

From China to Canada: The Immigration Experience of a Mainland Chinese Group in Toronto

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Abstract

We live in a rapidly changing and globalized world within which the transnational mass movements of population become more popular than ever before. In the contemporary world complex population movement refugees are a growing element associated with the new world order that followed the end of the Cold War (Richmond 1994:xi). As a specific phenomenon with the growth of state hegemony in the 15th century, refugee experience is hardly new (Donnelly and Hopkins 1993:2). It has been an international problem that increasingly challenges scholars all over the world since World War II.

Mainland Chinese refugee (MCR) claimants are by no means a new phenomenon in the refugee world; the numbers of MCR claimants entering North America, particularly Canada, substantially increased after June 4, 1989, but this is just the latest of a number of refugee groups who have historically entered North America (Tian et al., 1994). Due to the prosperity in comparison with China, the perceived opportunity for a better life, and the well developed and organized Chinese communities, more and more MCRs chose Metro Toronto as their destination. According to the statistics released by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), from 1984 to 1996, more than ten thousand mainland Chinese had made refugee claims in Canada. Based on the reports in local Chinese newspapers, it is estimated that about 3,000 to 4,000 MCRs live in Metro Toronto.

Larger number of MCRs coming to Canada did not occur until recent years as will be discussed. The reforms and the "open door" policy in China since last decade exposed more Chinese to the west than ever before. The desire to emigrate has resulted in large numbers of illegal emigrants and refugees. Once out of China, these illegal emigrants and refugees become members of the diaspora, or overseas, Chinese community which has now reached a total world population of 50 million (Fu 1994). In Canada, although some ultimately qualify as bona-fide refugees according to Canadian policies and are permitted to stay permanently, most refugees fail to meet Geneva convention criteria but are allowed to stay in Canada temporarily under the special order by the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada (Gilad 1990:314). This paper describes the processes of MCRs migrating to and resettling in Canada. In so doing, I examine who the MCRs are, why

they left China, the strategies they adopt in migration to and resettling in Canada, and the types of reactions and feelings MCRs experience upon arriving in Canada.

Mass movements of labour from less to more developed regions is a phenomenon associated with the increasing globalization of capitalist systems of production (Richmond 1993:32). While much can be learned about international migration through postmodern perspectives (Schiller et al. 1992:12), traditional migration theories are still useful in analyzing MCRs' migration processes. I am concerned with explaining how and why MCRs migrate in terms of "push" and "pull" factors at work in both China and Canada. More specifically, I argue that migration can be analyzed as individual MCRs responses to: 1) low socioeconomic status or insecurity (push factors) in China; and 2) superior economic opportunities or the relatively stable sociopolitical system (pull factors) perceived to exist in Canada (see Richmond 1993).

Other refugee studies tend to give more importance to the role of push factors in stimulating migration over pull factors (Goza 1987:64-65; Kunza 1981; Stein 1986:9). I argue that while some individuals might be forced to leave China, MCRs tend to migrate to Canada and the United States based more on the perceived advantages (pull factors) that those countries offer (cf. Coughlin 1960; Lai 1988; Li 1988).

Furthermore, to properly understand why MCRs migrate to Canada, it is necessary to examine: 1) China's social and economic milieu in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the majority of MCRs left the country;² and 2) who the MCRs are and why they, but not other mainland Chinese, become "refugees."

The Impact of Reforms and the "Open Door" Policy in Contemporary China

China has experienced dramatic changes in the years of Deng Xiaoping's leadership: in sharp contrast with the period dominated by Mao Zedong, whose death in 1976 signalled that changes were to come. The 1980s and 1990s have been a period of enormous reform (Cannon & Jenkins 1990: xiv). Of primary concern to Deng Xiaoping and his politburo has been to stimulate economic growth in part by introducing the Four Modernisations policy.³

Deng's new reforms first targeted and took effect quickly in rural China by adopting a de-collection policy: the reforms were based on the assumption that family farms would increase their productivity if farmers were given long-term leases to the land and the right to sell surplus produce.⁴ At the same time, China's *xiangzhen qiye* (business in rural areas) sector has experienced tremendous growth, to the point that it has become the most dynamic growth sector in post-1979 China. That most of these business enterprises have been established as private/family (*getihu*) businesses, an emergent class formation, reflects and contributes to the economic changes occurring in rural China (Chen 1990; Tisdell 1993).

Reforms targeting urban China have proven more difficult to implement and have taken longer to effect change (Cannon & Jenkins 1990:15). The key features of industrial sector reforms (which were not introduced until after 1984) advocated reducing party control over the "rigid economic structure" such that the government gradually assumed (with the exception of the 1989-1991 Tianamen Square period) more of a regulatory, as opposed to managerial role in urban enterprises. Undermining the principles of *daguofan* (meals prepared in large canteen cauldron⁵ and *tiefanwan* (iron rice bowl),⁶ the reforms were introduced in the hopes of enabling enterprises to become more independent (in part by endowing managers with more decision-making powers), as well as to stimulate the conditions wherein product prices would be determined by cost and supply-demand relations and wages would reflect productivity. Emerging in the face of these and other post-Mao reforms was an urban based, private-business class (*chengshi getihu*) which became most active and less controlled by the government in the urban areas (Cannon & Jenkins 1990:15; Gold 1990:45-68).

Also important to examine in terms of changes in China is the impact of the "open door" policy. Originally proposed by Dr. Sun Yatsen in the early 1920s (Godley 1993), and contrasting with Mao's "Self-Reliance" policy, the "open door" policy was designed to promote economic and technical co-operation with other countries in part by liberalizing trade and allowing more foreign investment. Initially, the "open door" policy focused on developing the four Special Economic Zones (SEZ) on the southeast coast, in part to minimize the decadent influences of capitalist interests. In fact, regions throughout the country vied with each other to be designated as areas in which the reforms would be introduced. As a result of the reforms, China has begun to more actively promote economic ties with international bodies and other countries. Also notable is how receptive many mainland Chinese, especially urban youth, have become to the influences of western ideologies and values (democracy, individualism, freedom, and popular culture: Cannon & Jenkins 1990:16; Rice 1992; Tian 1987, 1988).

