

## **Why Emigration Occurred: Chinese Immigrants to Edmonton**

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### *Abstract*

Findings from a 1991 sample survey of recent Chinese immigrants in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, are presented in this paper. Politics and children's education topped the list of various factors that had pushed the Chinese away from their home countries or regions. They were also the most important goals expected to be achieved through emigration. Canada's perceived multiculturalism, lower levels of racial discrimination, and good educational opportunities were reasons for more than 75% of the respondents who chose to migrate to Canada. The study also revealed the constraints and uncertainties that had been perceived by the immigrants in the process of deciding to emigrate.

### *Résumé*

Le présent article présente les résultats d'une enquête par sondage effectuée en 1991 sur les immigrants chinois nouvellement arrivés à Edmonton (Alberta, Canada). La politique et l'éducation des enfants sont en tête de liste des divers facteurs qui ont poussé les Chinois à s'expatrier de leur pays ou de leur région d'origine. Elles représentent aussi les objectifs les plus importants qu'ils s'attendent à réaliser grâce à l'immigration. Le multiculturalisme, les faibles taux de discrimination raciale et la possibilité de recevoir une bonne éducation sont la raison pour laquelle plus de 75 % des répondants affirment qu'ils ont choisi d'émigrer au Canada. L'étude révèle également les contraintes et les incertitudes ressenties par les immigrants au moment de prendre la décision d'émigrer.

**Key Words:** Chinese immigrants, Edmonton, motive, constraint

### *Introduction*

Canada has witnessed a large inflow of Chinese immigrants since the mid-1980s. In fact, on a list of the ten countries of last permanent residence that have provided the largest number of landed immigrants, Hong Kong ranked first from 1987 to 1990, second in 1985, and fourth in 1986. China ranked tenth in 1989 and eighth in 1990 (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1990). In addition to Hong Kong and China, other major sources of Chinese immigrants included Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei. By a conservative estimate, Chinese immigrants from

the above six sources exceeded 140,000 between 1985 and 1990, accounting for over 15% of all immigrants who arrived in Canada during that period (Lin-Yuan, 1993). Edmonton is one of the major destinations of immigrants, after Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

The subject of emigration has attracted great media and public attention in Hong Kong. A Hong Kong government task force was established in 1988 to ascertain the facts, and it concluded that 30,000 persons emigrated in 1987, 45,800 in 1988, and 42,000 in 1989, compared to a historical average of 20,000 in the early 1980s (Roberts, 1989). An estimate by a group of British Members of Parliament put the number of people who will want to flee in the event of a major emergency at a minimum of 1 million (Downton, 1986). A frequently heard reason for the exodus of Hong Kong Chinese is that on July 1, 1997, Britain's 99-year lease on the major part of the territory expires. Consequently, this territory, together with the rest of the British crown colony, will revert to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China. It is the thought of living under Communist rule and the uncertainty surrounding Hong Kong's political and economic future that are pushing people to emigrate, even though "many of them do not really want to go" (Wilson, 1989:5).

Emigration is also a major concern to the government of Singapore. Up to 4,000 Singaporeans are emigrating yearly—mostly to Australia and Canada. A government committee was set up to formulate policies to stem the outflow, and a decision was made to lure Hong Kong professionals to migrate to Singapore (Balakrishnan, 1989a; 1989b). The main reason for emigration is said to be uncertainty about their children's future. Singapore's education system is intensely competitive. Those who do not make it into academic channels have little likelihood of making a good living in a society that swears by scholastic qualifications. A substantial portion of Singapore's Chinese middle class generally feels that the education systems in Australia and Canada are better, and their English fluency makes it easier for them to migrate to those countries. Semi-skilled emigrants cite very mundane reasons for leaving, such as their inability to own cars or houses which are too expensive. The lack of political freedom is cited only as a minor reason for emigrating (Balakrishnan, 1989a).

Studies on Chinese immigrants from the other sources are rather rare. Even those on Hong Kong and Singapore emigrants are mainly based on journalistic reports. On this topic there is a particular lack of academic research based on specific information obtained from individual migrants. Important issues such as socio-demographic background, perception of the various factors that had pushed them away from home countries, goals

expected to be achieved through migration, and specific reasons for coming to Canada instead of other countries have yet to be seriously addressed. This study attempts to fill in a few gaps in the current literature by answering some of the above questions. It is hoped that this study will enhance general understanding of one of the largest immigrant groups to Canada in recent years, and consequently, help to identify implications for policy formulation.

