 from Cambodia, 340 from Madagascar, 295 from Trinidad and Tobago and 210 from Laos. Also found in Quebec were Chinese born in the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, Morocco, the United States and various other Asian countries. Such a distribution shows a wide diversity of origins of the Chinese

Table 10.1 Total Chinese population (by ethnic origin) in Quebec in 1981 according to place of birth

Numerical rank	*Place of birth*	*Number*	*Percentage*
1	Quebec	4,650	24.1
2	Taiwan	3,550	18.4
3	China	3,145	16.3
4	Hong Kong	2,410	12.5
5	Vietnam	2,000	10.4
6	Mauritius	695	3.6
7	Cambodia	390	2.0
8	Canada (outside Quebec)	360	1.9
9	Madagascar	340	1.8
10	Trinidad and Tobago	295	1.5
11	Laos	210	1.1
12	Malaysia	170	0.9
13	United Kingdom	120	0.6
14	Jamaica	115	0.5
15	Indonesia	115	0.5
16	Philippines	80	0.4
17	United States	60	0.3
18	West Germany	40	0.2
19	India	40	0.2
20	Singapore	35	0.2
21	Thailand	30	0.1
22	France	30	0.1
23	Japan	20	0.1
23	Morocco	20	0.1
23	Brunei	20	0.1
23	Burma	20	0.1
	All others	235	1.2
	Total	19,260	100.0

Source: Research Division, Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration, Quebec, Canada Census 1981, Special tabulation, Table 5: Total Quebec Population in 1981, according to detailed place of birth, sex, and ethnic origin.

population in Quebec, vividly illustrating the character of the Chinese diaspora worldwide. A similar spread by place of birth continues well into the 1990s for the Chinese business immigrants in other metropolitan areas of Canada, notably Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta, as subsequent sections of this chapter will show. Taiwan, China, Hong Kong and South-east Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) accounted for more than half (about 58 per cent) of the total Chinese population in Quebec, while the Quebec-born Chinese accounted for only about a quarter (24 per cent), with 360, or no more than 2 per cent, born elsewhere in Canada. The net result is that about three-quarters of the Chinese community of Quebec in 1981 were foreign-born, primarily Asian, immigrants who emigrated into the French metropolis.

The high proportion of foreign-born Chinese is partly due to the absence of Chinese women and the unbalanced sex ratio in the Chinese communities before the war, which delayed the growth of one whole generation. The more important reason was the influx of Chinese immigrants to Canada between 1967 and 1981, which resulted in the majority segment of the foreign-born in the community. The Chinese immigrants have tended to settle in metropolitan centres: Toronto and Vancouver accounted for 60 per cent of all Chinese in Canada while cities such as Montreal, Calgary and Edmonton also had substantial Chinese populations. Between 1966 and 1986, the Chinese population in Toronto increased dramatically from 8,000 to 106,000, making it among the largest Chinese-populated cities in North America.

The high proportion of foreign-born Chinese in Canada means that they share many demographic characteristics with other recent immigrants *in spite of* their long history in the country. Two such characteristics are the high rate of retention of Chinese as a mother tongue[3] as well as their lack of facility with the two official languages (English and French). The latter characteristic suggests a language and adjustment problem among a large segment of the community, which creates the need for professional agencies and services that solve the cultural problems of new immigrants.

The continuation of an essentially immigrant community character among the Chinese in Canada today, coupled with their relative concentration in major metropolitan areas, has important implications and consequences for the development of Chinese business settlement patterns. One witnesses in Toronto, for example, the simultaneous existence of the ethnic niche as well as the middleman minority types of business. Toronto has not only one classic Chinatown in downtown (the Dundas–Spadina area) but also four others in suburban areas, all adjacent to recently aggregated Chinese immigrant populations. Chinese businesses there continue to offer goods and services to meet the needs of *both* ethnic and non-ethnic clientele.

In their study of Chinese businesses in Toronto, Chan and Cheung (1985) compiled a list of 1,533 businesses from two Chinese business telephone directories,[4] out of which a simple random sample was constructed, resulting in 187 completed interviews. They reported the following distribution of business types: restaurants and take-away food businesses (33 per cent); professional practices, mainly phy-

sicians and dentists (16 per cent); dry cleaning and laundry services (4 per cent); and others, including beauty salons, newspapers, real estate brokers, Chinese medicine experts and construction companies (47 per cent). Businesses in the professional category included physician, dentist, accountant, pharmacy, ethnic school and interior design. Those in the commercial category included grocery, gift shop, photo shop, Chinese newspaper, retail store (flower, clothing, stereo, bookstore, etc.), wholesale, garage, manufacturing and real estate. Included in the service businesses were restaurant, take-away Chinese food, dry cleaner, printing shop, cinema, driving school, travel agency, hair salon, construction company, taxi and Chinese herbalist.

In terms of opportunity structure, such a distribution clearly shows that the Chinese businessmen in Toronto continue to engage in both the ethnic niche and the middleman minority types of enterprise, with the exception of some new services provided by physicians, real estate brokers and hairstylists, which reflect the increasing affluence of recent Chinese immigrants. The overall market conditions are such that Chinese businesses continue to meet their co-ethnics' needs for culinary and cultural products, and for professional and paraprofessional services. Chan and Cheung (1985: 149) reported that 65 per cent of these businesses were located in areas with high to moderate concentrations of Chinese residents. As many as 54 per cent of the businesses catered mainly for Chinese customers, while only 22 per cent relied almost exclusively on non-Chinese clients. Only 6 per cent of the businesses had no Chinese employees while 49 per cent hired only Chinese as employees.

In terms of ethnic resources and group characteristics, the presence of several large Chinese population pockets within and outside metropolitan Toronto (including such medium-sized nearby cities as Waterloo, Hamilton and Mississauga) is an obvious advantage for the proliferation and sustenance of Chinese businesses. The Chinese populations are an invaluable source of ethnic resources: they are steady consumers of ethnic goods and services, an inexpensive labour force and offer possibilities for joint ownership, as well as family and kinship assistance.

The Canadian immigration policy since 1979 has placed considerable emphasis on business immigrants and economic investors (Chan 1991: 215–23). Between 1980 and 1982, 5,500 business immigrants were admitted to Canada, bringing an estimated C$1.5 billion into the country and creating about 10,000 new jobs.[5] The socio-economic and occupational profile of the Chinese community in Quebec took a sudden 'upward' swing in 1983 when the federal government began implementing a policy of attracting immigrant investors. This policy proved particularly attractive to Chinese investors from Hong Kong who were fearful of the political and economic future of the British colony, whose sovereignty would return to the People's Republic of China in 1997.

On 24 October 1983, John Roberts, then federal Minister of Employment and Immigration, announced a new programme to promote the admission of entrepreneurs as immigrants, effective from 1 January 1984. Under the amended immigration regulation, 'an entrepreneur must intend and be able to establish or purchase or make a substantial investment in the ownership of a business or commercial

venture in Canada whereby employment opportunities will be created or continued for one or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents'. The entrepreneur or business class was given priority in processing their application, second only to the family class members and refugees. The programme also posted specially trained officers in key source countries (West Germany, Hong Kong, France, the United States and the Netherlands) to find likely applicants, and instituted a two-year provisional admission for well-qualified applicants who had not fully developed their business ventures.

In 1980, out of a total of 1,556 business immigrants (excluding their dependants) admitted into Canada, 122 or only 7.8 per cent were from Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, Macao and Malaysia (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991). By 1984, as a result of the new federal programme to promote entrepreneurship, the number of business immigrants (entrepreneurs, self-employed persons and investors)[6] from these Asian countries increased dramatically to 756 out of a total intake of 1,901 or almost 40 per cent. Table 10.2 shows data on the number of business immigrants admitted into Canada in 1990 (January to November) from these Asian countries relative to other countries. As a group, these 2,322 Asian business immigrants accounted for 54 per cent of the total intake of 4,300; the majority of the former were from the People's Republic of China (921), Hong Kong (707) and Taiwan (533). Relative to other countries, a larger proportion of these Asian business immigrants migrated to Canada as investors or entrepreneurs than as self-employed persons.

In 1988, the total capital inflow to Canada alone amounted to C$2.4 billion. Hong Kong has been a primary source of wealthy business immigrants: in 1984 alone, 41 per cent of all business immigrants were from Hong Kong. In the same year, 52 per cent of the total of 3,555 entrepreneurs admitted into Canada were from Hong Kong, and another 6 per cent from China and Taiwan (Li 1988: 125). The Consul and First Secretary of the Canadian Commission was quoted as saying that 'Hong Kong has become Canada's largest single source of immigrants, accounting for about 14 per cent of total immigration to Canada'. The trend is expected to continue. About 200,000 may emigrate to Canada by the end of the 1990s.[7]

Table 10.3 shows the number of businesses established in Ontario between 1986 and 1991, their source countries from the Asian region and indicators of their economic contributions to the province. The contributions of business immigrants (the bulk of whom were Chinese) from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore are apparent.

Records from the Entrepreneur Monitoring Information System (EMIS) of Immigration Canada (Monahan 1991) show that, while many of the Chinese business immigrants have chosen the services sector (restaurant, hotels) or the wholesale/retail sector, a significant proportion are manufacturers and exporters of a diversity of goods and/or services, especially clothing, which has revitalised Toronto's garment industry. New Ontario businesses set up by Taiwanese immigrant entrepreneurs between 1986 and 1991 represented a total investment of C$18,013,507 in the province's economy, and created or retained 322 full-time

Table 10.2 Business immigrants and dependants in Canada by selected countries of birth in 1990 (January to November)

	Entrepreneur: principal applicant	*Entrepreneur: dependant*	*Total entrepreneur*	*Self-employed: principal applicant*	*Self-employed: dependant*	*Total self-employed*	*Investor: principal applicant*	*Investor: dependant*	*Total investor*	*Total principal applicant*	*Total dependent*	*Total*
Singapore	24	66	90	2	9	11	2	10	12	28	85	113
Hong Kong	457	2,590	3,047	33	129	162	217	1,357	1,574	707	4,076	4,783
Taiwan	265	841	1,106	23	64	87	245	877	1,122	533	1,782	2,315
China (PRC)	554	449	1,003	42	30	72	325	256	581	921	735	1,656
Macao	38	81	119	0	1	1	17	37	54	55	119	174
Malaysia	63	217	280	8	17	25	7	23	30	78	257	335
Total Asian countries	1,401	4,244	5,645	108	250	358	813	2,560	3,373	2,322	7,054	9,376
Other countries	1,407	4,277	5,684	461	1,025	1,486	110	370	480	1,978	5,672	7,650
Total	2,808	8,521	11,329	569	1,275	1,844	923	2,930	3,853	4,300	12,726	17,026

Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, Permanent Residents (Business Immigrants Only) by selected country of birth, January to November 1990. Run date: 06/02/1991.

Table 10.3 Business established in Ontario from 1 June 1986 to 11 July 1991

	Hong Kong	*Taiwan*	*Singapore*	*Indonesia*	*Malaysia*	*South Korea*	*Total*
Total businesses	499	91	7	6	23	106	732
Total $ invested	$68,646,640	$19,596,046	$500,000	$816,000	$2,160,215	$17,776,277	$100,397,178
Total full-time jobs created/ retained	494	83	4	2	21	46	650
Average $ invested	$137,368	$215,374	$71,429	$163,000	$93,922	$167,701	N/A
Average full-time jobs created/ retained	7.3	3.7	6.0	2.0	1.8	4.4	N/A
Average part-time jobs created/ retained	1.0	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.9	0.4	N/A

Source: Business Immigration Section, Trade and Investment Support Branch, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology, Government of Ontario.

Note: All funds in Canadian currency.

and 82 part-time jobs (Monahan 1991). The figures suggest an average investment of C$214,446 and an average creation of 3.8 full-time jobs for every new business.

In 1979, a total of 253 business immigrants came to British Columbia. By the first half of 1990, that number had increased to 333. A large majority of these business people came from Asia, with an average investment of C$306,200 per immigrant. Table 10.4 shows the economic contributions of investor immigrants from different countries destined for British Columbia in 1988 and 1989. In both years, investor immigrants from Hong Kong topped the list in every category of economic contribution: amount of funds invested, other funds brought along, total number of cases and amount of investment per case.