The reforms and "open door" policy have stimulated great socioeconomic development, which was reflected in a doubling in the last decade of China's output and the fact that the nation's economy was one of six in the North-Western Pacific to have experienced exceptionally high economic growth rates. As well, national income levels increased an average of a little over 9 percent per year in the 1980s, and upwards of 13 percent in 1992 and 1993, a rate which is among the highest in Asia (Madsen 1995:14). Its remarkable economic growth and increasing involvement in the global economy have made China one of the most important countries in the Asian Pacific area (Hussain 1994). Despite the large increase in population,⁷ real income per head almost doubled and real consumption per head rose more than 75 percent (Tisdell 1993).

In certain respects, the impact of reforms and the "open door" policy on Chinese society is hard to describe and, from the perspective of the government, has brought unforeseen effects. For example, the growth of China's market economy has required the Communist Party to relax (and in some cases, lose) its control over ordinary peasants and workers. Party slogans have begun to become less effective than money in motivating mainland Chinese. There is, moreover, a notable loss of faith, particularly among the younger generations, in Marxism (Kristof 1993; Rice 1992). Furthermore, to the extent that the "open

door" policy has effectively reinforced the state's preference to more rapidly develop the coastal regions, China has experienced more inter-regional inequities and tensions (Cannon 1990:28-60; Tian et al. 1987). As a result, more people from the interior and rural areas have begun to migrate to the coastal and urban regions. As discussed below, this internal migration is highly correlated with external migration as the result of reform and "open door" policy.

During the time that China has been subject to more market reforms and a greater decentralisation of economic decision-making, the economy has also been strained by inflation. In addition, the "two track" pricing system of certain products,⁸ has enabled *guandao* (civil service profiteers)⁹ to manipulate price differences in ways which aggravate the unequal income distribution between ordinary people and officials. In 1988 the inflation rate reached 18 percent and by early 1989 intellectuals and urban workers became more vocal in complaining about the *guandao* phenomenon and the extent to which wage rate increases lagged behind the rate of inflation (Chen 1990; Rice 1992:257-279; Tisdell 1993:13). Facing populist discontent and *qianggou* (panic purchase) by the population, the government introduced "stabilization" policies in the autumn of 1988 (similar to ones in 1980-81 and 1986) which aimed to bring down the inflation rate by reining in investment. In an effort to reduce the inflation rate, China's growth rate dropped sharply from 11.3 percent cent in 1988 to 3.7 percent in 1989 and remained at 4.8 percent in 1990 (Hussain 1994:14).

Socioeconomic tensions arose due to the high inflation rate and the officials' corruption and ignited the student demonstrations of April and May 1989, which were subsequently quelled by the much-criticized military action taken by the government on June 3rd and 4th of the same year. Demonstrators were motivated by both political and economic concerns:

While some demonstrators and their supporters were clearly in favour of more democracy and liberalism along Western lines, including a multi-party system, others were merely in favour of more liberalism within the existing political order, greater freedom of the press and more effective means of dealing with corrupt officials and eliminating corruption. It may have also been that some young people wanted greater equality of economic opportunity according to ability (Tisdell 1993:11-12).

The 1989 democracy movement in China resulted from socioeconomic tensions which in turn reflected the impact of China's reform and "open door" policy. Moreover, in mobilizing its tanks and troops to put down the pro-democracy demonstrations, the Chinese government, as discussed below, inadvertently created an effective pretext for MCRs to make their claims (Lu and Tian 1995; Ma 1993; Tian et al. 1994).

The Influence of Reforms and the "Open Door" Policy on Chinese International Migration

Relatively few people migrated from China between 1949 (when the Communist Party of China (CPC) first took power) and the later 1970s, during which time the government began introducing the various reforms and the "open door" policy mentioned above. The low migration rate reflects the extent to which the Chinese government controlled the physical mobility of its population, in this case by imposing severe emigration restrictions: those wishing to gain the documentation needed to travel abroad or emigrate were scrutinized very carefully and subject to highly restrictive policies (Poston & Yu, 1990; Liu 1995).

Legal and illegal emigration did occur, prior to the reforms, from the mainland into Hong Kong: an estimated half-million mainland Chinese crossed over into Hong Kong in the peak period between 1977-1982 (Jowett 1990:126; see also Chung 1984: chapter one). Smaller streams of emigration have also occurred over the country's borders in the west close to India (cf. Oxfeld 1993) and the former USSR, and where minorities such as Tibetans and Khazaks are concentrated¹⁰ (Jowett 1990:126).

The reforms and the "open door" policy of the post-1978 period have influenced emigration patterns in at least two important ways: first, in relaxing the extent to which it controlled the movement of its population, the Chinese government made it much easier for people to acquire passports or travel documents; second, the "open door" policy has exposed Chinese to the images of the "modern West" more than ever before. Perceiving in the west abundance and freedoms not realized in China, many Chinese, especially urban youth, have developed a keen interest in travelling abroad (Grant 1991; Ma 1993; Rice 1992). These desires have been further fuelled by the images transmitted by Hong Kong's mass media (via radio, newspapers and television programs) to the coastline areas. More than

ever, young people are stimulated to travel abroad "to see," as one of my informants said, "whichever is better, socialism or capitalism."