#### *About the Data*

The data on which this paper is based are derived from a questionnaire survey which was conducted in Edmonton between August and December 1991 (Lin-Yuan, 1993). The survey population consisted of independent immigrants of Chinese origin who settled in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada between 1985 and 1991. The class of independent immigrant, according to Canadian immigration laws and regulations, is further subdivided into Retirees, Assisted Relatives, Business Immigrants (Entrepreneurs, Self-Employed Persons, and Investors), and Other Independent Immigrants (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1987). It was assumed that people falling into these classes were relatively independent in making their decisions to migrate to Canada, and therefore were suitable for the purpose of the survey.

The survey was a self-administered questionnaire. A sampling frame was created by identifying Chinese surnames from the 1991 Edmonton and Vicinity White Pages telephone directory. The estimated size of the sampling frame was 6,000. Telephone calls were made to every fifth family on the frame to get addresses of those who qualified and agreed to participate in the survey. After the addresses were obtained, a bilingual questionnaire (in English and Chinese) was sent to each of them on the following day. Included with the questionnaire was a self-addressed business-reply envelope and a letter which acknowledged the recipients' participation in the survey, explained the purpose of the research, and reassured them about the confidentiality and anonymity of the survey. After the first round of systematic sampling of the frame, the sample size was deemed too small to be satisfactory. Therefore more phone calls were made to all the families that were left on the sampling frame and whose names were not listed in the 1985 Edmonton White Pages. It was reasonable to assume that such families were more likely to have qualified immigrants who came to Canada after 1985. The two rounds of telephone calls were made between August 7 and November 15, 1991 which resulted in 2,195 contacts. Among them, 392 met the criteria set for the survey population and also agreed to participate in the survey. Therefore 392 questionnaires were sent out over that three-month

period. Three weeks after the questionnaires were mailed, a follow-up letter was sent to each member of the sample thanking those who had participated and encouraged those who had not to do so. Two questionnaires were returned undelivered. By December 13, 1991, 192 (49.2%) returned questionnaires had been received.

Since most of the survey questions were concerned with people's evaluations of their home countries or regions and the countries they had expected to migrate to prior to coming to Canada, the question of the reliability of the responses was raised. "People's memories get blurred with the progression of time" (Golledge and Stimson, 1987:257), so two types of nonparametric statistical tests were used to check the returned questionnaires in order to reduce the potential damage. First, the "Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient ( $r_s$ )" was used to examine correlations among answers given by each individual respondent to items intended to reflect the same characteristic. It is assumed that high intercorrelations are an indication of the validity and reliability of an answer when the logic of the construct calls for high correlations (Patchen, 1965). If a person's memory has failed, it is very likely that answers to the same type of questions are inconsistent. On the other hand, if a person's answers to the same type of questions are consistent or highly related, then there is no reason to doubt memory and the answers may be considered reliable.

A study on the returned pre-test questionnaires indicated that answers to reasons for emigration and goals expected to be achieved through emigration had shown a high degree of correlation. Since respondents assigned scores of importance (from 1 to 5) to the reasons for emigration and goals expected to be achieved through emigration on a closed-format, the answers could be viewed as ordinal data; therefore the Spearman rank correlation coefficient was appropriate for the test. Specific reasons for choosing Canada instead of other countries were found from the pre-test not significantly correlated with either reasons for emigration or goals expected to be achieved through emigration. This was reasonable because the intensity of the relationship between motives for migration and reasons for choosing a particular destination might have been reduced due to constraints of international migration. Many factors affect and determine the possibility of migrating to another country and those factors are usually beyond the control of immigrants themselves. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient test was thus applied to every returned questionnaire to examine consistency between reasons for emigration and goals to be achieved through emigration. Among the returned questionnaires, 187 had a value of  $r_s$  that was higher than .70, an acceptable level of consistency set for the answers to these two questions. The five disqualified questionnaires also appeared to be answered by