The number of applicants for immigration into Quebec made by investors grew nearly 10 per cent from 1983 to 1984, mainly due to the number of applications from Hong Kong, which increased by 93.5 per cent in one year. The three countries from which Quebec received the largest number of applications from immigrant investors in 1984 were, in order of importance, Hong Kong, France and Switzerland. These countries accounted for 55 per cent of all applications accepted by Quebec and 56 per cent of the capital, C$300 million in total.

In 1984, Quebec received 314 investor applications from Hong Kong (38 per cent) out of a total of 818 cases from sixty-six different countries (Chan 1991: 228–30). Compared with the total capital of C$533,469,000 supplied by all sixty-six countries in 1984, Hong Kong investors brought in C$244,303,000, averaging C$778,000 per case, which is considerably higher than the average capital of C$652,000 for all sixty-six countries. Like investors from the other sixty-five countries, Hong Kong businessmen tended to concentrate in the secondary and tertiary sectors in terms of distribution of cases of applications, total capital brought in and average capital per case.

Structural problems and ethnic strategies

Internal competition among co-ethnics within an enclave economy happens when an inordinate number of immigrants launch similar types of business, cashing in on a similar ethnic niche (Waldinger *et al.* 1990). Competition is thus often built into ethnic enterprise when immigrants follow each other's commercial footsteps too closely; this in turn leads to saturation and competition. In Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver Chinatowns, there has been in recent years a dramatic proliferation of Cantonese restaurants – a new one opens as soon as another one closes down. Chan and Cheung (1985: 147), in a study of Chinese businesses in Toronto, reported that 60 per cent of their respondents admitted competing with other Chinese businesses, and 64 per cent of these found the internal competition 'quite strong' or 'very strong'. They reported somewhat less competition from non-Chinese businesses. The Chinese restaurateurs in Canada, like the Asian businessmen in the London borough of Wandsworth (Aldrich 1977), cope with competition by working even harder, or self-exploitation: they stay open on Sundays and holidays, work longer hours a day and more days a week, and lower

Table 10.4 Investor immigrants given visas abroad and destined for British Columbia

	Funds invested ($'000)		*Other funds*		*No. of cases ($'000)*		*Investment per case*	
Source country	*1988*	*1989*	*1988*	*1989*	*1988*	*1989*	*1988*	*1989*
Hong Kong	122,931	68,738	116,804	270,073	130	176	945	390.6
Singapore	1,000	9,550	5,789	81,812	5	40	200.0	238.8
London	500	250	1,775	850	2	1	250.0	0.0
San Francisco	1,000	1,000	7,060	8,000	6	4	166.7	0.0
Los Angeles	250	250	950	1,700	2	1	250.0	0.0
Manila	1,420	1,670	4,515	3,070	4	5	355.0	334.0
Nairobi	250	0	10,000	0	2	0	250.0	0.0
Bonn	2,060	1,500	27,163	12,900	6	6	343.3	250.0
Seattle	266	3,350	700	60,300	2	15	266.0	0.0
Buenos Aires	0	250	0	1,200	0	1	0.0	250.0
Tokyo	0	400	0	6,000	0	2	0.0	200.0
Bangkok	0	250	0	250	0	1	0.0	250.0
Berne	0	250	0	250	0	1	0.0	250.0
Total	129,677	87,458	174,756	446,405	156	253	831.3	345.7

Sources: Tabulations prepared in February 1990 by the Planning and Statistics Division, Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, Government of British Columbia, based on data provided by the Immigration and Refugee Affairs Division, Department of External Affairs, Government of Canada.

Note: All funds are in Canadian currency.

their employees' wages to keep costs down. Internal competition, not that with non-Chinese, often results in a vicious circle of cost cutting and longer hours – it leads to yet more competitive behaviour. Even the most energetic and vibrant enclave economy would eventually reach its saturation point if competition continues unabated.

So, quite ironically, the more institutionally complete an ethnic community is, the stronger the centripetal and the weaker the centrifugal forces, the stronger the propensity for internal competition. While ethnic ties, informal family and kin networks as well as immigrant institutions are obviously enabling because of the myriad of resources embedded in them, they can also be limiting, possibly leading to 'ghettoisation of ethnic businesses of a similar type' and, worse still, business failures and bankruptcies.

Other than self-exploitation, Waldinger *et al*. (1990: 146–51) have identified three additional ethnic entrepreneurs' *strategies* for coping with competition: expanding the business, creating or joining trade associations and using marriage to join rival families. In terms of the strategy of expansion, ethnic enterprises can expand vertically by entering into complementary wholesale or manufacturing businesses, or horizontally by opening up several businesses of a similar type in different locations. The strategy of vertical expansion at the collective level has emerged in Montreal and Toronto in the past five years. With the inflow of capital and entrepreneurial spirit and experience from the better endowed economic investors from Hong Kong, Chinese businesses began to concentrate on garment manufacturing, wholesaling, construction, import and export and real estate. Having revitalised Toronto's garment industry, these businessmen seem poised to enter the higher fashion niche where product margins are wider.

Expansion also means diversification, looking for new spheres of commercial influence. The Greek experience in the United States (Saloutos 1964) indicates that the growth of the ethnic niche type of enterprise does not necessarily lead to internal competition and saturation; if properly managed, it can serve as a base for an 'export platform' from which ethnic businesses can move out into the larger market (Waldinger *et al*. 1990: 113). Thus, the Greeks broke through the boundaries of the ethnic market by offering 'American food' both within and outside their own communities.

The Ontario Immigrant Entrepreneur Program, instituted in 1976 and administered by federal immigration agencies in tandem with the Ontario Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology, seeks to attract high-capital, high-experience entrepreneurs. The Chinese from Hong Kong have responded quite favourably to this programme. Compared with their predecessors, they have better class resources, such as education, capital and business acumen and experience, and are likely to become Canada's new economic elite. Being more independent than traditional immigrants in their investment strategies, they target, among others, the garment industry and import/export, both of which link them with their homeland in terms of business continuity, entrepreneurial experience and acumen, business type and capital flow. The recent setting up of branches of several Hong Kong banks in Toronto and Montreal suggests the flow of capital both ways across the Pacific.

The third strategy for coping with internal competition is that of creating formal trade and professional associations, especially to regulate and control intentional undercutting in prices at all levels of the ethnic trade. When effective, such ethnic institutions safeguard the common interests of co-ethnics, protect them from unjust discrimination or unfair external competition (from non-ethnic businesses) and influence state policies, business oriented or not, including those pertaining to immigration quotas and selection criteria, preferential taxes and other government incentives. In Toronto, efforts to organise Chinese professionals and merchants, as among the Koreans in Los Angeles (Waldinger *et al*. 1990: 149), have met with limited success. Eventually, the long-term viability and benefits of this strategy, along with the strategy of business expansion and the strategy of marriages between members of competing families, lie in integrating the immigrant entrepreneurs into the larger society, both its business *and* its social life. In this way, ethnic entrepreneurs can be ushered into the next stage of business development – that of economic assimilation.

In Canada, economic assimilation will probably be a long process. The massive entry of ethnic businessmen into the larger economy, while decreasing internal competition, increases the external competition with non-ethnic businesses, posing a threat and possibly even inducing a backlash. Business or economic relations are part of ethnic relations – the two are closely intertwined and typically evolve as well as regress in tandem.

Conclusion

The case of the Chinese in Canada has demonstrated the heuristic utility of viewing ethnic or immigrant entrepreneurship from the standpoint of a historical–developmental model – Ward's (1984) theory of business settlement patterns – *as well as* a structural model using concepts of ethnic resources and opportunity structure as articulated by Waldinger *et al*. (1990). Crossing the two models enables researchers to create a theoretical *and* empirical order out of the *total* (historical, spatial and social) experience of ethnic entrepreneurs in a particular economy and nation-state. When put to vigorous cross-cultural and comparative testing, an integrated model has the potential of opening up the way we perceive ethnic entrepreneurship; it also contributes to our understanding of the interactions between race, ethnicity, class and politics.

In examining the development of Chinese business and entrepreneurship in Canada, it is obvious that both history and social structure have constrained and handicapped the Chinese and many other immigrants who are visible minorities. Precluded from better paid jobs, the Chinese first turned to self-employment and business for survival. Yet, quite ironically, as this chapter attempts to show, migration and immigration can also be seen as emancipatory processes – they open up opportunities for social mobility, for the growth and development of immigrants as individuals *and* as a group. The Chinese in Canada grapple with history and social structure; embedded in the migrant's experience and 'everyday life-world' (Schutz and Luckmann 1973) is a vast reservoir of ethnic resources waiting to

be exploited; thus, ethnic entrepreneurship often succeeds in spite of the odds. Research on ethnic entrepreneurs shows how ethnicity and the migration experience can be and have been put to good use. The migrants (as individuals and as a group) engage in what Giddens (1976) calls a 'dialectic of control' with history and social structure. In this, Giddens includes the ability of the weak to use their weaknesses against the powerful.

The concepts of ethnic resources and opportunity structure will remain essentially static until the analyst moves towards a more dynamic and proactive conception of the ethnic entrepreneur as relentlessly improvising and strategising. Integral to such a conceptual shift on the part of the analyst is to view ethnic strategies as changing, emergent and dynamic, and as the result of mobilising and enhancing resources, on the one hand, while creating opportunities and overcoming barriers on the other hand (Waldinger *et al*. 1990: 131–56).

Saturation of ethnic enterprises of a similar type among the Chinese businessmen in Canada has recently been a problem leading to a vicious cycle of fierce internal competition. Branching out, expansion and diversification of industrial and commercial types is one strategy for coping with internal competition. Expansion is also geographic in nature; it entails the continual exploration of new business frontiers and the articulation and construction of new spheres of business activities. In spite of their long history, the Chinese in Canada are still essentially an immigrant community that rejuvenates itself by influxes of professionals and businessmen from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and many other parts of the world. This new economic elite may want to strive, at the community and national levels, to organise themselves in order to safeguard their own economic interests *vis-à-vis* the mainstream society, the state and its policies regarding ethnic business development and promotion.[8] Simultaneously, in an attempt to become 'transilient' (Richmond 1991) and global, they may want to *put to use* their ethnicity and historic–cultural linkages to their homelands in Asia, thus opening new business frontiers in the Pacific rim and beyond. By 'transilient' migrants, Richmond refers to those resource-rich, well-endowed and skilled persons who, as facilitators of international trade, will continue to cross the boundaries of nation-states – they are the new migrants of the next era. The transilient migrants, as Richmond (1991: 5) puts it, literally 'leap across' geographical and political boundaries – 'hypermobility involving remigration and return is typical'. The Hong Kong Chinese have for years typified this new category of migrants as 'going stereo', meaning, literally, going both ways, one to the east, the other to the west, often many times over. Seen in this way, Chinese immigrants from Asia to Canada are no longer 'lost' to the east – rather, they become the prime movers of powerful economic forces in the east–west transaction. Increasingly so, many of the Asian immigrants to the west, the Chinese entrepreneurs in Canada as a case in point, will lead a 'two-legged existence' (Ng 1991: 63) – one leg in their motherland and the other in a country of voluntary adoption, shuttling back and forth between the two places as cultural brokers and as trade mediators and facilitators[9].

Lary (1991: 5) recently pointed out that much of the merchandise trade from

Hong Kong, and from China through Hong Kong, is realised through Canada's recent Hong Kong immigrants. Their experience in trade, their familiarity and understanding of Hong Kong and other Asian markets and their business skills and entrepreneurial spirit make their continued involvement in Canada–Asia trade highly likely. Lary added that 'the value of the pool of business people who know Chinese, and understand the Chinese and Hong Kong markets, is now realised in Canada, though as yet under-utilised' (1991: 6).

It is for this reason alone that the terms 'immigrant' and 'migrants' require rethinking, mainly in terms of realising a long-term gain to both country of origin and country of destination. Nation-states on both sides of the Pacific need to learn this historical lesson – they would do themselves, their people and their economies much good if their public policies adhered to a spirit of tolerance, respect and mutual appreciation.

11 State, economy, culture and business networks

Interest among professional analysts, policy makers, scholars and laymen in China's recent economic revitalisation, and its possible correlation with the burgeoning economic activities of the ethnic Chinese diaspora worldwide, is the impetus for examinations of Chinese business networks.[1] In these endeavours, considerable emphasis has been placed on the cultural aspect of Chinese networking. Popular conceptions of sealing a deal with a friendly handshake rather than a hard legal document are legendary. Such business flamboyance is extremely appealing and perhaps even longed for in an increasingly disenchanted world. Ironically, these same culturalist explanations have been reversed lately: Chinese business networks and their 'dark side' – allegedly shadowy dealings – have been blamed for the current economic malaise in Asia. There is thus a need to re-examine some of the assumptions underpinning the culturalist point of view. For far too long, both academics and journalists have emphasised the similarities among the popularly termed 'tiger economies' of Asia while neglecting the fact that differences between them abound.