At the same time, the government has encouraged students -- particularly those who have relatives overseas -- to go abroad to study. Reflecting its more permissive attitude toward overseas travel, in November 1985, the government passed the People's Republic of China Citizens' Exit and Entry Control Law (hereafter referred to as the Exit and Entry Control Law) which stipulates the two types of passports which Chinese residents may be eligible to attain: *yingsi huzhao*, passports or documents issued to those who want to travel for personal reasons and *gongwu huzhao*, which are issued to those who travel for business or public affairs purposes. The Exit and Entry Control Law also stipulates that those who wish to leave the country to engage in matters of public affairs are required to obtain permission from their *danwei* (employment department or working unit) to apply for a passport from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the national level or from the Foreign Affairs Office at the provincial level. Prior to giving their permission, *danwei* leaders typically will consider such factors as the applicant's family and personal history, loyalty to the Communist Party of China, employment record, and social relations. Once they are sponsored by their *danwei*, it is generally easier for residents to obtain a passport for reasons of business/public affairs than for personal affairs.

Normally, those who hold public affairs passports conduct business on behalf of or act for the government or their *danwei*. The *gongpai liuxuesheng* (students sponsored to study abroad by the government or *danwei*), are also issued public affairs passports, but may, with the permission of their *danwei*, exchange them for private passports at the appropriate Chinese Embassy or Consulate. Once they have fulfilled their assignments or affairs overseas, the public affairs passport holders are required to return their passport to the issuing bodies. In practice, however, many (as discussed below) retain their passports so that it will be easier for them to go abroad later.

The process of obtaining a private passport or travel documents is a relatively complex affair which requires applicants to attain permission from the local Public Security Bureau (PSB). Only those engaged in illegal deeds or activities harmful to national security are

ineligible; in theory and so long as they can provide proper documentation (e.g., invitation letters from overseas relatives or friends, acceptance letters from foreign educational institutions, or offers of employment), all other Chinese citizens are entitled to passports or travel documents. In practice, however, even those holding all the required documents may still experience difficulty getting passports or travel documents as the PSB will also check the applicant's personal file and solicit opinions from applicants' *danwei* leaders. If the latter decide that the applicant should not be issued a passport or travel documents, his/her application will be denied.

As a response to the problems they experience in attaining passports for personal travel, many Chinese residents undertake various strategies which will enable them to travel abroad. Huang Jian (all informants are pseudonym names), as an example of somebody who did not turn in his public affairs passport upon returning to China after an overseas training session. Originally from Beijing, where he served as a lawyer for a state owned company, Huang was sent to the United States for international commercial law training in 1988 by his *danwei* and came back to Beijing in 1990. As he related to me, Huang chose not to return his passport:

when *waiban touer* (the leader of foreign affairs office) in my *danwei* asked me to hand in I lied to him that it was lost. It is a *gongkai de mimi* (a secret that every one knows) in my *danwei* that no one who holds a public affairs passport is willing to hand it in to *waiban* after finishing his job abroad. To have a passport is a given right for the citizens, but you know in China the most basic human rights are not guaranteed let alone ensure you the right to have a passport. I felt guilty using a public affairs passport for my personal purposes, but what else could I do? If I had handed in my passport to *waiban* of my *danwei*¹¹ at that time, I would not have the chance to come here as an interpreter for a business delegation.

In the attempt to gain their permission, some will switch jobs from one *danwei* to another¹² while others will attempt to bribe their leaders. Another interviewee, Zhang Ying, a female refugee claimant from Beijing, experienced difficulty when she applied for a passport to visit her husband in Toronto. Zhang Ying's husband

came to Canada as a *zifei liuxuosheng* (self-supporting overseas student) in 1990. She applied for a private affairs passport in early 1991, but the leaders of her original *danwei* would not confer their permission:

They simply did not agree, I asked them the reasons, they just kept saying that to go abroad is a serious thing, since no one else in my *danwei* had applied to be issued a passport before my application, the leaders seemed too naive to make the decision. Later, I found a copy of the Exit and Entry Control Law from the Public Security Bureau and gave it to them. I did not know if they read it or not, but one day when I went to the office of *laodong renshi ke* (the human resources department), the director told me that my application had not been *yanjiu* (discussed or considered) by his department. I knew quite well, there is no *yanjiu* but *yan* (cigarette) and *jiu* (wine).¹³ I didn't want to bribe them, but I had to. I bought some goods of 500 *yuan* (Chinese money unit, one Canadian dollar equals about five Chinese *yuan*) and gave them to the director of the human resources department secretly. Although I felt shame for what I did, I got my application approved soon after bribing the director.

Fang Yong also had difficulty obtaining a passport. He had planned to come to Canada to study English. Although his relatives in Alberta indicated they would sponsor him, the leaders of his *danwei*, a small factory run by the local government, refused to write a letter of introduction (*jieshaoxin*) on his behalf to the PSB. Rather than bribe the leaders in his factory, he used his *guanxi* to get an introduction letter from another *danwei*. The introduction letter, in turn, enabled him to obtain a passport. Once in Canada, Fang did not attend school after all, but rather made a claim for refugee status. As he put it:

I am very lucky, my claim was agreed to with no questions. When I recall being refused a letter of introduction to get the passport, I feel unhappy. They don't have the right to disallow people to go abroad for study, but they do have the power to give you a hard time when you apply for a passport. I think you know better than I do why they do things like that: it is jealousy, simple jealousy. They themselves also want to go to abroad, or send their children to Western countries for training, but they may not have the

relatives or friends abroad to help them. This is one of the reasons why I made a refugee claim as soon as I realized that when you make such a claim you may have the opportunity to become a landed immigrant. I don't want to go back, simply don't want to.

Since public affairs passports and private passports are issued through different agencies, some people obtain one of each to take advantage as per their needs. Some people, in fact, have little difficulty obtaining multiple passports. For example, Zhong Jing, a Convention Refugee from Fuzhou city, prior to attaining landed immigrant status in 1993, had been a *chuzhang* (section chief) when he left China. He told me that "I left China with the true passport, [but] I could have as many passports as I wanted. Actually, I have several passports now."