immigrants of family class and visa students, which explains the inconsistent answers to motives for migration specified for independent immigrants. Therefore, data included in the analyses were drawn from those 187 qualified questionnaires. The second type of test was aimed at finding any significant association between the evaluations of immigrants and their period of immigration. It was assumed that time is the most significant contributor to people's "memory lapse" or "post hoc reflections about prior behavior" (De Jong and Fawcett, 1981:34). People who have been living in Canada for a longer time presumably have more trouble recalling their thoughts prior to coming to Canada. Also, their judgements about Canada and their countries of origin are more likely to be affected by their experiences in Canada than are those of newer immigrants. Since the sample consisted of people who immigrated to Canada between 1985 and 1991, a " $\chi^2$  test" for  $k$  independent samples was used to examine if there were any significant differences among immigrants of different time periods in the way they evaluated (1) the importance of various reasons for emigration; (2) the importance of various goals to be achieved through emigration; (3) the major constraints to emigration they had faced; and (4) specific reasons for making Canada their migration destination. The result indicated that the values of  $\chi^2$  in all four cases were too small to suggest the existence of any significant difference at the level of  $\alpha = .05$  among immigrants of different time periods. Therefore, the 187 questionnaires returned by immigrants of all time periods were considered reliable.

Among the 187 survey participants, males accounted for 60.3% of the sample, while females accounted for 39.7%. The majority of respondents were between 20 and 50 years of age (85.0%) and were married (82.3%). In terms of place of last permanent residence, the 119 Hong Kong immigrants accounted for nearly two-thirds (63.6%) of the total respondents. The rest of the sample consisted of 22 from Brunei, 18 from P.R.China, 6 from Malaysia, 6 from Taiwan, 3 from Singapore, 9 from other sources (the Philippines, Vietnam, U.K., U.S., and Panama), and 4 did not specify their last permanent residence. Over half (51.1%) of the respondents belonged to the class of "Other Independent Immigrants." This group included those selected to fill jobs in the labour market, those coming to Canada with jobs, professions or skills to contribute to Canada's economy, and those applying as independent immigrants for other reasons (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1987). In this study, "Retirees" were also included in this class. "Investors," "Entrepreneurs," and "Self-Employed Immigrants" together, accounted for 18.3% of total respondents. Among immigrants, these classes are believed to have brought the most money and created the most jobs in Canada. The remaining 30.6% of the respondents belonged to the class of "Assisted Relatives." There was an increase in numbers of respondents over

the period of immigration: 24 immigrated between 1985 and 1986, 73 between 1987 and 1988, and 89 between 1989 and 1990, plus 1 in 1991. Compared to the composition of total Chinese independent immigrants who arrived in Alberta between 1985 and 1989 (ACDE, 1990), this sample by and large represented the general survey population. For example, Hong Kong immigrants dominated the sample, followed by immigrants from Brunei and China. "Other independent immigrants" accounted for the largest proportion of the sample while "Investors" had the smallest proportion. The number of immigrants in the sample increased over the years. All these features of the sample are true for the general population of Chinese independent immigrants. The 1991 survey was used as a source of data for all tables included in the present report.

### *The Decision to Emigrate*

In most geographical and psychological studies, migration is viewed as a process of adjustment whereby one location is substituted for another in order to better satisfy the needs and aspirations of each migrant. The individual's overall level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a given location is described in terms of place utility (Wolpert, 1965; Pryor, 1976).

Two types of factors influenced the decision to migrate. The first one, suggested by Brown and Moore (1970), sees the decision to seek a new location as the result of a long-term, continuous evaluation of the congruence between the individual's needs or expectations and the advantages associated with the present residence. The disparities between needs or expectations and current advantages give rise to stress, which in turn leads to some coping behavior if a threshold level is exceeded. Seeking a new residence is one such behavior. Even if the decision-makers choose either to readjust their personal needs or to alter current advantages rather than migrate, the matching process between needs and current advantages will go on and may well lead to migration at a later date.

The other approach was based on Janis and Mann's five-stage scheme of human decision making. Rather than viewing the beginning of a decision-making process as the result of long-term evaluation, this theory emphasizes the role of a specific event or of information that commands the individual's attention. More specifically, "being exposed to information about a threat or opportunity that effectively challenges a current course of action marks the beginning of the decision-making process" (Janis and Mann, 1977:172).