The Weberian fervour for trying to crystallise or distil a cultural basis for economic performance must now be re-examined. Advocating a closer scrutiny of differences in the structural climates of many Asian states, Mackie (2000) suggests that a comparative method would afford more practical knowledge as well as refine the many analytical concepts and perspectives in the study of Chinese business networks. A fusion of the cultural and structural explanations might accomplish this. For as much as the Chinese immigrants have brought an 'original' culture to the host society, their subsequent conduct must be understood in terms of their personal as well as collective reactions to the historical and contextual realities of their host countries. Group cultures are thus necessarily emergent and processual in nature, a theoretical standpoint that harks back to the social psychologist George Herbert Mead.[2] An emergent group culture is best seen as the product of a transplanted immigrant culture transforming itself to adapt to the changing structural demands of the larger milieu.

The idea of a singular, monolithic Chinese culture anywhere, whether in China or overseas, baffles the mind. China today itself does not boast a consistent core value either. As Li Cheng (2000) has pointed out, the technocrats use their aca-

demic credentials to dominate the bureaucracy, often locking horns with the entrepreneurs whose formal schooling was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution. These two rival groups also operate internal networks that perpetuate their own ranks by helping their fellow kind to move in, on and up their success ladders. Moreover, the long-standing contempt for businessmen and the high regard for education (and credentials) inherited from Confucian China move the antagonism between the two groups beyond a mere conflict of interest. Guided by their communist ideology, the technocrats clash with the free market advocates of the entrepreneurial class in China's larger economic experiment. The value differences and conflicts within China run deep.

Outside the mainland, the largely Chinese communities of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan have long been exposed to the foreign influences of the British, Portuguese and Japanese. Moving south to South-east Asia, the kaleidoscopic experience of Chinese immigrants exposed to varied historical and national trajectories further complicates the monolithic label of 'Chinese'. South-east Asian countries have coined different labels for the Chinese within their own borders. In Indonesia, Chinese are differentiated by the words *peranakan* (naturalised) and *totok* (Chinese from China). The latter are generally discriminated against as being non-*pribumi* instead of *pribumi* (native/indigenous). This is similar to the *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra* titles that favour indigenous interests over those of 'other' descents. In the Philippines and Thailand, however, the majority of Chinese are assimilated at one level, while Singapore is the sole state with a Chinese majority rapidly taking on an urban cosmopolitan character.

Without even a common concept of the Chinese, finding a singular culture in China and overseas is reductionistic and does not square with the geopolitical realities of history and today. As Peter Li (2000) has pointed out, the use of terms such as 'overseas Chinese networks' is based on cultural stereotypes and anecdotal evidence. The dispersal of the Chinese people beginning in Ming China (AD 1386–1644) further compounds the problem, by the long passage of time. Looking at the present states of Asia, a loose definition of 'Chinese' based on descent is imprecise and problematic. As an exercise, it is insensitive to the political, economic and ideological differences even among the ethnically closer Chinese communities of South-east Asia and East Asia. The varied experiences of Chinese communities everywhere have resulted in destinies that differentiate the ethnic Chinese in, say, Taiwan and Indonesia, or Singapore and Thailand.[3] As Mackie argues, hanging on to such labels handicaps our ability to understand the Chinese overseas.

Moreover, in the light of Chinese business networks gaining prominence as an alleged mechanism for business contact within the Chinese diaspora, there is a hint at a de-sinification/re-sinification tendency in the scholarly literature. On the one hand, ethnic Chinese outside mainland China have reacted and adapted to their adopted countries. This has necessarily contributed to considerable de-sinification. On the other hand, with China's rising economic prominence, there is an observable enthusiasm on the part of ethnic Chinese in adopting particular traits and practices associated with China – including the cultivation and usage

of business networks among themselves in an excessively intense manner. This re-sinification is pragmatic and conscious. However, theoretically as well as empirically, re-sinification and de-sinification are inherently problematic as they assume that there are poles of ethnic purity that are static and unchanging within which the ethnic Chinese actors oscillate. Taking on Chinese characteristics on the outside does not mean becoming more Chinese inside. Re-sinification/de-sinification processes seem to be deliberate and selective; they are largely a matter of positioning. Given the plurality of experiences embedded within the third- and fourth-generation Chinese migrant families, these adopted traits or practices are not likely to be the only, unchanging markers of ethnic identity. Many authors, for instance Gipouloux (2000), have hinted that membership in Chinese business networks is a calculated moral investment. Taken in this light, potential as well as existing members are expected to conform to a code of behaviour that might include adopting beliefs contrary to one's own. Ethnic entity is thus more a matter of pronouncement than internalisation, having more to do with the outer image of an individual than the inner reality.

Not only are monolithic cultural labels deceptive, it is fallacious to lump varied Chinese experiences into a singular history and destiny. Popular lay assertions tend to stereotype the Chinese as exploitative fortune seekers, who are almost always much wealthier than their indigenous hosts. Cribb's insightful analysis (2000) through a historical eyepiece suggests that the Chinese were selected by their colonial masters as middlemen as they were politically and religiously less of a threat than the indigenous populations.[4] The idea of the Chinese as wealthy and exploitative overlooks the fact that, for every business success, there were countless other failures. Not all successful businesses were Chinese. Not all Chinese were successful in all their businesses. When looked at over the long haul, successful Chinese businesses in one era under the Dutch failed to preserve their wealth when political power changed hands from the Dutch to the Japanese and then to the present independent governments. Chinese success in a particular era was a manifestation of a specific group of Chinese merchants who were able to capitalise on the fall of the preceding group. Cribb's study of the booms and busts of Chinese businesses since the sixteenth century foils the famed stereotype of Chinese adaptability and flexibility (as an alleged intrinsic trait) in preserving their businesses. This historical approach has shed light on the changing fortunes of a succession of different social groupings in the Malay world – the Chinese being one of them – an important fact that would have been masked by the cultural argument.

Chinese communities in South-east Asia often incur the wrath of the indigenous populations. The recent riots and ethnic violence in Indonesia highlight the inherent instabilities fuelled by negative stereotypes that characterise the Chinese as exploitative and devoid of political loyalty to their adopted lands. 'The Chinese problem' must be understood in terms of the indigenous state and the native population reinforcing negative stereotypes through blocking the integration of the Chinese minority into mainstream society. Chinese close association with the colonial powers, and later the state apparatus, emphasises a fundamental compul-

sion: their recourse to commerce and economics as the only means of livelihood. In Indonesia, the ban on Chinese involvement in the government and the military, and the *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* tags, severely preclude Chinese involvement in other sectors of the economy. The only means to survival is then through the entrepreneurial route. In time, success breeds more contempt as the Chinese become fully entrenched and visible within the economy, further contributing to popular perceptions of a Chinese-dominated economy in Indonesia, and arguably throughout South-east Asia. Violence is often directed towards targets that are visible because of race and, in the case of the Indonesian Chinese, class.

Forced into an economic niche, Chinese businesses often have to defend against hostile and discriminatory state policies. Liao's study (2000) on the Philippines shows how discriminatory state policies forced the Chinese into private enterprises, specifically the commercial sector. It was not until the naturalisation policy in the mid-1970s that the Chinese had greater access to the economy. Gomez's study (2000) in Malaysia highlights the relations between state and ethnicity, suggesting that networks need not be race exclusive – rather, their formulation is an instrumental response to changing political climates. The formulation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970 eroded Chinese political representation as well as their share of the market. Driven by a policy ostensibly to raise the level of Malay or *bumiputra* economic well-being, the state sprouted public enterprises that encroached on the traditional stronghold of Chinese businesses. To redress the problem, for a brief period between the mid-1970s and 1985, the Malaysian Chinese Association's (MCA) limited corporatisation movement regained some hope of ensuring Chinese economic and political participation in Malaysian society. However, since the arrest of Tan Koon Swan, the Association's president, and the Pan-El debacle, Chinese businesses have had to resort to cultivating Malay patrons to advance their economic and political agenda. Chinese businesses have cultivated relations with power networks such as the UMNO elite, aspiring politicians and prominent *bumiputras* – a role the MCA used to play before the racial riots in 1969. There is a major risk in the utilisation of such networks: fortunes of network members are tied to those of their Malay patrons. As such, there is an inherent danger in advancing power tie-ups as the chief means of survival within a state that actively discriminates along *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra* lines. This case study by Gomez highlights one important feature of networks: it is more instrumental than racial. With the co-option of an influential *bumiputra*, the network hopes to advance its business agenda, thus securing favours and economic dividends from the Malay elite.

As Li Cheng (2000) has shown, tensions are rampant between the entrepreneur and the technocrat, with the latter increasingly dominating the bureaucracy. Three strata divide up China. At the peak are the political/bureaucratic elite. The second stratum comprises intellectuals and entrepreneurs, with peasants and workers in the bottom stratum. Born out of the marginalisation of the second stratum during Mao's reign, societal disdain for the entrepreneur in a *de jure* communist country has increased. Meanwhile, those with credentials, the technocrats, have ascended into the bureaucratic stratum. This has further fuelled the rivalry between entre-

preneurship and credentialism. While technocrats want control of the economy, the entrepreneurs want to run it, claiming the former are less able. Technocrats also resent the amount of money entrepreneurs make, while entrepreneurs scoff at and discredit the technocrats. In short, there is distrust between the entrepreneur and the modern-day mandarin. Li's study of a developing economy exposes the conflicting currents of free trade versus ideological vanguards – with each group forming their separate networks to advance their own interests during China's economic reformation. This antagonism between credentialism and entrepreneurship is also observable in other societies where entrepreneurs measure success through monetary achievement while technocrats measure theirs through credentials.

Taken together, the case studies by Cribb, Gomez, Liao and Li highlight the reluctance of Chinese entrepreneurs to embark on a business career. Where no other jobs are available, going into business is the only way to make a living. In less than ideal sociological situations, ethnic or immigrant businesses are highly dependent on useful ties to make up for their lack of access to systemic safeguards. As Qiu (2000) mentions, the Chinese were forced out of China into the international capitalist system in the late nineteenth century – first as labourers, then as businessmen. Mass Chinese emigration into South-east Asia was not motivated by profit, but occurred when China was forced open. When superimposing this idea of a reluctant merchant working out of forced circumstances on to a majority–minority framework of race relations, it is not difficult to understand the proliferation and resilience of rotating credit associations outlined in Wu-Beyens' study (2000).

Where the state is less than co-operative, where the Chinese lacked support from the ground and where, in extreme cases, the wrath of locals was invoked, the Chinese were forced to form the now legendary mutual aid organisations that acted as a rallying point to counter external hostilities. To borrow from Shakespeare: lesser enmity gives way to greater. Animosity within the group was put aside to deal with a strong outside enemy. In that sense, solidarity and, for that matter, trust are the result of force from the outside, not love on the inside. Holbig's study (2000) on the use of money in the form of cash and credit asks this question: Are Chinese businesses resistant to institutions because they utilise personal trust, or are they driven (or forced) to cultivate personal trust and *guanxi* as a safeguard against institutional weaknesses? It must be noted that, in China's recent history, faith in paper money has been variously tested in tandem with bouts of economic and political upheavals since the turn of the twentieth century. In this sense, Holbig argues that there is still very little trust on a systemic level where institutions such as the bureaucracy and legal structure do not inspire confidence in the protection of personal property and business transactions. This observation is echoed in Schak's study (2000): the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of Taiwan band together to cope with the lack of support from the government and financial institutions. In any instance, traditionally, Chinese have rarely relied on the political institutions for help, as doing business is a perpetual struggle against the mandarins, and formal institutions cannot be trusted.

The concept of *guanxi* denotes personal connections combined with loyalty.