In short, it is becoming more common for people to obtain passports or travel documents by illegal means (e.g., by bribing the officials of PSB, or by buying other peoples' passports and then exchanging the photographs).¹⁴ More so than elsewhere, these type of activities are occurring in the Eastern Economic Region (see Tian 1988 for detailed discussion about China's Economic Regions), particularly Southeast coastline provinces (e.g., Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, and Hainan, etc.) which have more developed market economies and, as China's tourist areas, are more "open" than the other areas.

Thus, while Chinese citizens are still subject to policies which generally restrict their mobility, it has become much easier for people to get passports or travel documents than ever before. Excluding those who obtained them by illegal means, over 3,300,000 Chinese citizens have been issued passports since 1979 (The World Journal May 9, 1995:A19).

Not only have the "reform" and the "open door" policies contributed to China's economic growth, they have also stimulated a "revolution of rising expectations" among its citizens. At the same time, however, China remains a developing country, and few people experience the touted glories of being rich. In the face of relatively difficult living conditions and a lack of personal freedom, many Chinese look to the possibilities of migrating elsewhere. That the desire to emigrate far exceeds available opportunities has contributed to the rise of large numbers of illegal emigrants and refugees, as

well as operations and agencies supporting these groups (Ma 1993:368; Rosemont 1991:Introduction). Previously unknown, the last several years has seen the emergence of international refugee-smuggling organizations in China.¹⁵

As discussed elsewhere (Tian 1995), the perceived attractions of the west: higher standard of living, the values of individualism and personal freedom, have strongly influenced the Chinese *chuguo chao* (waves of emigration) since China adopted reform and open policies in the post-1979 period. One of my key informants, Chen Ping, among many others told me

that the reason for him to go abroad was very simple: "China is too poor, the standard of living is too low."

Three waves of emigration have occurred from China since 1979 (Table 1). I term the first *qinshu danbao chuguo chao* (relatives sponsored emigration wave) to refer to the emigration which occurred between 1979-1982, when the government relaxed the rules permitting the visiting of families and relatives abroad. As would be expected, this wave consisted primarily of mainland Chinese who, sponsored and supported by their relatives living overseas, left China legally and tended to experience fewer problems adapting once settled.

Tide	Period	Features	Gov. Attit.*	Rel. to MCRs **
1 st	1979-82	Overseas Relative Sponsored	Supportive	No Relation
2 nd	1984-87	Self/Government Sponsored Overseas Students	Encouraging	Some Became MCRs Some Dislike MCRs
3 rd	1989-92	Refuge Seeking Illegally Exit	Obstructive	Main Resource of MCRs

* Chinese government's attitude towards the emigration.

** Relations to MCRs.

Table 1. Three Chinese Emigration Waves and Relations to MCRs

The second wave, which I term *chuguo liuxue chao* (study-abroad emigration wave), occurred between 1984-1987 when the government encouraged young students in universities to go abroad for further education.¹⁶ Again, most of these students left China legally. The majority of this group has remained abroad, particularly in those countries (the United States, Canada, and Australia) where programs initiated in the wake of the Tiananmen Square event allowed students to attain landed status.¹⁷ Moreover, *liuxuesheng* living in Toronto tend to keep their social distance from MCRs.

The third and most recent wave took place primarily

between 1989 and 1992, following the military suppression of the Tiananmen Demonstration. A number of renowned intellectuals and student leaders fleeing China in the wake of the Tiananmen-Square crackdown found refuge in various Western countries (Ma 1993:369). The flight of students subsequently lured many other mainland Chinese, including those who had not demonstrated, to also seek refuge in the West. Reflecting the high proportion of "refugees" (who are mainly from the Southeast coastal provinces, Fujian and Guangdong), I refer to this wave as the *naimin chuguo chao* (refugee emigration wave). One further defining feature associated with this wave, and one which reflects the growth of China's market economy, has been the

emergence of international population smugglers who found it possible to bribe local officials and state border guards to let large numbers of people exit illegally. Also noteworthy are the substantial roles which crooked police and customs officials play in the smuggling operations (Kristof 1993). Given the participation of some of its officers, it is not surprising that the police have been less than effective in eradicating smuggling operations. Hence, international refugee-smuggling organizations' contribution to this wave should not be underestimated; they would and could send Chinese "refugees" all over the world upon the requests and the payments they got from their "customers" (Montreal Gazette July 6, 1994:13, June 13, 1993:A13; Toronto Star June 10, 1993:A2, June 7, 1993:A3). While it supported the migration of those who left with the first two waves (because it was believed they would send back or return with useful foreign exchange, skills and knowledge, see Thompson 1989:177), the Chinese government attempted to prevent the migration of those who left during the third wave; government officials supposed that China's international image would be tarnished by the flight of its citizens seeking refuge in other countries (Cuenod 1989:224).

Contributing to all three waves, but especially the last, has been the influence of the West on Chinese society. When China opened its door to the world, many Chinese, especially those living in the coastline areas, were enchanted by the perceived opportunities to become fabulously wealthy and successful upon going abroad (Grant 1991:chapter 8; Kristof 1993; Rice 1992: chapter 5). Kristof (1993) adds that many people from Fujian have emigrated (or would like to) not because the 32 million people who live there are necessarily poor, but because of other underlying factors including the growth of a monetary culture, the rise of criminal gangs which can arrange their passage to other countries, and the increasing boldness and mobility of peasants. Some Fujianese told him:

The United States -- what a place! It's so rich! If there weren't restrictions, everybody would leave here. We would go to look for work in America, Hong Kong or Taiwan. If we could figure out how to get there, we would all go. We're on the coast, and so we know more about what life is like abroad. These days everybody thinks only money. That's why we want to go abroad. Lots of people from here have gone to Hong Kong or elsewhere, and they've gotten rich. We see that.