Analysis of the data obtained from the present survey will show that both types of determinants have been involved in triggering the decision-making processes of the Chinese immigrants under study.

De Jong and Fawcett (1981) identified a relatively full range of motives for migration based on review of empirical and theoretical literature on migration. This set of motives was successfully applied in recent studies of international migration from India to Canada (Winchie and Carment, 1989) and from the Philippines to the United States (Arnold, 1987). In the present study, reasons for emigration and goals expected to be achieved through emigration were also identified based on the seven categories proposed by De Jong and Fawcett, adjusted to the existing literature on recent Chinese emigration. The factors examined in the survey under the seven categories included:

Wealth:	good income, high standard of living;
Status:	prestigious job, advancement in job, better education, honor of family, being looked up to in community;
Comfort:	comfortable housing, easy and comfortable life, more leisure time, good weather;
Stimulation:	desire for adventure or different lifestyle and cultural environment, doing new things;
Autonomy:	political stability and freedom, being free to say and do what one wants;
Affiliation:	join family, near friends or relatives;
Morality:	better education for children.

#### *What Was So Stressful at Home?*

The first question pertained to the importance of various reasons for emigrating. These were assessed in a closed-format question, where scores from 1 to 5 were assigned to represent an ascending order of importance from "of no importance" to "of great importance." In addition, a final category of "Other reasons" was provided to allow respondents to fill in any reasons that applied to them but were not included among the given reasons. Table 1 gives the median and mean scores received by each reason, along with the total number of responses to each. The higher the median and mean score, the more the reason had contributed to people's decision to leave their original countries. "Political stability and freedom" was the most important reason for emigration. The median and mean score given to this item was 5.0 and 4.4, respectively, indicating a rating very close to "of great importance."

TABLE 1. SCORE OF IMPORTANCE BY REASONS FOR EMIGRATION

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Political stability and freedom	185	5.0	4.4
Inadequate educational facilities for children	185	4.0	3.5
Inadequate educational facilities for self	185	2.0	2.5
Crowded living conditions	185	2.0	2.4
Desire for adventure or different life/culture	185	2.0	2.4
Close relatives or friends all going abroad	185	2.0	2.4
Inadequate housing	185	2.0	2.2
Lack of opportunity for advancement in job	185	2.0	2.2
Inadequate income	185	1.0	2.0
Lack of suitable employment	185	1.0	2.0
Unpleasant climate	185	1.0	1.9
Others	15		

Looking at the median and mean scores given by Chinese immigrants of different origins, it appears that immigrants from Hong Kong, Brunei and China ranked political reasons particularly high (Table 2). It is not difficult to figure out that the reversion of Hong Kong to Communist China in 1997 was the main concern of Hong Kong immigrants. Quite a few respondents also wrote such comments on their questionnaires as: "I would never have thought of leaving Hong Kong if it had not been for 1997" and "The moment I decided to apply for immigration, I knew I lost everything. But I had to leave because of 1997." The political pressure suffered by Brunei Chinese was from Brunei's prolonged anti-Chinese policy. Brunei Chinese have limits on their education and job opportunities. Their political rights are even more restricted, including extreme difficulty obtaining Brunei citizenship even if they have been living there for generations. According to the Asia Yearbook 1983, "the Chinese question remained Brunei's most serious unresolved political problem. About 30% of the population is Chinese and most of them are not citizens but British-protected permanent residents holding Brunei British passports" (Punwani and Chiu, 1983:120). A number of respondents from Brunei commented on their reason for emigration using exactly the same words—no citizenship. The situation of the Chinese in Malaysia is similar since "constitutional provisions explicitly distinguish citizens on the basis of ethnicity. For the most part these provisions were aimed at balancing political privileges for the Malays and other indigenous peoples against the economic power of 'immigrants,' especially the Chinese" (Brown, 1976:80). Most Chinese in the People's Republic of China had been dissatisfied with their government and their political system for a long time, but emigration of Chinese from China at a



noticeable level became possible only when the government recently began to relax its emigration restrictions and to promote "open door" economic policies.

TABLE 2. MEDIAN AND MEAN SCORE GIVEN TO SELECTED REASONS FOR EMIGRATION, BY REGIONS OF ORIGIN.