Guanxi is more than a relationship; it is a form of social exchange based on a mutual belief in reciprocity, as Lin (2001) and Wu (2000) emphasise. To be indebted to someone within a network does not necessarily mean a speedy repayment of a debt or a favour in equal or monetary terms. In reality, such debts know no bounds and are not based on economic rationality. Instead, they involve transactions between two people of different hierarchies and resources that have the intangible goal of maintaining or enhancing the creditor's influence, power, status and face. Thus, by granting a favour to someone within the network, the creditor accumulates intangible gains, especially when the debtor acknowledges the benevolence of the creditor in public.

Guanxi networks can be formed on the basis of almost any shared social attribute, such as kinship (*qinqi*), schoolmates *(tongxue*), colleagues (*tongshi*) or even between strangers who get to know each other because of a common interest (*tonghao*). Contrary to popular belief, *guanxi* is not identical to familialism and paternalism. *Guanxi* emphasises unwritten codes of conduct to guard against the opportunistic behaviour of its members. Business networks are thus a moral community *par excellence*, based on trustworthiness or *xinyong*. Before someone is admitted into a network, his track record and reliability are scrutinised. His continued participation in the network is dependent on his observance of the principles of reciprocity and obligation. Violation of a conduct code is violation of trust. Of course, this code can be confusing, and even contradictory. As Wu (2000) points out in his study, there is a fine line between *guanxi* as exchange and as a corrupt practice. Given its mostly uncodified nature, compliance may become cryptic or cumbersome. The concept of trust may be slippery and puzzling, as it takes a considerable amount of time to know someone, not just officially but personally, and thus to trust them. To circumvent this, a person can be introduced into a network, as Schak (2000) has suggested. In this instance, the introducer's *xinyong* is transferred on to the person introduced. He or she is liable for the behaviour and compliance of the person introduced until that individual has gained sufficient trust on his or her own. Such safeguards, however, suggest the opposite: that networks are born out of distrust rather than trust.

Chinese businessmen face much hostility in the form of racial scapegoating, lack of institutional safeguards in protecting businesses and personal property or mere distrust on the part of bureaucracy and the state. Already a reluctant entrepreneur searching for a niche in the economy, the business person is faced not with the personal desire to trust, but with the need to be wary, to distrust. Business networks are born out of distrust of those outside the group, not trust of those within. In this sense, business networks are formed from a position of weakness, not strength. This is why, according to Schak (2000), the Taiwanese SMEs operate along networks; they have to overcome governmental bias in favour of big businesses. In China, the rivalry between the technocrat and the entrepreneur betrays a deep distrust between the two; in addition, China's formal institutions have yet to catch up with its rapid economic transformation. Networks help businesses to negotiate the pitfalls and drawbacks of all these negative structural forces. They are best conceptualised as a group strategy not to build trust, but to cope with

distrust. In observing a social group, the sociologist is better off looking at things outside the group, not inside it.

To a culturalist, family is the heart of Chinese business. The family is often viewed as a source of social, cultural and economic capital: it is the fountainhead of start-up capital and of loyal, dependable, cheap labour. The loyalty from blood ties is thought to extend beyond the family nucleus to include colleagues, friends, etc. And, of course, family is central to the Confucian thought that stresses obligation, loyalty, reciprocity and paternalism. As such, it is not difficult to see the concept of network overlaid with that of the family. The culturalist argument is that ethnic capital such as the familial and kinship affinities assists in the formation of self-help, mutual aid groups such as rotating credit associations, and studies of the Chinese diaspora have repeatedly commented upon the cultural propensity of Chinese to replicate *guanxi* in their business and social dealings.

Mackie (2000) has dubbed this culturalist, family emphasis 'the essentialist fallacy'. Such an emphasis raises many questions. First, is the family the basis of all Chinese businesses? In comparing Chinese and Japanese family businesses, Numazaki (2000) reports that the Chinese in fact are more open and flexible about hiring non-familial members into family businesses. While Japanese family businesses are characterised by rigid maintenance of the business within family control, Chinese families tend to allow for non-kin participation in the 'extended family', which includes friends and acquaintances.

Second, are the Chinese naturally disposed to exploit familial resources in their business pursuits or are they compelled to do so? In this respect, Wong (1999) argues that the family's economic status predicts the propensity of its members in resorting to family resources. In his study of Hong Kong Chinese emigration in the pre- and post-1997 period, Wong points out that affluent families were inclined to use weak ties of friendship and avoid family assistance when emigrating, while working-class Chinese were compelled to use the family as it was their only resource. This suggests a general reluctance to use the family, an unwillingness to be indebted to it, when one's network is capable of being broadened to include other more functional and practical linkages. There is a certain utility–rationality in involvement in a network. The use of network capital (Lin 2001) is thus always deliberated upon, as a means to an end.

Moreover, businesses need other resources, such as management skills, that the family cannot always supply. It is no surprise that a divide between professional management and family capital has emerged in many family businesses. Wong contends that size matters a great deal: the larger the firm, the more likely it is to hire staff outside family-based networks. Peter Li (2000) also suggests that the bigger firms tend to rationalise their business operations and thus rely more on institutional and formal corporate or bureaucratic organisations to enhance the viability of their enterprise. This may also be due to an overall improvement in the state apparatus. A rationalised state apparatus and greater access to finance and the legal infrastructure would relegate most business networks and family ties increasingly to the back seat. As argued in Chapter 12, in Singapore, due to structural factors such as the weeding out of corruption, provision of infrastructure

and greater rationalisation and transparency of the state and economic apparatus, networks that used to serve Chinese businesses well are gradually being replaced by the state. Networks are supplanted by formal institutions as long as the latter remain dependable and useful.

As the Chinese have been forced by discriminatory external forces to concentrate on commerce, they are just as likely to have their descendants accredit themselves in professions to avoid such discrimination. Li Cheng's portrayal (2000) of the Chinese entrepreneur's desire for their descendants to gain professional credentials may underline a wish to be involved in other modes of livelihood besides entrepreneurship. This represents a movement away from reliance on the family to a role more integrated with the mainstream economy.

Finally, Chinese business networks are not the kind of harmonious, co-operative entity that popular conceptions have made them out to be. From the outside, a social group often appears more cohesive than it actually is, and insiders more similar, and therefore more co-operative, than they actually are. Of course, there are very good psychological reasons for the in-group to present itself as a coherent whole. But, as the study reported in Chapter 12 indicates, in examining family businesses, it is difficult to ignore the disharmony brought up by inheritance issues as well as personality clashes. Contrary to journalistic myth-making, members of the Chinese diaspora, both as individuals and collectively, are divided and fragmented by history, politics, class and ethnicity. As Schak (2000) has taken care to point out, the Taiwanese do not trust their Hong Kong or mainland counterparts in business dealings, and Singaporeans are well aware of the deep value differences that set them apart from the mainland Chinese. In other words, there is a flip side to the Chinese business networks, often not a very pleasant one.

12 Ethnic capitalism

Ever since the emergence of the Asian newly industrialising economies (NIEs) in the early 1980s and the subsequent rapid economic growth in the South-east Asian region since 1989, a voluminous scholarly as well as popular journalistic literature has attempted to account for this 'Asian miracle'. One of the most frequent explanations for such phenomenal Asian growth is the concentration of 'overseas Chinese' in this region. According to the literature, this ethnic group, culturally speaking, is 'hardworking, frugal, communitarian and pragmatic in outlook'. They represent a driving force propelling the economic growth of the region. The literature, however, has also 'discovered' 'the other side' of 'overseas Chinese' capitalism. Yoshihara (1988) calls it 'ersatz capitalism' while others label it 'crony capitalism'. In the midst of these two contending explanations, several other misperceptions about overseas Chinese capitalism have evolved. The purpose of this chapter is to use the Singapore experience to identify and dispel a number of such misperceptions as propounded by authors of popular as well as scholarly writings on the subject.

Perceptions of 'overseas Chinese' capitalism

While reviewing the literature, one often encounters a number of perceptions of overseas Chinese businessmen. First, ethnic Chinese, be they in South-east Asia, North America or Europe, are all called overseas Chinese. Redding (1990: 2) even considers Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan as such. Other times, they are called members of the 'Chinese diaspora' or 'sojourners'. The connotative meanings of such labelling are: like their predecessors, they are temporary settlers with an eventual aim of going back to their ancestral land in China; they are loyal to and have a close affinity for China; and they are a homogeneous group with a common cultural background, basically Confucian in character and outlook.

Second, these overseas Chinese, wherever they are, are linked into an integrated whole by a network like a cobweb. Some authors call it the 'bamboo network' (Weidenbaum and Hughes 1996), while others call it an 'invisible empire of overseas Chinese' (Seagrave 1996). Kotkin (1993) considers these overseas Chinese one of the 'global tribes' who belong to one race with one religion and

one identity. Moreover, these overseas Chinese are 'secretive, cliquish and fabulously wealthy' (Sender 1991), implying that the so-called bamboo network is closely guarded to the exclusion of other races. During the Cold War period, these overseas Chinese were suspected to be secret agents of the Beijing regime who, given the chance, would establish the 'Third or Fourth China' wherever possible so as to be part of the 'Greater China'.

Third, these overseas Chinese businesses are allegedly implicated in unethical and corrupt practices, involving bribery, smuggling, drug trafficking, slave trading, illegal money-lending, prostitution, extortion, speculation and illegal hoarding (Seagrave 1996). In the colonial days, they were middlemen, compradors, members of secret societies and sometimes power brokers involved in the exploitation of the natives. After independence, they allied with the ruling class and became its cronies. The purpose of such an unholy alliance was of course to make money and become rich.

Fourth, this group of sojourners' ulterior motive is to 'control' the national economy to perpetuate the creation of wealth for their own families. It is not uncommon for the scholarly as well as journalistic literature to give evidence of such control by reiterating that a small percentage of the overseas Chinese population own wealth out of proportion to their small population. The most fantastic example used is that a mere 3 per cent of the Chinese population control 75 per cent of the economy of Indonesia. Some writers consider such 'pervasive ownership and control of the national economy' as an indicator of the economic success of ethnic Chinese everywhere. Others regard the phenomenon as an indicator of ethnic Chinese exploiting the indigenous people – thus lending support to measures of affirmative action by the local government, or racism at the hands of the native working class and underclass.

Fifth, all Chinese businesses are allegedly family enterprises much influenced by Confucian cultural values such as communitarism, frugality, diligence and pragmatism. At the same time, the Chinese family business is characterised by paternalism, nepotism and personalism (Redding 1990). The Chinese use *guanxi* (personal connections) and *xinyong* (trustworthiness or loyalty) in their business dealings.

The scholarly and journalistic literature abounds with these stereotypic generalisations. Some authors use the 'good' aspects to explain the much-heralded success of ethnic Chinese business in South-east Asia and call it an 'Asian miracle'. Others emphasise the 'bad' aspects and hypothesise that they may be the main cause of the current Asian currency crisis. As it happens, the literature belonging to this genre continues to grow (Backman 1999). The same explanations for Chinese business success and failure are applied uncritically to different Asian economies without taking into account their own unique historical, social, economic and political circumstances.

Singaporean identity and 'overseas Chinese'

Over the decades, governments of South-east Asian nations, be they integrationist, assimilationist or accommodationist, have transformed the Chinese communi-

ties in their midst, which as a whole have become increasingly less 'Chinese' in a multiplicity of ways, even to the extent of shifting their political allegiance to their countries of residence. Notwithstanding this fact, many authors of the scholarly and journalistic literature (Tanaka *et al*. 1992; Kotkin 1993; Hodder 1996; Seagrave 1996; Weidenbaum and Hughes 1996) continue to label ethnic Chinese descendants in South-east Asia as overseas Chinese. These authors may not intend to question the loyalty of these Chinese to their countries of residence, but the implications arising from such labelling can be rather problematic. This literature is sometimes used as evidence of Chinese disloyalty, thus justifying affirmative action or even racial discrimination. The notion of overseas Chinese implies specifically that these people are sojourners who will eventually make their way back to their ancestral 'home' in mainland China. If that is the case, their long-term interest will not be with their countries of residence; the implication is that these overseas Chinese are ultimately loyal to China only. Equally misleading is the construction of these ethnic Chinese as a homogeneous group with Confucian values as their basic cultural traits, conveniently overlooking the plurality of religions and cultural beliefs found in these Chinese communities – a fact well documented in the sociological and anthropological literature (see Tong and Chan, 2001; Tong 1988, 1992).