They come back and start factories and become big bosses. We Fujianese think of the United States as a kind of heaven. We worship the United States. I would love to go and work there, if only I could find a way. (Kristof 1993)

In common with Kristof, almost all of my interviewees were attracted to Canada by what they saw as a higher standard of living and more economic opportunity in Canada. Among my fifty-six interview respondents, 60.7 percent (34 respondents) admitted that their emigration decisions were directly or indirectly stimulated by the Western influence (such as more developed economies, individual freedoms) on them. "I just wanted to go abroad to probe the large world, to have a modern life with a car and a house for myself," said Hong Po, a 30 year old male whose claims for refugee status have been rejected. He continued, telling me that:

"In the end, I wanted to go abroad, not only to *ganchaoliu* (catch up with the fashion). Guangzhou is a place which has been greatly influenced by the West. Hong Kong films, radios, and newspapers tell us the real situations abroad."

While Hong Po held a Masters degree in China and worked as an engineer in a research institute, his wage was only about 300 yuan *renminbi* (Chinese money) per month: just enough for his food and daily necessities. Somebody told him that if he were in the United States or Canada, he would get paid about \$25,000 annually, which, equalling approximately 180,000 yuan *renminbi* was more than he could make in his whole life in China. Reasoning that if he could only be paid \$10,000, it would be much much better than what he could get in China, Hong Po, like many of the other MCRs I interviewed, made the decision to go abroad to try his luck.

In short, the impact of reforms and the "open door" policy on recent Chinese emigration has been substantial. However, when we examine the movement of MCRs from China to Canada, we not only need to understand who the MCRs are, but also why they were motivated to come to Canada as opposed to other countries, as well as the strategies they adopt in managing their migration.

Tashang Buguilu (Get on One Ended Road)

In this study, MCRs refer to all those from mainland China who are either Convention refugees, *de facto* refugees, refugee claimants, and those whose refugee claims have been rejected. According to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), between January 1984 to March 1995, about 9,500 mainland Chinese made refugee claims in Canada. Among those, 1,667 people who claimed before January 1989 were grouped in the backlog program¹⁸ and the great majority of those who fit in the program were offered landed status or Canadian citizenship. Among the 7,325 claimants who made their claims after January 1989 but before February 1993 when Bill C-86 became effective, 1,547 have been accepted as Convention refugees, while the remaining 5,778 have either had their claims rejected or have yet to complete their hearings. In general, the rate at which MCRs claims have been accepted has been declining since 1990.

Due to data limitations, it is not easy to figure out precisely how many MCRs as defined above are living in Metro Toronto and its vicinity.¹⁹ According to existing IRB data, 2,126 Convention Refugees and Designated Classes from mainland China came to Canada during the period of 1989-1992, of which 741 (34.9 percent) took Metro Toronto as their intended destination. Taking this percentage as a reference, and based on my personal experience, I would estimate that there are approximately 3,000 MCRs living in Metro Toronto up to 1995. Since no more detailed official data are available we may use the data collected by the survey mentioned above to describe MCRs in Metro Toronto demographically. 116 MCRs have participated in this survey, among them eighty-seven (75 percent) are males, twenty-nine (25 percent) are females. 69 percent are rejected refugee claimants, 14.7 percent are Convention Refugees, 7.8 percent are refugee claimants who have not undergone full hearing. 75 percent of the participants' ages range from twenty-one to forty years old, 22.4 percent from forty-one to fifty years old. 48.3 percent of them have college and more educations. 73.3 percent are married, but among those eighty-five married respondents, 59.8 percent (fifty-one individuals), have been suffering separation.

With respect to "pushing and pulling" them to Canada, it is important to compare the dates when MCRs left China with those of when they arrived in Canada. Of those I surveyed, twenty-four (20.7 percent) MCRs left China before June 1989, while (with the exception of seven who did not answer) the rest

(n=85) left China after June 1989, the majority of whom (62.9 percent) left during the period of June 1989 to June 1991. In sum, the majority of MCRs exited China during the peak of the third emigration wave, the Tiananmen Square incident and its aftermath, during which time the international community attacked the human rights abuses which were perceived as associated with, or resulting from, the protests (see Madsen 1995: Chapter 1). It was also at this time that many countries, such as Canada, the United States, and France, opened their doors to those Chinese who left China following the Tiananmen Square incident.

The average time difference between when MCRs left China and when they arrived in Canada reflects the Canadian government's policy towards refugees in general, and towards Chinese in particular. The role that the Canadian government has played in the construction of MCRs as an identifiable group cannot be neglected. I would argue that the Canadian government has effectively played a role similar to the Chinese state's in recognizing certain people as constituting a "nationality" and others as not (Gladney 1991). According to the survey, the times when MCRs arrived in Canada can be correlated with government's policy:²⁰ 11.2 percent (eight) arrived in Canada before December 1989, 81.9 percent arrived after January 1990, the majority (63 percent) arrived in Canada between January 1990 and June 1991.

The peak time for MCRs arriving in Canada is six months later than the peak time when they left China. The difference suggests that some MCRs might not have originally intended to come to Canada. Later, Canada's special program to give Chinese students permanent residency status following the Tiananmen Square crackdown and the special order not to deport people to China made by the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada influenced many, such as Zhu Guang to come.²¹

I also used the survey to compare the status of the respondents when they entered Canada: 73.1 percent came to Canada without valid visas, of whom 76.3 percent had their claims rejected. Of those who have become landed immigrants, 40 percent of them held visit visas when they arrived in Canada, 40 percent came without valid visas and 20 percent came via other means or ways (some bought passports declaring them citizens of other commonwealth countries which do not require visas to enter Canada). For those who have

valid visas now, 50 percent entered as visa students and another 50 percent as visitors. Among those whose claims are still being processed, 12.5 percent

entered Canada as visa students, 12.5 percent as visiting scholars and 12.5 percent as visitor, with the rest (62.5 percent) coming without visas.