<i>Regions of origin</i>	<i>Political reasons</i>		<i>Children's education</i>		<i>All other reasons</i>	
	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Hong Kong	5.0	4.6	4.0	3.4	1.5	2.1
Brunei	5.0	4.5	5.0	4.0	2.5	2.3
P.R.China	5.0	4.3	3.0	3.2	3.0	2.5
Malaysia	4.5	4.0	5.0	4.8	3.5	3.5
Taiwan	3.0	3.0	4.5	3.8	1.5	2.2
Singapore	2.0	2.3	1.0	2.3	1.0	1.5
Others	4.5	4.1	3.5	3.2	2.5	2.4

The second most cited reason for emigration as shown in Table 1 was "inadequate educational facilities for children." It was also the highest ranked reason for immigrants from Malaysia and Taiwan (Table 2). Expecting children to grow up to be successful, even to stand out among their peers, is an important part of Chinese culture. Many Chinese parents believe that a good education is crucial to their children's future success. Apparently, most of the Chinese immigrants under study are from densely populated countries or regions, where there is a lack of opportunities and facilities for higher education. Chinese from Malaysia and Brunei also worried that their children could not internalize enough Chinese culture and values in their original countries because of government policies.

The remaining reasons were scored at a median of 2.0 or lower, or a mean between 1.9 and 2.5, below "of some importance." Therefore, the dominant reason for emigration for most Chinese, regardless of their regions of origin, was actually quite simple. They fled from either political bitterness or lack of educational opportunities for their children or both. The "other reasons" for emigration mentioned on the questionnaire included "to fulfill a dream (of becoming a citizen of a country)," and "curious about other countries."

*Goals to be Achieved by Emigration*

The Chinese immigrants under study are independent immigrants. Most of them are professionals and business people. It is true that many of them were under pressure when they decided to migrate to another country, but they were by no means in such a life-or-death situation that they had to escape immediately from their home countries. They chose to leave because they had certain goals that they thought could be better achieved or could only be achieved through emigration.

TABLE 3. SCORE OF IMPORTANCE BY GOAL TO BE ACHIEVED THROUGH EMIGRATION

<i>Goal</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Political security, free to say and do what you want	185	5.0	4.5
Children have better education	185	5.0	4.1
Opportunity to get good education	185	4.0	3.6
Comfortable housing	185	4.0	3.5
Easy and comfortable life, more leisure time	185	3.0	3.3
Having a prestigious job	185	3.0	2.8
New lifestyle, doing new things	185	3.0	2.8
Join family members and friends	185	3.0	2.8
Making good money, high standard of living	185	3.0	2.7
Honor of family, being looked up to in community	185	2.0	2.3
Others	7		

The second question was concerned with various goals. Again, the goals were assessed in a closed-format question where five levels of importance were assigned to the goals. A final category of "Other goals" was provided to allow respondents to fill in any goals that applied to them but were not included among the given goals. Table 3 shows the median and mean scores

given by the respondents to each goal, along with the total number of responses received by each of them. Again, political security and children's education lead the list of goals. Obviously, Tables 1 and 3 together show consistency between the "push" and "pull" factors affecting the population under study.

TABLE 4. MEDIAN AND MEAN SCORE GIVEN TO SELECTED GOALS OF EMIGRATION, BY REGIONS OF ORIGIN

<i>Regions of Origin</i>	<i>Political stability</i>		<i>Children's education</i>		<i>All other goals</i>	
	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Hong Kong	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.0	2.5	2.8
Brunei	5.0	4.7	5.0	4.3	3.5	3.6
P.R.China	5.0	4.3	5.0	3.8	3.0	2.9
Malaysia	4.0	4.0	5.0	4.8	3.5	3.7
Taiwan	3.0	3.0	5.0	4.5	3.0	3.1
Singapore	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.3	2.0	1.8
Others	5.0	4.1	5.0	4.0	3.0	3.2