In Singapore, ethnic Chinese, over three and a half decades, have gone through the transition from being overseas Chinese (before the 1950s) to being Chinese Singaporean (Chiew 1997). They consider themselves Singaporean first and *huaren* (ethnic Chinese) second, if ever. They would be horrified to be called overseas Chinese or *huaqiao,* the sojourners, especially the younger Singaporeans. Their political loyalty is to Singapore; China is just another foreign country whose people happen to be *Sons of the Yellow Emperor* (Pan 1994).

A related issue is the supposed motive behind the wave of investments by ethnic Chinese businessmen from South-east Asia, including Singapore, into mainland China since 1979. Some writers maintain that Chinese Singaporeans invest in China for emotive reasons – such as helping their ancestral homeland to develop – rather than for profit. Such a perception may have been true before the 1950s. One notable example was Tan Kah Kee, a Chinese businessman who mobilised financial resources in Malaya and Singapore during the Second World War and channelled the funds to China to fight Japan. After the Second World War, he donated a large sum of money to help rebuild China. He finally returned to his homeland for good. There were many other Chinese doing what Tan did at that time: Wang (1995) suggests that such cases belong to the Tan Kah Kee model. Under this model, 'philanthropy was extended to cover investments in the local industry, but mainly to support development projects already started' in one's home town (Wang 1995: 21). Such a motive can still be attributed to some Hong Kong businessmen, such as Li Ka-shing, who invests in China and helped build a university in his home town in Shantou, but this description is less relevant to present-day Singaporean businessmen.

Neither can the Singapore case be classified under Wang's (1995) Sincere-Wing On model. Under this model, overseas Chinese businessmen in the early

1900s invested in China for business reasons. However, they 'did so as a prelude to or as preparation for their eventual return to China' (Wang 1995: 21). But present-day Singaporean businessmen are rooted in Singapore, especially the second generation. For many of them, investment in China may be just another way to make money. Naturally, these Singapore businessmen, especially the older, Chinese-educated ones, have exploited their comparative ethnic advantage, using their ethnic and communal ties to enter the Chinese market. However, building up *guanxi* with their mainland counterparts is not always a successful strategy; it often incurs high transaction costs in terms of time and resources.

The authors of some scholarly literature also consider the ethnic Chinese in South-east Asia as a homogeneous group – one race, one tribe. They do not differentiate between the ethnic Chinese in Singapore and their counterparts in the Philippines, or those in Hong Kong, Taiwan and even mainland China. Suryadinata (1997) and Tan (1997) both argue forcefully that the Chinese in Singapore are not the same as their counterparts in other South-east Asian countries.

Even within Singapore itself, ethnic Chinese businessmen are not all the same. The ethnic Chinese businessmen in Singapore can be classified into two groups, and one is culturally more Chinese than the other, more numerous and belongs mainly to the first generation. Even the group itself is not homogeneous. The smaller the business, the more traditional and Chinese its outlook is; the larger the business, the more westernised in management style and corporate culture. The more Chinese group is mainly family owned and tends to be involved in banking, retail trade, hotel and restaurants, light manufacturing and property and real estate. Owners tend to be members of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI). They also participate actively in clan associations and alumni bodies of local Chinese schools. Vasil (1995) points out that, in the formative years after Singapore's independence, this group of Chinese businesses was alienated by the People's Action Party (PAP) government because of their stand on Chinese culture and language. The second, more westernised group of Chinese businesses is still relatively small in number. However, it is an emergent and promising group. Companies in this group are not based on traditional family lineage because of their short history. Moreover, a western management style is embedded in their corporate culture and company structure. More importantly, they are involved heavily in larger scale industries such as electronics, computers and telecommunication products. The owners are younger, better educated and may have worked in multinational corporations (MNCs) previously. To the policy makers of the Singapore government, this group stands a good chance of developing into an important partner in technology transfer from MNCs, as well as in joint ventures with MNCs and government-linked companies (GLCs) in their investments abroad.

Myths of 'overseas Chinese' business networks

According to Redding (1990: 95), an overseas Chinese network originally arose because the Chinese agrarian society had used this strategy to counter an unpre-

dictable officialdom. As China entered the twentieth century, a network built on social relations was still needed to ensure 'trust' and 'dependability' in business – especially when the formal institutions of law failed or were unavailable. The need for such a network arises when information is asymmetric, which tends to increase transaction costs. The establishment of a network will cut down transaction costs considerably, so that mutually beneficial trade can be transacted (Akerlof 1970). A network may exist in the form of a *huiguan* or clan association based on family surname, kinship, province or district and dialect. The more modern networks include alumni associations of local Chinese schools. In the colonial period, such associations in South-east Asia acted like banks through which members could borrow money, trade information, recruit workers and receive business introductions (Weidenbaum and Hughes 1996: 51). If a businessman violated an agreement, the entire Chinese network, acting as a 'moral community', would refrain from doing business with the guilty party. A moral community ensures moral conduct.

Such a network existed in Singapore (Cheng 1995). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, new Chinese immigrants or *sinkhek* received assistance through such networks. Chinese merchants, compradors and middlemen used these networks for all kinds of business dealings. The SCCCI was founded in 1906. Clan associations such as the Hokkien Huay Kuan or the Hokkien Association[1] were widespread; in the 1960s and 1970s, they were vocal about government policies on Chinese education and culture. For instance, Tan Lark Sye, who helped found Nanyang University in 1955, supported the opposition party – the Socialist Front – because it was considered sympathetic to Chinese culture and education (Vasil 1995; Leong 1998). In the formative years after Singapore's independence, Chinese traditional associations represented a political force to be reckoned with. To reduce their influence, the government set up an extensive network of community centres as well as the People's Association. Together with the creation of an English-speaking class through English-language schooling, the new centres brought about the eventual decline of the Chinese associations. In later years, as part of the 'Asianising Singapore' programme (Vasil 1995), the clan associations were encouraged by the government to revive their activities as part of the strategy to put a brake on increasing western influence. In 1986, the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA) was founded to focus on cultural activities, leaving SCCCI to concentrate on business and economics. However, these traditional associations are less potent as a Chinese network than they were, as Redding (1990) has shown, because formal institutions of courts and law are now well established and capable of performing the role once played by the traditional Chinese network.

Corruption and crony capitalism

In recent years, several authors have blamed ethnic Chinese business for the rampant corruption in South-east Asian countries. Some authors even note that Chinese business can only thrive in a context of corruption and bribery, as ethnic

Chinese join forces with the ruling class, becoming their cronies to circumvent regulations for their own gain. One such view is put forth in Yoshihara's book *The Rise of Ersatz Capitalism in South-east Asia* (1988), which notes that most Chinese entrepreneurs in South-east Asia are 'ersatz capitalists', as opposed to industrial capitalists. 'Ersatz capitalists' are basically monopolists, rent-seekers and speculators who rely on the support of the ruling elite. Some argue that such crony capitalism contributed to the last Asian currency crisis.

Crony capitalism and corruption are not common in Singapore. The PAP government, after its ascendancy in 1959 under self-government rule, was determined to wipe out corruption in the civil service. Over the past decades, the government has established a number of safeguards against corruption among civil servants. Among them are transparency in rules and regulations, severe punishment including jail terms, confiscation of wealth accumulated illegally and strict enforcement of rules and laws. Moreover, any Singaporean involved in corruption overseas can be brought back to Singapore for legal prosecution. The most effective deterrent against corruption is the high salaries and the respect given to those with jobs in the civil service; corruption is less appealing when it pays well to be honest. As for businessmen who want to buy privileges, such a course is difficult in present-day Singapore, where government servants are unlikely to collude. In addition, all business transactions now have to be formalised in Singapore to provide redress to aggrieved parties as well as to prevent corruption and tax evasion. Moreover, trading rules are more transparent now than they were in the 1950s and 1960s, so there are fewer opportunities for exploitation.

Relatively weak private Chinese business

The economic position of ethnic Chinese business in Singapore is very different from that of other South-east Asian countries, where ethnic Chinese are the minority and yet have a large share in the economy. In Singapore, ethnic Chinese are the majority (75 per cent of the total population) and yet Chinese businesses do not play a pivotal role in the economy. In fact, they are relatively weak compared with government-linked companies (GLCs)[2] and multinational corporations (MNCs). There are three major factors contributing to the weakness of the traditional Chinese business in Singapore, namely government alienation in the 1960s and early 1970s, the fast-disappearing conditions for exploiting ethnic resources and cultural values, and the 'crowding-out effect'.

Tan (1996) observes that ethnic Chinese business in Singapore missed the chance of playing a pivotal role in the Singapore economy in the early 1960s. He argues that Chinese businessmen then tended to have a 'short-term' and 'opportunistic' outlook and considered their business ventures as temporary due to political unrest, racial tension, the Indonesian confrontation and the eventual separation from Malaysia. Accordingly, they avoided the manufacturing sector, particularly the high-tech industries, which normally take a longer time to show a profit. In subsequent years, traditional Chinese businesses were left far behind to play second fiddle to MNCs and GLCs (except in the banking sector). They

have continued to concentrate on traditional sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, light manufacturing, and hotels and restaurants. As a group, they have been marginalised somewhat and have not had a significant impact on the economy.

Tan's observations above may be applicable to a small portion of the Chinese businessmen, but do not describe the majority of them, who had shifted their political allegiance to Singapore by the 1950s. Many of them were afraid of returning to mainland China, especially after the communist takeover in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. According to Huff (1994), one of the most significant factors contributing to the eventual decline of traditional Chinese businessmen was the political alienation of this group by the PAP government. To Vasil (1995: 34), since the self-government rule by the PAP in 1959, these businessmen were vocal about the educational and cultural policies adopted by the government to de-emphasise the 'Chineseness' of Singapore. As a consequence, some of the businessmen, including Tan Lark Sye, openly supported the opposition party (Leong 1998).

The PAP government then pursued a two-legged policy by attracting MNCs and setting up GLCs, leaving the traditional Chinese business behind to play an insignificant role in economic development. In the mid-1970s, the government maintained that these Chinese businesses were dragging the economy down, because of their low productivity and intensive use of labour resources in the wake of severe labour shortages. The government, through the Economic Development Board (EDB), then stepped up its financial and technical assistance to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). To restructure and upgrade the economy, including the SMEs, the government introduced in 1979 the 'corrective wage policy'[3] through the National Wage Council (NWC). In 1982, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) switched to an exchange rate targeted for macroeconomic stabilisation and to accelerate the restructuring process (Ng 1996a). However, these policy measures not only failed to restructure and upgrade local enterprises, but indeed created severe hardship in the business community, in particular among the SMEs. Together with the adverse international economic conditions, such policy measures eventually resulted in a recession in 1985 (Krause *et al*. 1987). The government then shifted gears to bring in the SMEs, which were owned mainly by ethnic Chinese, as a full partner in economic development. During 1985–86, the government set up a venture capital fund and a second board called the Stock Exchange of Singapore Dealing and Automated Quotation (SESDAQ) for raising capital for SMEs. In 1989, the government came out with the SME Master Plan and the concept of the Growth Triangle as part of a strategy to reallocate labour-intensive industries to neighbouring Johor of Malaysia and Batam of Indonesia. In the early 1990s, these Chinese businesses were also encouraged by the government to invest in China to help launch the 'external wing' of the Singapore economy. By 1998, there were more than sixty government schemes to help SMEs (*Straits Times* 1998).

The second most important reason for the historical decline of the traditional Chinese business in Singapore is that the conditions for exploiting ethnic resourc-

es and cultural values were fast disappearing by late 1968. Rules and regulations as well as their enforcement were made more transparent and were rationalised to prevent corrupt practices, misappropriation of funds and tax evasion. Contract laws were amended to ensure avenues for seeking redress for aggrieved parties. In a way, all these changes have rendered the use of the traditional Chinese network for business transactions unwieldy. As a result, the local Chinese network, especially through clans and associations, has been weakened.

The third reason for the eclipse of the traditional Chinese business is the crowding-out effect exerted by MNCs and GLCs in the product market, saving and investment process and labour market (Tan 1996). In the product market, the crowding-out effect is mostly felt in the services (especially wholesale and retail trade) and banking sectors (in competition with well-established foreign banks from developed countries). But the effect does not penetrate into higher end products such as telecommunications, the biochemical industry and the petrochemical industry, as SMEs are generally weak in this area. In the saving and investment process, the crowding-out effect arises from the compulsory Central Provident Fund (CPF)[4] contributions. As Tan (1996: 162) observes, 'the CPF contribution has made it difficult for those would-be entrepreneurs to save the critical requirements to start their business venture'. In addition, the then Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) competed directly for savings deposits with local banks, which were mainly owned by Chinese bankers (Tan 1992: 359–61).