SOURCE: SURVEY DATA. *Percentages of total surveyed 116 respondents.

TABLE 2: THE REASONS FOR MCRs TO GO ABROAD

Reasons	Beijing		Shanghai		Fujian		Fuzhou		Guangzhou		Guangdong		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	1st		2nd		3rd		4th		5th		6th		Total	
Other Reasons	3	13.3	0	0	1	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3.0
It's My Luck	1	0.8	1	0.8	3	1.1	3	1.1	0	0	1	0.8	3	2.0
China Don't Like	3	3.0	3	2.0	8	3.8	1	0.8	1	0.8	0	0	31	18.1
Reunion Family	3	1.1	0	0	3	3.0	1	0.8	0	0	0	0	4	2.5
Persecution Avoid	23	42.1	13	11.3	3	1.1	0	2.5	0	0	0	0	14	63.8
Money Make More	1	0.8	3	3.0	1	0.8	1	0.8	0.8	1	0	0	1	0.8
No Freedom in China	40	34.2	30	22.0	0	0	1	0.8	0	0	0	0	31	61.3
Persecution Broader	4	3.4	2	1.3	1	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	8.0

The different statuses which MCRs hold upon entering Canada vary significantly in terms of the regions from which they come in China. For example, the majority (61.5 percent) of MCRs from Beijing held valid travel documents and visas when they arrived in Canada, while 63.6 percent of those from Shanghai, 75 percent of those from Fujian (excepting Fuzhou city), 100 percent from Fuzhou city, 84.1 percent from Guangzhou city and 100 percent from Guangdong (excluding Guangzhou city) did not hold valid documents or visas when they came to Canada. Among those who came to Canada as visa students, 66.7 percent are from Beijing, 33.3 percent from Shanghai. What these data suggest is that in Beijing, the capital of the PRC, the government retains enough control to ensure that those who want to go abroad do

so through properly legal channels. Most of those from Beijing did not originally intend to claim refugee status but did so only when they realized that claiming refugee status might be an effective strategy for staying longer in Canada. Moreover, my data also corroborates the idea that since the market economy in Beijing has not developed to the same extent as in the coastline areas, most Beijing people have little money to offer smugglers. In contrast, the government has less control over the coastline areas, such as in Guangdong, Fujian, and Shanghai, where people find it easier to exit illegally, and where the much more developed market economies make it affordable for many individuals to pay for the population smugglers. Thus, MCRs from the coastal areas are more likely to come to Canada with the purpose of claiming refugee

status upon arriving.

According to the survey, the reasons for MCRs to go abroad vary (Table 2): 8.6 percent (ten individuals) stated they went abroad to broaden their perspectives; 61.2 percent reported leaving to seek more freedom than that exists in China; 6 percent claimed they came to make more money than they would be able to in China so that they could in turn have a better life; 63.8 percent claimed to be escaping persecution from the Chinese government; 5.2 percent came to reunite with family; 18.1 percent simply did not want to live in China, wanted to change their residence and or did not want to always live in the same place; 6 percent wanted to try their luck in a foreign country where they can do whatever they want. The data implies that those who held valid visas left China mainly to broaden their perspectives (50 percent) and to reunite with families (50 percent). Many respondents who did not hold valid visas saw a lack of freedom in China (30 percent), or left China due to perceived persecution (about 60 percent).

While most MCRs claimed that they suffered persecution of sorts, what also emerged in the open-ended interviews is that MCRs tend to differ in terms of what they understand such concepts as "freedom" and "persecution" to mean. For example, I found highly educated MCRs to associate the concept of freedom with the rights to freely publish personal opinions, choose and change jobs, and move from one to another residence. Persecution to these same MCRs tends to refer less to political persecution than to situations in which they had arguments with colleagues, neighbours, or were punished for not family planning. My interviews also suggest that more highly educated MCRs are less likely to report that they had been persecuted: among thirty-one respondents who have college and higher education, only three (9.7 percent) claimed they had been persecuted in China while among twenty-five less-educated respondents, 40 percent (ten) reported they had been persecuted in China; of the latter group, ten respondents (33.3 percent) attributed their persecution to family planning. Only one interviewed Beijing told me that he would have been persecuted because of Tiananmen Square event had he not been out of the country, while four from Guangdong and one from Fujian told me they had been persecuted because they had been critical of the Chinese government in published writings or had been involved in the democracy movement in 1989.

The majority of the respondents admit that they came to Canada mainly to seek more individual freedom, better lives, and more money. The data from the survey indicate that for 85.3 percent of my respondents to seek for more personal freedom is their first reason to come to Canada (Table 3). Of those I describe as highly educated, 60 percent came to Canada because of Canada's "good" refugee policy. As revealed in my interviews, and based upon my personal experience in China, many Chinese people emigrate to seek more personal freedom; at the same time, there are also economic factors which help explain why MCRs left China.

The social situation in China has improved significantly since 1978, and the country's economic achievements have attracted much world attention.

Why then do MCRs want to go abroad, and in particular, why to Canada? The narratives of several of my informants might help to answer these questions. For example, a forty-three year old male whose refugee claims were rejected poses that:

Here in Canada you don't need to worry about your life, you don't need to find a job to make money. Everything you want you can get from the government. In China it is different, you have to work to make money: no work, no pay and no life. I feel I am very lucky to come to Canada, I wrote letters to my friends in my home town told them every thing I met in Canada and all of them want to come. It is true, even if there is only a very small hope they will come by any means.