The scores given to the two most important goals by immigrants from different origins (Table 4) show a pattern of scoring similar to the reasons for emigration (Table 2). Judging by the mean scores, political stability and security was the primary goal for immigrants from Hong Kong, Brunei, and China, while better education for children ranked second. A reversed ranking was found for immigrants from Malaysia and Taiwan, where education for children was first and political stability was second. Taiwan immigrants, while scoring relatively low on most reasons for emigration and goals to be achieved through emigration, scored very high, second only to Malaysian Chinese, on the goal of getting better education for their children. Another indication of the importance to Chinese of Canada as a place for education is the fact that some 20,000 Chinese visa students come to Canada every year. Between 1985 and 1990, students from the six source countries which are predominantly Chinese accounted for over 30% of the total visa students in Canada. Hong Kong was the largest source of visa students in Canada every year during that time period, while Malaysia ranked third in

both 1985 and 1986, and China ranked second in 1989, third in 1988 and fourth in 1986, 1987 and 1990 (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1990). The number of visa students from Taiwan was relatively small because the majority went to the U.S., where for many years the largest number of foreign students in colleges and universities had come from Taiwan (Myers, 1989; Chou, 1989).

In addition to the two main goals, the following also received relatively high scores, with origins of the respondents specified in brackets: "making good money, high standard of living" (China); "easy comfortable life, more leisure time" (Taiwan, Singapore, and Brunei); "comfortable housing" (Hong Kong and Taiwan); "opportunity to get good education" (Hong Kong, Brunei, and Malaysia); and "join family members and friends."

TABLE 5. SPECIFIC REASONS FOR IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Multicultural society, easier to survive as new immigrant	105	78.9
Good opportunity to get higher education	102	76.7
Good social welfare	98	73.7
Canadian citizenship for security	97	72.9
Relatives or friends in Canada	87	65.4
Language is no barrier in Canada	82	61.7
Easier to be granted immigration visa	71	53.4
High income, high standard of living	43	32.3
Career-related, advancement in job	31	23.3
Good investment environment	16	4.5
Canada was not the first choice	9	6.8
Other reasons	13	9.8

Table 5 shows the result of 133 responses to the specific reasons for migrating to Canada instead of other countries. Eleven reasons plus an "other" category were presented and the respondents were asked to check as

many items as applicable. The three most often cited reasons for migrating to Canada were: "multicultural society, easier to survive as new immigrants;" "good opportunity to get higher education for self or for children;" and "good social welfare (e.g., health insurance and old-age pension)." Many people also stressed that it was possible or at least easier to migrate to Canada due to recent changes to Canada's immigration policy.

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents mentioned the presence of relatives or friends in Canada as one of the reasons to choose Canada, although only 30.6% belonged to the class of "Assisted Relatives." This shows the profound impact of earlier immigrants, through ties between family and friends, on the decision of later immigrants. This resulted in formation of a "migration chain" (Goodall, 1987:304). Interestingly, the three least cited reasons for choosing Canada as an immigration destination were "good investment environment," "career-related, advancement in job," and "high income, high standard of living." Besides the fact that "Investors" accounted for only 3.8% of the sample, the data have indicated that high income and living standard and career reasons were not why most of the Chinese came to Canada. This differs from many conventional studies that claim migration is largely economically motivated. It also differs from the results of a recent study of Indian immigrants, for whom career reasons were the most important (Winchie and Carment, 1989). On the other hand, it is consistent with a recent study conducted in Hong Kong among potential emigrants showing the overwhelming majority were leaving because of fears of the future rather than better career opportunities or a better living environment abroad (Kirkbride and Tang, 1989). Cannon's report on Chinese immigrants in Canada might have offered some clue as to why the Chinese are not attracted to Canada for economic reasons: "the taxes are high and labor unions create problems for honest capitalists in search of a buck. Most of all, the business climate isn't what they're used to" (Cannon, 1989:217). The fact that many families, after becoming permanent residents or citizens of Canada, returned to Hong Kong to work as expatriates (Lau, 1987) may further indicate that the main interest of many of these immigrants is simply to secure a foreign bolt-hole. "Other reasons" for choosing Canada instead of other countries included: "stable government," "not a Communist country," "curiosity," "had studied in Canada before," "has a big family in Canada," and "has job offers in Canada."