Nevertheless, the most severe crowding-out effect on the SMEs is in the tight labour market (Krause *et al*. 1987; Lee and Low 1990; Tan 1996). The effect arises from two sources. One is the stiff competition for talented young employees among the civil service, GLCs, MNCs and Chinese firms. GLCs and the civil service offer various overseas scholarships to attract young staff and bind them for six to eight years. MNCs also offer similar attractive scholarships and better career prospects to retain good staff. Chinese SMEs cannot normally afford this kind of attractive package of benefits and well-respected jobs, much to their own detriment. Only the Chinese banking sector is able to do so, not the numerous small and medium Chinese enterprises (90,000 of them). In short, the small and medium Chinese firms have to be contented with the poorer quality of their manpower resources now and in the future. Tan (1996: 165) also observes that, for every wage increase, there is another wage differentiation that works to the disadvantage of Chinese firms; as a group, they suffer from the outward mobility of skilled manpower resources to GLCs, MNCs and the civil service.

Beyond family business and a new breed of entrepreneurs

Cultural factors have been invoked in the scholarly as well as journalistic literature to explain the success of ethnic Chinese business in South-east Asia. In Singapore, the cultural explanation may account for the success of early immigrant entrepreneurs in the first half of the twentieth century (Chan and Chiang 1994). In times of less rule and order, cultural factors in the networks acted as an anchor, a

self-imposed discipline against drifting into delinquencies such as gambling. To this day, the older generation of the traditional group, especially the SMEs, still adhere to, albeit to a lesser degree now, familism, Confucian values, *guanxi* and *xinyong* (Yao 1987; Menkhoff 1993). However, as noted earlier, cultural factors alone could not sustain the initial success of these traditional Chinese businesses because of government alienation, changing circumstances and the crowding-out effect. Even if one invokes business networks, *xinyong* and Confucian values to explain the success of the traditional Chinese business, it remains difficult to provide sufficient empirical evidence to test the hypotheses. This is because there are many other factors such as a conducive business environment, regional economic boom, macroeconomic stability, and so on, that are at work at the same time. It is equally difficult to isolate the contribution of such cultural factors from that of other variables, in quantitative terms. Granted one can indeed isolate these cultural factors, there is no certainty that such factors are peculiar to the ethnic Chinese (Hodder 1996; Dirlik 1997). Better cross-cultural, comparative research will generate evidence to bear on our last observation.

There is also a tendency in the scholarly literature to emphasise solidarity and co-operation within the ethnic Chinese group. Conflict and tension, such as family feuds, cut-throat competition, conflict between family and non-family members, forcing out minority partners, intrafamily competition for authority, retention of key positions for family members only, succession problems, fragmentation of business, hostile takeovers and so on, are well known but not well researched. This is partly due to difficulties in obtaining information on these aspects as ethnic Chinese are generally disinclined to reveal the internal workings of the family in public. Given such an information gap, the resultant impression is that Chinese businesses are conducted harmoniously among themselves.

Since the 1980s, a new breed of Chinese entrepreneurs has emerged in Singapore who depend much less on familism, *xinyong* and *guanxi* associated with Chinese business. Chew (1996) attributes the rise of this new crop of entrepreneurs to greater competition among graduates, an increase in the supply of graduates, technological advancement in Singapore (which reduces technical constraints encountered by entrepreneurs), a conducive business environment and increased affluence and regional development. One notable example of this new breed of entrepreneurs is Sim Wong Hoo who, without family lineage resources, founded Creative Technology in 1981 with Ng Kai Wa and Chay Kwong Soon (Tang 1996). Creative Technology has become one of the top 10 largest private Chinese firms in Singapore, specialising in multimedia and computer products. Sim Wong Hoo has received Singapore's Businessman of the Year award twice, in 1992 and 1998, and is touted as the role model for the new breed of entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

This chapter has made a discovery that seems obvious: that the ethnic Chinese who live throughout South-east Asia are not all the same. They are usually not 'overseas Chinese' whose allegiance is to mainland China. They do not want to

live in China. They are not a 'tribe', composed of one culture and one religion. If a researcher looks deeply into one of the ethnic Chinese communities outside mainland China, he or she will encounter a myriad of factors that divide and separate one group of Chinese from another. While the myth of ethnic sameness hides conflicts and tensions within and between ethnic Chinese communities, the differential Chineseness thesis takes them as a sociological phenomenon and shows that the idea of Chinese merchants doing business only among themselves defies logic and reason.

This thesis of differences among Chinese also bears on our analysis of Chinese business networks. Again, Chinese business networks are of different types that are negotiated and organised by a host of factors: size and nature of business, style of management, nature of relationships between ownership and management, and alternative ties and connections other than familial ones. The last factor reminds us not to equate Chinese business networks with family. There is a need to go beyond family and kin ties to realise that other ties also count, especially those based on social club membership (Buchanan 1965; Sandler and Tschirhart 1980) or schooling.

The problem at hand is made even more complex when one sees Chinese business networks as a process – forever changing and in flux – reaching backwards and forwards in time. Like others in the global business arena, Chinese businessmen must grapple with the tension of tradition and modernity. Chinese enterprises today are perhaps best described as ones 'in transition', 'between generations' or 'at the crossroads' of past, present and future. In a contemporary Chinese enterprise, capital and management are no longer monopolised by the owner-family. Younger, better educated Harvard or Stanford business school graduates are experimenting with new ways of doing things in firms that just happen to be owned by ethnic Chinese, which in itself does not make the firms Chinese. Future scholarship on business networks badly needs a theory of organisational change that conceptualises business and organisation as a process rather than an entity fixed or mummified in time – in other words, a sociology of business that takes history seriously, tracing it all the way back to decades ago to cure itself of short-sightedness. A serious orientation that takes history into account will enable us to 'discover' that Chinese businesses in Singapore, or in the Malay world, have not always been successful. There is a kind of ebb and flow depending on the prevailing relations between the Chinese and the various power elites. By wearing comparative, cross-cultural lenses, scholars may discover the extent to which Chinese business is unique or, as we would maintain, not so unique. The analyst who looks beyond a Chinese enterprise may find that the 'family-first principle', the predominance of the family and kin in business, the ethnic Chinese solidarity and the emphasis on trust and *guanxi,* and so on, are not uniquely Chinese.

Our plea for a new scholarship on business networks thus rests on the idea of variety and plurality, which enables us to ward off any propensity towards inventing and perpetuating myths, or culturalising. When it is used, culture must be a slimmed-down little fellow, not a begin-all, end-all kind of explanation. Not all of the complexity and nuances of the social world can be attributed to culture. It is

often simplified by the outsiders looking in; but the real danger is when there is a collusion between outsiders and insiders, a kind of cognitive and then ideological hegemony such that the insiders begin to look unthinkingly and unknowingly at their own world in the way the outsiders want them to. A new scholarship grounded in comparative ethnography and a reflective, historically informed sociology of knowledge will keep us from the pitfalls of myth-making.

13 Singaporeans doing business in China

In 1985, the Singapore government signed the Investment Protection and the Avoidance of Double Taxation Treaties with the Chinese authorities. Since then, in the drive to regionalise the Singapore economy, there has been a rapid increase in capital investments in China. In 1994 alone, new investments in China totalled a record US$3.78 billion. From 1979 to 1994, over US$8.6 billion was invested in China, in over 4,565 projects, making Singapore the fifth largest foreign investor in China, after Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan and the United States. The pace of investments has quickened considerably since. In 1995, a total of US$8.67 billion worth of new direct investment contracts were signed, more than the cumulative total from 1979 to 1994. More importantly, several of the projects, such as the Singapore-Suzhou Township and the Wuxi Industrial Park, are rather long-term commitments. When completed, the Singapore-Suzhou project will cost almost US$20 billion (*Straits Times* 1999).

The bulk of the investments were in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, where most Chinese Singaporeans originated from. Until 1994, over 80 per cent of all Singaporean investment projects were in these two provinces, consisting primarily of private Singaporean companies and tending to be relatively small projects. Government-led investments, especially by companies such as Keppel and Sembawang, have focused their resources in the north, particularly in Jiangsu, Liaoning and Shandong. The level of investments in Shandong, in particular, has increased dramatically since 1994. While earlier investments were centred in these regions, from 1994 on, investments have extended to more peripheral areas in China, such as Yunnan and Sichuan. One reason for this development is that areas such as Guangdong and Fujian are already well established; new investors are looking at the less exploited inland China provinces. These areas are attractive because the local provincial governments are keen to develop them and often offer attractive concessions such as low-cost prime land and reduced red tape.

The type and scale of investments have also changed. In the initial period, funds were directed towards real estate development, food processing and manufacturing. Nowadays, while smaller enterprises continue to invest in these traditional fields, there has been a diversification into leisure and recreation, the tourism industry, environmental protection, warehousing finance, logistics, communica-

tions and information technology and large-scale projects such as the development of ports, industrial parks and infrastructural projects. These are often massive projects with huge injection of capital and are most commonly undertaken by Singapore government-linked companies in joint ventures with third-country firms or Chinese state investment agencies. For strategic and financial reasons, these joint ventures – which require the cooperation of Chinese state agencies – remain the favoured form of investment. The growth of investments has also led to an increase in the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries. In 1994, for example, bilateral trade totalled S$7.6 billion.

Business networks: functions and dysfunctions

Networks allow the businessman to utilise resources far greater than any one person can muster. A businessman, particularly when he is just starting out, can draw upon the resources of his kin, both real and fictional. These resources can take the form of information and knowledge, access to suppliers and markets, labour and, most importantly, capital. Put another way, there is strength in numbers. A company may be weak, but its possession of a dense and rich *guanxi* network can result in a strong, larger grouping and a more resilient firm. This is especially important when competing with multinational companies and dealing with the state. *Guanxi* are particularly powerful when they are institutionalised into formal structures, such as the Chinese Chamber of Commerce or guilds (see Redding 1990; Hamilton 1996).

Guanxi networks also allow a company to diversify into new trades through partnerships and joint ventures, creating interlocking directorships, cross-subsidiaries and sub-subsidiaries. The resultant interlocking structure, at both the formal and the informal levels, allows the businessman to expand without losing ownership of the company or control over its resources.

The Chinese emphasis on networks and informal structure can be traced, in part, to their need to cope with institutional insecurity, whether in China or in the host communities where the migrants have settled (Bodde and Morris 1973; Cheng 1985). Historically, the Chinese had to contend with the nepotism of Chinese emperors, the corruption of the dynastic bureaucracy and the lack of a sound legal system. In the host countries, the Chinese migrant had to cope with discrimination meted out by colonial rulers such as the British in Singapore and Malaysia and the Dutch in Indonesia, as well as the indigenous populations. This has resulted in the Chinese businessman's distrust of the legal system, a fear of outsiders and a dependency on the trustworthiness of his co-ethnics.

Networks allow for flexibility and informality in business dealings. The use of informal ties allows traders to handle the dilemma of having to co-operate as well as compete with one another. They do not threaten the dominance and control that owners have over their own firms, but can bring about unity and co-operation (Wong 1985; Tong 1996).

While *guanxi* is fundamental to economic transactions among Chinese businessmen, what is noteworthy is that, although profit-making is the main underly-

ing motivating force, economic actions are embedded in larger social relations that influence business decisions (Landa 1983; Granovetter 1985). At the same time, *guanxi* cannot be understood merely as a cultural concept. In an environment of uncertainty, distrust and hostility, *guanxi* is an essential resource and coping strategy.

Such a personalised system, despite its merits, has its disadvantages. Just as social relations enable action, they also restrict it. For example, while *guanxi* facilitates problem-solving, it can be cumbersome and costly when there are too many obligations to fulfil. A trader may be required to reciprocate disproportionately to a favour. This situation is difficult to avoid because favours cannot be objectively quantified. The cost of a compromise may be heavy, especially when social obligations in kinship demand one repeatedly to overlook the misdemeanours of others. Because of this, the social obligations required by *guanxi* may sometimes prove to be crippling. For example, Wong (1988), in his study of spinners in Hong Kong, found that over 50 per cent of his respondents felt an obligation to appoint relatives against their own better judgement. In this sense, family orientation poses thorny management problems.