In common with the man above, thirty-three year old Chen Ping, was motivated to apply for refugee status by the higher standard of living in Canada. Born in a family of professionals, Chen left China in the Spring of 1991 for Canada as a visa student. Chen's family supported and provided him with money and found a sponsor for him.²² Chen also had the support of his new bride and hoped that he could soon arrange for their reunion in Canada. Whereas in the beginning he had hoped that he could become an immigrant on the basis of his own abilities, he later realized that it was not easy to obtain permanent residency in Canada. After serious consideration, he decided to claim refugee status. In my interview, he was straightforward in admitting that "*Wo shenqing nanmin zhishi weile huode shenfen, dongji jiushi yao yimin* -- my

motivation in claiming refugee status is to become an immigrant." He told me:

China is too poor, the standard of living is very low. I planned to go abroad, my family supported me. For me there was no choice, actually I had no right to choose the country I wanted to go, whichever country issued a visa to me I would go to that country. Before I made the claim I had

known something about the Canadian refugee system otherwise I would not claim. When I was in China I knew nothing about refugees. It was my friends here who told me that if I claim I might have the opportunity to become an immigrant. . . . My purpose is to immigrate . . . I don't think I am a real refugee . . . all the mainland Chinese refugee claimants, they are just like myself, claiming to be refugees for nothing but *shenfen*.

Chen criticized the Canadian refugee system as being ridiculous and irrational for accepting

which he has been "paid under the table" (i.e., paid cash) or borrowed other peoples' *dagongka* (work

SOURCE: Survey Data. Percentages of total surveyed in parentheses.

TABLE 3: THE REASONS FOR MGRS TO CANADA

Reasons	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th
Other Reasons	1	0.0	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.0	3	3.3
Canada Relatives in	4	3.4	5	1.1	0	2.3	3	1.1	1	0.0	0	0	12	13.0
Opportunities More	3	3.0	30	13.3	10	3.0	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	34	38.3
Seeking Good Benefits	0	0	0	2.3	1	0.0	0	0	1	0.0	0	0	14	15.1
For Refuge	2	4.3	31	18.1	5	1.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	54.1
For Freedom	0	0.0	1	0.0	5	1.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	103	83.0
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th
	Importance in Order													

"refugees" while lacking an effective means to identify bona fide refugees from those who take advantage of the system. He sees the refugee system as but a means for immigrating when others do not work.

Li Heping, a forty-one year old male refugee claimant from Guizhou province came to Canada (in January 1992) also as a visa student. A university lecturer with a Master's degree in economics in China, his principal motivation to go abroad was to develop himself academically. He was accepted as a graduate student by a Canadian University but offered no financial assistance. Since arriving in Canada he has never attended school, but rather has worked at jobs for

permit for non-permanent residents or citizens, or social insurance number for citizens and permanent residents).²³ In January 1993, one year after arriving in Canada, Li claimed refugee status. He told me he was motivated to do so because:

In China you didn't have personal freedom, nor did you have political freedom. I was very dissatisfied with the long-standing one party dictatorship. I wanted to go abroad to *xishou ziyou kongqi* (literally, "to have freed air," meaning to gain a share of Western liberalism and freedoms). China has been ruled by one man not by legislations; nothing has been ensured by

law. Its economy has been backward. Western countries are ruled by legislation and their economies are much better. Originally, I didn't want to claim refugee status because I planned to go back. Later I claimed on the advice of my friends here. Since I didn't go to school, I felt that I at least should make some money. Thus, I made the refugee claim mainly based on economic reasons because after claiming, I could receive *nanmin fei* (refugee money, i.e., welfare) from the government ... I knew nothing about the refugee system in Canada before I claimed. The Canadian refugee system was built up according to the United Nations Convention Refugee Agreement made in 1950s. While it can provide help for those who really need refuge, it is questionable whether or not Canadian financial resources can maintain it or not and whether it can help those who really seek asylum. They will let anyone collect the refugee money so long as the person has made a claim. I am worried as to whether this kind of operation could be maintained long. I don't feel I am a refugee . . . I abuse the Canadian refugee system, I don't care if it accepts me as a refugee or not, my behaviour is rational.

Li Heping abandoned his claim and went home before Christmas of 1993 with \$20,000 he gained in Canada, of which he collected \$7,200 from welfare. Two months later, he wrote me to say that he felt relieved of the stress he experienced abusing the refugee system. He added that he remains concerned that, while he himself has benefited from it, the refugee system should be totally reformed.

Ma Jinxia, a forty-four year old woman from Shanghai, was born in a family whose members included high rank Guomindang (the Nationalist Party) officials and had grown up experiencing class struggles and political movements. Reflecting her family's position, she had to be careful about her *yanxin* (words and behaviour) in China when she attended school or went to work. Only later, when the C.P.C. softened its hard ideological doctrine and introduced economic reforms was Ma liberalized from class struggle: she became the director of a factory with more than 400 workers in 1980 and passed the *dianshi daxue* (the distance education University which offers lectures through television) entrance exams in 1986. In 1988, she went to Japan for language and business administration training. The two years'

experience in Japan helped broaden her perspective and, tempted by the fruits of Japan's developed economy and technologies, she would have remained in Japan following the Tiananmen massacre; the Japanese government, however, would not offer refugee status to (most) Chinese claimants. On a trip to Thailand with four other classmates, Ma came to realize that:

[the] Japanese government did not take care of Chinese students. Having experienced many political movements, I was scared to go back. The Local Chinese newspapers in Thailand reported that the Canadian government gave immigration papers to all mainland Chinese. We then made the decision: Go to Canada to try our luck.