Although most of the respondents did not identify income and living standard as important factors in their decision to leave original countries to come to Canada, it was possible that people simply considered high income and standard of living in potential destinations a necessity. It was clear in people's mind that they wanted to emigrate for political reasons and for their

children's future. At the same time, they also assumed either consciously or subconsciously, that they would not sacrifice their standard of living to achieve those goals. In the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate four conditions, namely "living standard," "career," "social status," and "political stability" in Canada compared to those conditions in the country of origin based on their perceptions prior to coming to Canada. As Table 6 shows, 81.8% of the respondents believed that the standard of living in Canada would be better (or much better) than that in the original country, while only 9.1% believed that the standard of living in Canada would be worse (or much worse) or the same as that in the original country, respectively. It is reasonable to suggest that even though income and standard of living were not cited as important factors in people's decisions to migrate, they actually functioned as a necessary condition for them to choose Canada as the migration destination. The evaluation of the other conditions in Canada compared with those in the country of origin were consistent with the scores of importance of reasons for emigration and goals expected to be achieved through emigration. An overwhelming majority (97.1%) of the respondents believed the political situation in Canada would be better (or much better) than that in original country. In terms of career advancement, more than half (54.5%) of the respondents believed the situation in Canada would be worse (or much worse) than in the original country, 18.2% thought it would be the same in Canada as in the original country, and only 27.3% were optimistic about having a better (or much better) career in Canada than in the original country. People's perceptions on social status were most diverse. Nearly half (45.5%) of the respondents thought they would have a better social status in Canada than in the country of origin, while 27.3% believed their social status in Canada would be worse (or much worse) or the same, as that in the country of origin, respectively. Neither career nor social status received a high score of importance as reasons for emigration and goals to be achieved through emigration.

### *Constraints on Immigration*

Constraints play an important role in the process when a potential migrant decides whether to move. Besides visa control and language barriers which are crucial to international migrants, migration over a long distance also involves tremendous cost, both financial and psychological. There is also a chance that people have too little or too much information which produces either much uncertainty about a new country or much stress resulting from information overload. Therefore, people may give up the idea of seeking a new country before they really start doing so, once the constraints appear to be too obvious and too strong to overcome.

TABLE 6. EVALUATION OF CONDITIONS IN CANADA COMPARED TO THOSE IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Canada worse or much worse than original country</i>	<i>Canada the same as original country</i>	<i>Canada better or much better than original country</i>	<i>Total</i>
Living standard	9.1%	9.1%	81.8%	100%
Career	54.5%	18.2%	27.3%	100%
Social status	27.3%	27.3%	45.4%	100%
Political stability	2.9%	0	97.1%	100%

TABLE 7. MAJOR CONSTRAINTS TO IMMIGRATION

<i>Constraints to immigration</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Afraid of being unable to find a job in the new country	126	67.4
Not sure what would happen to you in the new country	88	47.1
Difficulty in obtaining an immigration visa	78	41.7
Afraid of being away from family or friends	68	36.4
Financial cost of moving	51	27.3
Language difficulty	12	6.4
Other reasons	7	3.7
No constraints	15	8.0

The fact that those immigrants ended up migrating to Canada is a result of the combination of three elements: the factors pushing them away from their home countries, the goals they expected to achieve through migration, and the constraints faced in entering another country. One question on the survey questionnaire asked about the major constraints that made migrating to another country difficult. Five possible constraints were presented, plus "others" and "no constraint." The respondents were asked to check all applicable items. A total of 187 people responded to this question (Table 7).

Only 8% of the respondents answered that they did not feel any constraints. The three most cited constraints to migration were "afraid of being unable to find a job in the new country," "not sure what would happen to you in the new country," and "difficulty obtaining an immigration visa." Canada is one of the few countries in the world that has an open door policy for immigrants, especially since the mid-1980s when new business immigration programs were introduced. Naturally, it became the only choice for those who had limited options. Some respondents wrote: "there was nowhere else in the world that would take me" and "I tried, but only Canada accepted my application (of immigration)." The item "language difficulty" was not listed on the original questionnaire. Still, twelve people (6.4%) mentioned it as one of the "other constraints." Among the "other constraints" were "sadness at leaving home country," "different life style," "worrying about kids coping with a new environment," and "racial discrimination in a new country."

There is a subtle difference in the kinds of constraint perceived by immigrants of different origin (Table 8). The mainland Chinese felt more strongly about visa difficulties than the rest of the immigrants, while they felt less worried about what would happen to them in a new country. Malaysian Chinese mentioned more often than others the financial cost of moving. Overall, uncertainty about jobs as well as the general conditions in a new country were identified as the main constraints by Chinese from almost all sources.