One is inclined to rely on a dependable *guanxi* and to retain amiable ongoing relations. Traders feel more comfortable and secure working with familiar people, but the value of a *guanxi* is never permanent. When relations between firms are anchored upon their proprietors, problems arise because 'When the old man dies, that's it'. With the passing away of the entrepreneur, it is difficult to retain and maintain the prevailing *guanxi*. Thus, the dependence on personalised relations creates problems of inheritance and wealth distribution. It tends to result in firms that can shut down or fragment into separate companies upon the death of the founder.

In spite of the awareness of these disadvantages and weaknesses, the commitment to the personalised mode remains strong. The myth of personalism remains vivid, and Chinese businessmen are predisposed to abide by the line of action that they have always taken to be reasonable, appropriate and meaningful. It is the close personal relationship and its corresponding mutual trust that ensures security in business transactions. It is also for this reason that 'networks are only good for those who know each other very well'. Personal trust has more than just a functional (economic) value. What survives organisationally may not be the most efficient or effective way, but it survives anyway because it has become instilled with value within that specific institutional context. Things, forms and practices may be valued in themselves, irrespective of their contribution to the efficiency of the organisation.

The study

This chapter identifies and examines the dynamics underlining the various ways in which Singaporean Chinese and mainland Chinese do business. It explores the implication of similarities and differences in the business conduct of the two

groups of businessmen for the future of Singaporean Chinese doing business in China.

This chapter is based on an analysis of two data sources. The first source consists of data from face-to-face and telephone interviews completed in 1995 with twenty Singaporean Chinese businessmen. They ranged from twenty-five to sixty years old and varied in terms of educational level, stream of education (Chinese or English educated) and number of years spent doing business in China (Leong 1996: 55).[1] The second source consists of in-depth interviews conducted in 1996 with fourteen Singaporean Chinese businessmen then investing in China, who were between thirty-five and sixty years old. Our Singaporean respondents were keenly aware of what set them apart from their Chinese counterparts; they were articulate about the differences between the Chinese and the Singaporean ways of doing business.

The social

Eating, talking, drinking and entertaining – activities properly belonging to the social and the interpersonal – are part and parcel of the Chinese business culture:

> To do business there, you must be prepared to spend time and money on entertainment. Like they say, no venture, no gain. The Chinese there love drinking and eating.
>
> I feel like a Chinese when I have to spend a lot of time eating and drinking with the mainland people.
>
> To cultivate a relationship, you have to spend time on entertainment. Eating and drinking is a must because the Chinese there believe that even if you are poor, you should be poor in style. Being a Chinese does give me the advantage over the non-Chinese while building *guanxi* because we share the same interest in eating. Eating is one important way of helping you clinch that deal and building your network. This is because when that person knows you well, he would be willing to help you in other areas. That person is the key to help you extend your network as he knows a vast number of people who can be useful to you.
>
> We spend a lot of time eating and drinking. We have to entertain them many times before we can clinch the deal. In order to build up this *guanxi*, it is important to make them trust you. You must be willing to build up the relationship before signing the contract. You must be prepared to entertain them as much as possible until they feel comfortable enough to trust you.

This accentuation on the social possibly expresses a deeper desire of the Chinese to personalise business relations; it stems from their antipathy to strangers, their propensity to transform the strange and the unknown into the friendly and

the known. The Chinese thus exert considerable time and effort to 'do emotion work'. Business relations are social relations; and the social and economic realms are like interwoven threads. Business relations, like social relations, are for the long haul. To sustain and consolidate them, Chinese businessmen make an emotional investment and expect others to do the same. Unaccustomed to the social and failing to see its link to 'the deal', Singaporean businessmen experience the recreational prelude to business with discomfort:

> A lot of entertainment before closing a deal. This is so unlike in Singapore where after only about two meetings, the deal is almost clinched.

> *Guanxi is* important but Singaporeans tend to lose out to the Hong Kong people who do not mind spending a lot just to please the mainland Chinese. They are willing to splurge and entertain the mainland Chinese on an elaborate scale. Singaporeans would not go through this elaborate process of entertainment.

The oral

Much of the Chinese business world thrives on a 'talking culture'. Unlike the Singaporean businessman whose business conduct is guided and regulated by laws and contracts – the quintessential artefacts of a 'writing culture' that values nothing more than the written word – the Chinese businessman typically starts with a bare skeleton of written agreements and rules, leaving the rest to negotiation and oral interpretation as the business relationship evolves. Additional clauses are added and dropped as the need arises. To a Singaporean, an oral culture that relies on the spoken, the interpretive and the emergent is a deep source of insecurity and anxiety. To a Chinese, a writing culture that insists on the written, the legalistic, curbs his freedom and makes him uneasy. To a Chinese, the spoken word is binding. A person's character can be judged by his speech, and his trustworthiness can be judged by whether he does what he says he will do. To a Singaporean, the verbal contract is messy and unclear; it does not bind. The written/contractional is tidy; it controls and predicts business conduct. The Singaporean is less satisfied with the verbal agreement:

> We are different from them in the way we work. We are more legally conscious and tend to work within a legal framework of things . . . For construction projects in Singapore, we have tons of paperwork and documents, but do not expect that it would be the same in China. They use only a few pages of documentation for one project.

> The mainland way of doing business puts very little stress on paperwork as many things are based on trust and verbal agreement. This does not mean that nothing is written down on paper. The main points of the agreement are put down in black and white.

> You have to learn to trust more because the mainland Chinese rely more on trust and verbal agreement than the written contract.

> Many Singaporeans do not believe in making contracts verbally and this is where they lose out. In China, it is very important to have verbal contracts – the ability to make a transaction over the phone is valued.

The moral

A Chinese businessman probably has a 'moral' motive in his emphasis on the social and the interpersonal. The social arena provides a more relaxed, less intentional context in which to observe and judge character:

> The mainland people like to talk to you and get to know you. They like the personal touch, the little details you provide them. They are very grateful and would help you as much as possible, once you have won their heart.

> The Chinese style of doing business is going slow, that is, a slow build-up to cultivate the relationship as they like to spend time getting to know you. Are you sincere, are you honest?

> It depends a lot on your sincerity. You have to prove your sincerity in doing business with them before you can gain any privilege.

> The Chinese like to establish good relations with you before closing any deal. There is a lot of talking, socialising to do before you can close the deal. So you and your Chinese partner may end up being part partners and part friends at the end of it.

Conceptions of time

Singaporeans and Chinese businessmen have different conceptions of time and probably also use time differently. Singaporeans value efficiency, productivity and effective and 'rational' (economical) use of time; to them, time is measured in terms of tangible rewards – the less time spent, the better. The Chinese proclivity to socialise as a prelude to closing a business deal is at worst a waste of time to a Singaporean, and at best a mystery:

> As to my relationship with my mainland partner, it can be quite frustrating. The mainland Chinese prefer gradual build-up to the relationship so that they get to know you better. So they tend to go slow in the way they handle business. Singaporean businessmen tend to be impatient and would rather go straight to the point with anyone who can offer a good profit potential. They do not spend time cultivating a relationship.

> Trust is built over time. I guess both parties will start off on a suspicious note. True character will show in the passage of time . . . The only way to deal with the Chinese is to learn to build a relationship with them slowly. The American or Singaporean approach of double speed, double time doesn't work there.

To a Chinese, the social and economic realms of business are inseparable. Together, they form a coherent whole, one reinforcing the other; all of them 'cost time'.

Any foreigner, Singaporeans included, who insists that spending time in building interpersonal relationships is peripheral to doing business will spend time the Chinese way with discomfort.

Guanxi: functions and dysfunctions

In so far as investing time and energy in developing *guanxi* is essential business conduct, the Chinese certainly have no monopoly. However, in China, *guanxi* takes on an added importance, partly because it is almost a moral imperative, and partly because it is an indispensable strategy for coping with the Chinese bureaucracy, ever-changing investment regulations, a less than transparent legal system and difficulty in obtaining reliable data for investment analysis. A survey found these to be the four top-ranked problems that Singaporeans faced when doing business in China (*Straits Times* 1996a).

In China, *guanxi* is valued not only for its utility in building relationships and nurturing *ganqing* (feelings, affection), it is instrumental in solving the many structural and infrastructural problems in the larger economy. In addition, *guanxi* expands one's business frontiers. In China, *guanxi* is both a means to an end and an end in itself. At the interpersonal level, *guanxi* cements sentiments; at the macro level, it exploits an otherwise hostile environment.

Our Singaporean respondents were aware of the limits of *guanxi*, especially its exploitative potentials:

> *Guanxi is* having the right connections or relations. But too much *guanxi* is not good because it means that you have more obligations to more people.

> When a business relationship becomes too personal, it may lead to exploitation.

> There is a possibility of one party being exploited or taken advantage of by the other when the relationship becomes too close.

> It is very important to have the right *guanxi* to help you in your business but it can be very troublesome and costly if you have to use *guanxi* every time you want things done. I find that I would be indebted to a lot of people if I use *guanxi* too often. Sure, *guanxi* enables you to get things done faster and if

> you don't have it, you may end up with no business at all. But then, you will lose all your money just depending on *guanxi* every time.

After having been embedded in such social and emotional ties, a Singaporean businessman often finds himself in a dilemma when asked by his Chinese counterpart for special favours – as in hiring or promoting his relatives. To ignore such requests would undermine the *guanxi* and harm the *ganqing*. To grant them is to encourage nepotism and risk violating the principles of meritocracy that the Singaporean values.

The more the Singaporean businessman has invested his emotions in relation building, now seeing his Chinese business counterpart as friend, or 'brother', the more difficult it will be for him to voice his anxiety or fears about the potentials of exploitation or emotional blackmail. He is thus locked into a dissatisfying relationship. The inscription of feelings over a business relationship that is supposedly practical and rational inhibits the expression of interpersonal dissatisfaction while foreclosing the possibility of any discourse on fair play, reciprocity and mutuality.

As the enabling functions of *guanxi* have been touted in their ideal form – almost as a taken-for-granted business ethos – the idea that *guanxi* can be disabling (to one party or to both) is difficult to articulate even in private because it has serious interpersonal, moral and practical consequences. As a result, 'the dark side' of *guanxi* and *ganqing* remains unarticulated, unanalysed and poorly understood. That *guanxi* and *ganqing* are good for business is well known in both the scholarly literature and the lay business community. In social science, analyses typically focus on business successes rather than failures, system equilibrium and harmony rather than structural conflict and exploitation. That an over-reliance on *guanxi* and *ganqing* can harm business is an untold story. Among academics, this is partly due to a lack of a self-reflective, critical discourse on the functions and dysfunctions of *guanxi* and *ganqing*.

Conclusion

Ethnic networking seems to be the catch phrase these days as Chinese, Indian and Malay Singaporeans exploit ties with their co-ethnics in their homelands and diasporas to do business. In the race for business, the business of race is serious business (*Straits Times* 1996b). This 'ethnic advantage thesis' is articulated by Kotkin (1993) as a paradox that juxtaposes a new, rational world order with the localising powers of race, ethnicity and religion (see also Weidenbaum and Hughes 1996). Global forces of divergence and convergence seem to be at work simultaneously.

The interview data of our study do not entirely contradict this ethnic advantage thesis. Singaporean Chinese businessmen doing business in China were articulate about the advantage of sharing a culture and language with the Chinese. Being Chinese is, no doubt, a business asset. It bonds the Singaporean and mainland Chinese. However, a deeper analysis also shows that there are differences in cul-

tural ethos and business conduct that set the two peoples apart. A mainland Chinese sees socialising with his business associates as part of 'the deal' and a way to infer the latter's moral character and judge whether he is sincere, honest and trustworthy. A mainland Chinese businessman works with a minimum of written agreements while relying on goodwill to realise and interpret verbal agreements. He also prefers a slow, gradual build-up in his business conduct – his conception of time differs markedly from that of a Singaporean. As far as a Chinese businessman is concerned, this emphasis on the social, moral, oral and temporal realms of his business conduct lends itself readily to the creation, development and maintenance of *guanxi* networks. As social/interpersonal relations, *guanxi* is precarious and thus requires vigilant accommodation and adjustment on the part of both parties. In China, *guanxi* is fundamental to business success, a fact the Singaporean businessman has learned not to ignore.