TABLE 8. CONSTRAINTS TO IMMIGRATION, BY REGIONS OF ORIGIN

<i>Regions of Origin</i>	<i>Number of responses to constraints as % of total</i>					
	<i>Visa difficulty</i>	<i>Financial cost</i>	<i>Family ties</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>General uncertainty</i>	<i>No constraint</i>
Hong Kong	36.1	25.1	32.8	70.6	41.2	10.1
Brunei	40.9	40.9	40.9	68.2	59.1	9.1
P.R.China	66.7	22.2	55.6	61.1	44.4	5.6
Malaysia	33.3	66.7	50.0	83.3	66.7	0
Taiwan	33.3	0	50.0	66.7	83.3	0
Others	66.7	11.1	11.1	33.3	55.6	0



Although the people under study were immigrants who voluntarily chose to migrate to Canada, 92% of them cited various constraints to migration they had encountered during their decision-making process. This might give an indication of why many people with socio-economic backgrounds similar to these immigrants chose to stay at home coping with their stress. Migration would not be an option for people who see constraints as too obvious and strong to overcome, regardless of other factors. It might also suggest that once some of those migration constraints were alleviated, the overall pattern of immigration to Canada might be affected. For example, the newly passed immigration bill by the U.S. Congress allowed special immigration status to entrepreneurs and increased the total number of immigration visas granted to Hong Kong residents each year (Awanohara, 1990). As a result, the rush of Chinese immigrants to Canada might be redirected to the U.S.

#### *Uncertainty Perceived by Immigrants*

Whether an individual will reach the decision to migrate depends also on an individual's personality traits in terms of feelings of uncertainty and willingness to take risks (Haberkorn, 1981). Uncertainty may stem from the potential migrant's inner experience—uncertainty about success or failure of the approaching move and uncertainty about the future as well as sources outside the potential migrant such as availability of suitable employment. The two most often cited constraints to migration (see Table 7) actually reflect those immigrants' fear or consideration of the uncertainty that would be associated with moving to another country. Over two thirds (67.4%) of the respondents worried whether they would be able to find a job in the new country, while 47.1% of them generally were not sure what would happen to them in a new country. The answers given by immigrants from different regions did not differ very much (Table 8). The result indicates that uncertainty was widely experienced by Chinese immigrants during their decision-making process. Most of them might have tried to avoid or reduce the uncertainty by collecting information about the new countries, or by imitating the successful pioneering immigrants whom they knew. Undoubtedly there were many people who chose to absorb the stress by altering their need set, if they could not alter the environment, in order to avoid any risk associated with moving to a new country.

#### *Conclusion*

This essay has presented some research findings on recent Chinese immigrants to one of Canada's major cities. The focus here was based on a

wider study, of migration and constraints as perceived by decision-makers. Contrary to widespread beliefs, economic reasons were not the dominant impetus behind the recent accelerated inflow of Chinese into Canada. Instead, political situations and children's education topped the list of various factors that drove the Chinese away from their original countries or regions. Correspondingly, looking for a stable and safe political environment and better opportunities for their children's education were the most important goals they had expected to achieve through emigration. It was also possible that high income and standard of living at the place of destination had functioned as a necessary condition for the Chinese immigrants to leave their original countries or regions, although they were not cited as important factors in people's decision to emigrate. The sources of stress that triggered the decision to emigrate came from both long-term dissatisfaction with the situation at home, such as the one experienced by Brunei immigrants, and specific events that had called people's attention to a real loss soon to be expected, such as the one for Hong Kong immigrants. These findings for Chinese immigrants differed from those for Indian immigrants, for whom career reasons were the most important. The perception of Canada's multiculturalism, lower levels of racial discrimination, and good educational opportunities were special reasons for more than 75% of the respondents choosing to migrate to Canada.

The study also revealed the constraints and uncertainties that had been perceived by Chinese immigrants during their decision-making process. Many people admitted that uncertainties about job opportunities and life in general made it difficult to decide whether to emigrate. Immigration control was another frequently cited constraint. It is very likely that widespread perception of constraints could affect decisions of other potential emigrants who may alter their need set rather than migrate.

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*Received, July 1993; revised July 1994.*