On the one hand, Singaporean and Chinese businessmen, to a certain extent, are united by a shared ethnicity and heritage – origin, language, food, kinship, familism and religion. This shared ethnicity, both real and imagined, bonds them and bestows a feeling of psychological comfort. In this sense, Singaporeans who are older and Chinese educated are more at home with the mainland Chinese culture. Their English-educated colleagues have had to 'reculturalise' themselves. On the other hand, the cognitive and behavioural differences between the two peoples are substantial enough to cause anxiety and discomfort, especially in that the Singaporeans, decades before the Chinese, have launched themselves on the road of development, modernisation and globalisation.

Singaporeans doing business in China have thus found themselves arbitrating their own cultural sameness and difference while interacting with the mainland Chinese – a Singaporean Chinese is like them and not like them; or he is like them now, but not like them later. When a Singaporean assimilates himself into the Chinese business culture of the mainland or displays his cultural sameness with his Chinese counterpart, he is building ethnic solidarity – he is exploiting the ethnic advantage. He is creating a zone of comfort for himself and the other. Yet, ironically, his greater asset lies in his difference from the mainland Chinese.

Singapore, thanks to diligent statesmanship and diplomacy, enjoys considerable political goodwill in Beijing. Chinese officials see Singapore as a model for modernisation without westernisation, industrialisation without massive social dislocation (*Straits Times* 1993a). Singaporean businessmen are 'desired' in China for their managerial and technical skills, their professionalism, and 'their reliability in delivering on commitments' (*Straits Times* 1993b). The Chinese stereotype Hong Kongers and Taiwanese as aggressive and crafty, and Singaporeans as trustworthy and reliable (*Straits Times* 1993b; Leong 1996).

As the data in our study have shown, Singaporeans are concerned about excessive reliance on *guanxi*, prefer to work within the legal system and emphasise efficiency, productivity and the effective use of time. All these differentiate a Singaporean from a Chinese. Yet, ironically, it is this very difference that the Chinese desire and need to learn from in order to get on in the world. In a deep anthropological sense, the Singaporean provides the Chinese with a window to

the west, to the world. To a Singaporean, his greatest asset lies in his ability to strategise on his ethnic identity (of being Chinese) and his national identity (of being Singaporean) in his presentation of self. He invokes his identities in context. By strategically balancing his dual identities, he can open up many options for himself and increase his 'degree of freedom' (Chan and Tong 1995). This ability to arbitrate sameness and difference – to oscillate between ethnic and national identities – may cast the Singaporean in a new role in the emerging international order of trade and commerce, that of a cultural broker or 'knowledge arbitrator' (Lee 1993). The hybrid Singaporean will arbitrate differences in culture and knowledge between societies in the east and the west. He bridges divergent cultures and benefits from it materially. He has an advantage through his hybridity, his inner multiculturalism. He is the classical marginal man or the trading middleman for a new world stage – a role the Republic of Singapore has already begun to play while mediating between China and third-party investors, of which Germany is the latest example (*Straits Times* 1996c, 1996d).

Notes

1 Coping with racism

1 The three Royal Commission inquiries are: (1) Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Methods by which Oriental Labourers have been Induced to Come to Canada (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1908); (2) Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (Ottawa: Printed by Order of the Commission, 1885); and (3) Report of the Royal Commission on Oriental Immigration (Ottawa: Printed by S.E. Dawson, 1902).

2 Ethnic stereotypes in the media

1 For a comprehensive review and critique of the literature on stereotypes, see Brigham (1971).
2 In his book *Gold Mountain, The Chinese in the New World* (1983), A. Chan devoted an entire chapter (pp. 161–6) to the CTV 'Campus Giveaway' incident, focusing on how the Chinese in Canada mobilised resources on a national level to demand a public apology from the CTV administration.
3 For a critical treatment of the 'sojourner' controversy in the literature about the Chinese, read A. Chan (1983).

5 Racial discrimination and social response

1 The 1981 census recorded 19,255 Chinese by ethnic origin in metropolitan Montreal, accounting for 0.30 per cent of the total Quebec population, whereas leaders of the Chinese community have often estimated the number of Chinese in the city to be in excess of 30,000. The majority of the recent influx in the Chinese community were ethnic Chinese refugees from Indochina admitted to Canada in 1979. Between 1975 and 1978, Canada took in 9,060 Indochinese refugees through the Special Vietnamese and Cambodian Programme. In 1979–1980, through the Indochinese Refugee Programme, a total of 60,049 refugees from Vietnamese, Cambodia and Laos were resettled in Canada.

The Canada census of 1981 recorded 11,345 Vietnamese (by place of birth) in Quebec, 3,370 Cambodians and 2,445 Laotians, giving a total of 17,160 Indochinese in the province. It is estimated that about 30 per cent of these 17,160 Indochinese are ethnic Chinese.

2 Other than one representative from each of the four target communities, this advisory committee also consisted of two researchers from the Quebec Human Rights Commission, one information officer from the Canadian Human Rights Commission

in Montreal and two representatives of the Centre for Research–Action on Race Relations.

8 Voluntary associations and ethnic boundaries

1 A Chinese noodle factory located at the corner of Côté and La Gauchetière Streets.
2 During my group interview with the five board members of the UCCC, I was impressed by their hope that one day all Chinese in Quebec, irrespective of their birthplace, country of origin, religious and political affiliation or language, would unite into one community with one voice; subsumed under this great expectation was the desire that all Chinese from Indochina would work towards the union of the three associations. However, almost in the same breath, while comparing themselves with the ACVM, they indicated their awareness that they were from a smaller and less powerful country than Vietnam, having a smaller community in Montreal and fewer organisational resources and skills. They were quite ambivalent about the idea of joining forces with the ACVM while they were in a relatively weak position. Their preference at the present moment is to run their association in the way that they have in the past years while finding a niche for themselves in the larger Chinese community and bearing in mind the importance of working towards the long-term goal of uniting the three associations and their communities. It is important to point out that this apparent resistance to immediately uniting with the ACVM on the part of the UCCC has to do with some unpleasant early experiences of being slighted, ignored or rejected while interacting with organisations in the local Chinese community. As far as the ACLM is concerned, to unite with the other two associations is at best a distant goal; it is presently more preoccupied with getting its own association off the ground. During the group interview, however, all five members of the ACLM unanimously expressed their ideological endorsement of 'being Chinese as being the all-important, overall governing principle'.

   The incumbent president of the ACVM, an active young man, suggested in the interview that he supported the idea of an 'association of associations' in principle and in spirit, but did not disguise the unwillingness of the older members of the association to share their resources with the weaker parties of such a union. Rather poetically, he volunteered that a possible model for such a united organisation be named 'Association of Chinese from Mekong's Three Countries', and explained that the Mekong River, with its origin in China, runs through Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and gives the three countries a common geographical and cultural identity and heritage. He also suggested that a possible organisational model for the union is that the three associations continue to sponsor their cultural, social and recreational activities separately for their own people but present themselves as a united body in delivering social and community services, thus anticipating a separation between the cultural and service functions of the union.

9 The many faces of immigrant business

1 In this chapter, we make no distinction between ethnic entrepreneurship and immigrant entrepreneurship, and use the two terms interchangeably. We are aware of the conventional view in the field of race and ethnic relations that suggests a processual progression from the immigrant to the ethnic status.
2 Here, we use 'he' and 'himself' in reference to the immigrant entrepreneur partly because such a person, rightly or wrongly, has hitherto most probably been a male. We acknowledge the appearance of women as ethnic entrepreneurs.
3 Besides Aldrich and his associates, Morokvasic and Bonacich are the two other critics of the workings of immigrant entrepreneurship in relation to the system of advanced

industrial capitalism. As both are women sociologists, they are perhaps particularly sensitive to issues of social inequality and oppression of female labour.

4 In her 'dialogue' with Waldinger *et al*. (1990), Bonacich (1993: 686) calls their work, *Ethnic Entrepreneurs: Immigrant Business in Industrial Societies,* a 'pro-capitalist' book.

10 Ethnic resources, opportunity structure and coping strategies

1 Paper presented at the World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention in Singapore (10–12 August 1991) organised by the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The author is indebted to comments and suggestions by Ivan Light, Peter Li, Louis-Jacques Dorais, Emmanuel Ma Mung and Tong Chee Kiong.

2 The total number of Chinese from Vietnam was probably much larger as a result of the 1979–80 influx of boat people, although they might have been classified as Vietnamese.

3 Based on a 1973 survey of Canada (O'Bryan *et al*. 1976; Reitz 1980). Indices of ethnic language retention are knowledge of ethnic language, frequency of use and attitude regarding ethnic language retention in children (Chan and Cheung 1985: 145).

4 The two directories are Chinese Business Telephone Directory 1978 and Ontario Chinese Business Telephone Directory 1979.

5 'Entrepreneurs sought as Immigrants', in *Contrast* 11 November, 1983, p. 5.

6 Under the Business Immigration Programme, there are three categories: entrepreneurs, self-employed persons and investors. The last category was added in 1984.

The entrepreneur is a business person who wishes to start a business, buy into a going concern, joint venture (with a friend who is immigrating, a Canadian resident or anybody else), buy a franchise or otherwise start and be *actively* involved in a business in Canada, and has the financial resources do so. While there is no minimum amount required for the entrepreneur, it is very difficult to commence business in Canada today with less than C$200,000, with some additional money needed for maintenance until one becomes established.

The investor, like the entrepreneur, also has a business background but wishes to be a *passive* investor. The investor must have a net worth of at least C$500,000 and must invest C$150,000, C$250,000 or C$500,000, depending on the location, in a government-approved investment syndicate or project. A list of these is available upon request. The investment is locked in for at least three years. The investor may make an investment in any part of Canada and live in any other part of Canada. In other words, he/she may invest in a project in Toronto and live in Vancouver or vice versa. The investor may do whatever he/she wishes with the rest of their money.

There is also a *conditional visa*, which is available to the entrepreneur (not to the investor). The conditional visa allows an applicant and his or her family to enter Canada as permanent residents and gives them two years to make a final business decision. (In other words, two years to investigate thoroughly various business prospects before making a final decision.) The Canadian government feels this is the most practical and realistic way to start a business in a new country.

For the category of self-employed, immigrants will establish a business in Canada that employs only themselves, and the business must contribute to the economy (or the cultural/artistic life in Canada). This category is aimed at farmers, artists, etc.

7 *Toronto Star*, 16 April 1990, quoted in Lam (1991).

8 Social science research on ethnic institutions in general, and Chinese voluntary associations in particular, continues to focus on those of the 'old' type, which are largely political, religious and/or dialectal in orientation and functions, and are often set up to meet the immediate needs of a burgeoning immigrant community in the host society. Relatively little is known among the social scientists of the 'new' type of

ethnic associations, which reflect the changing demographics and needs of the 'new' immigrants in the late 1980s, many of whom are of professional, technical or business backgrounds. A book by John Rex *et al*. (1987) tries to fill this gap in knowledge.

9 Ng Lai Fun (1991: 55–9; 62–4), in a recent study of Hong Kong immigrants in Singapore, argued that this 'dual affiliation' and 'two-legged existence' facilitate their psychosocial adaptation to the host society, at least in the initial stage of resettlement. This insight has implications for future analyses of global trade and commerce.

11 State, economy, culture and business networks

1 An international conference held in Beijing, China, on 10–12 September 1996 was one of many such endeavours. Entitled 'Chinese Business Connections in Global and Comparative Perspective', the conference was jointly organised by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing) and the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (Copenhagen, Denmark). The European Science Foundation and the Ford Foundation were the conference co-sponsors.

2 For an in-depth discussion of the idea of emergence and its relations with mind and self, read Mead (1970: 42–226). See also Yancey *et al*. (1976).

3 Wang Gungwu (1988) addressed this ambiguity when he wrote about the multiple identities of Chinese communities outside China.

4 The Dutch, British, Portuguese and Spaniards were Christians while the majority of island South-east Asian communities remained Muslims or Hindus.

12 Ethnic capitalism

1 Hokkien is a Chinese dialect of people from the Fujian province. Hokkien people are the dominant dialect group in Singapore.

2 GLCs are actually state-owned enterprises that may be privatised. There are about 500–600 of them.

3 This policy has been called the 'Second Industrial Revolution'. It implements a double-digit wage increase to induce the growth of capital-intensive industries through factor substitution by making labour more expensive.

4 The CPF is a social security organisation in Singapore (see Ng 1996b).

13 Singaporeans doing business in China

1 We are grateful to Leong for allowing us to attempt a reanalysis of her data.

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