In Thailand, Ma and her classmates each paid \$12,000 to a *shetou* (a "snake head," i.e., an international population smuggler) to be taken to Canada. With seven Chinese from various other areas, the group was flown to Hungary first, then to Austria, and finally to Canada. Following the smuggler's instructions, they destroyed their passports and claimed refugee status upon arriving at Pearson International Airport in Toronto. Of the twelve claimants, seven were accepted as Convention Refugees in 1991, one went to Taiwan, and the remaining four had their claims rejected in 1992. Ma invoked the Chinese proverb *biliang wei chang* -- which translates as "to make good girls become prostitutes" -- to refer to the way in which the Canadian refugee system influences honest people to become dishonest. Of the claimants, Ma says:

They lied in the court; they cooked up their stories. Some even forged arrest certificates. I could have forged one too, but didn't. The result is they passed and I didn't. Besides, all those who passed were heard in 1991 and all those refused, in 1992.

To further point out the perceived unfairness of the system, she told me that while her story is almost the same as that of her cousin, she was rejected while her cousin has been accepted. Ma's feelings are common among all the MCRs whose claims have been rejected, and I would argue that this helps them establish a sense of solidarity in terms of fighting the government for their *shenfen wenti*. This feeling also helps them to construct a common identity -- *beiju Zhongguo dalu nanmin* (rejected MCRs). Compared with those who

were accepted as convention refugees, the MCRs whose claims were rejected tend to feel unfairly treated by the IRB; from their perspective, all accepted MCRs exaggerated their situations in China in the attempt to gain acceptance from the IRB.²⁴

Goffman points out that stigmatized individuals often lie in certain situations to certain audiences as part of a strategy to present themselves in a good light (1959, 1963). MCRs must exaggerate the "persecution" they might meet in China in order to be accepted as Convention refugees, which, in turn, would enable them to obtain their underlying goal -- i.e., landed immigrant status in Canada. To the extent that resolving their legal status is one of the key problems MCRs face in adapting and coping, therefore, exaggerating "serves as an indicator of adaptation to the system, rather than simply as an indicator of dishonesty" (Cooper 1993:108).

What the case of Liu Fu (below) and others suggests is that while political factors may be significant for some, MCRs are likely to exaggerate, if not lie, about the persecution they would face in China, and in any case, tend to be more influenced by economical factors in wanting to stay in Canada. Liu Fu, a forty-three year old Convention refugee from Shanghai, actively took part in *minyun houdong* (democratic movement) in China. While he might be subjected to some questioning from the government because of his involvement in the students demonstration in Shanghai, Liu thought it unlikely that he would face serious persecution or arrest. Moreover, while his main reason for migrating was to flee political oppression and discrimination and to gain the right to speak freely, he does not think that he qualifies as a bona fide refugee. Rather, he prefers Canada as a place which allows him to develop more as a person and have a better life. Prior to coming to Canada in 1990 with a Dutch passport, he claims not to have known too much:

. . . about the Canadian refugee system, but I was told Canada is a democratic country, a paradise for refugees from all over the World. I made the refugee claim as soon as I arrived in the Montreal Airport, and later transferred to Toronto to live with my brother. Canada is really a good country in which to live; life is much easier here than that in China. Its welfare system, health care system are indeed first class in the World. Canada is a

place where new immigrants can enjoy their lives. . . . I believe few mainland Chinese refugees are bona fide refugees, I mean political refugees. As a group, all of them came to Canada after innumerable hardships, and from a humanitarian perspective I hope they can be allowed to stay in Canada. Still, many mainland Chinese claim themselves to be refugees, but in fact they are not.

In general, my open-ended interviews helped convince me that most highly educated people came to Canada mainly to improve their personal development, to gain more freedom and to make more money. Many did not avoid telling me that they made refugee claims primarily to facilitate their immigration status or for economic reasons. Some, like Ma Jinxia and Liu Fu, admit that while they face some political repression in China, they came to Canada because of Canada's "good" refugee policy and welfare system.

In contrast, many of the less educated refugee claimants, especially those from the rural areas of Guangdong and Fujian, are more insistent in stressing that they came to Canada to seek political asylum. Fan Daxing, a thirty-three year old male claimant from a small town in Guangdong, testified to the Convention Refugee Determination Division that since he donated several thousand *renminbi* to the students of Guangzhou and had participated in a demonstration and a memorial commemorating the Tiananmen massacre, the PSB wanted him. He added that in order to flee arrest, he spent 200,000 Hong Kong dollars initially to be smuggled to the United States but was later convinced to come to Canada as it was better in terms of accepting refugees. The panel who heard his claims were of the opinion that he had not presented trustworthy and credible evidence to show that there is a serious possibility that he would be persecuted for his political views or on any other grounds should he be returned to China. Accordingly, his claim was turned down by the Refugee Division. Unhappy about the Refugee Division's decision, Fan still claimed to be a political refugee when I interviewed him. I personally thought, based upon my own experience and knowledge, that he cooked up the story and that even if it had been true, he would not likely be subjected to any trouble from the PSB.²⁵

Zhen Youfa, a twenty-seven year old refugee claimant from Fujian, the son of a peasant and holding only a six-year formal education, serves as another

example of the degree to which less-educated MCRs insist that they would face political persecution in China. Zhen left his newly married wife alone in China and came to Canada by *toudu* in 1992, with his family contributing 60,000 *renminbi* for his *toudu*. When I asked what kind of persecution he had met, he answered:

I just got married (when going abroad) and I wanted a child. The baby was only one month in my wife's belly when the government was going to arrest my wife. I could not stay at home. I don't understand why they should not let us have a baby.

Although China has a strict family-planning policy, it allows each family to have at least one child, and in some rural areas families are allowed to have more than one child (practically one-son family). Given the facts that he was newly married and his wife was pregnant for the first time, it is not likely that he had been persecuted because of having their first baby.

In short, all the MCRs I interviewed (with the exception of one person who arrived in Canada under the designated class because of his publications) came to Canada not under the fear of persecution, but on a voluntary basis. Although "push" factors existed in China (e.g., the lack of personal freedoms, poor living conditions), of greater influence are the economic opportunities, flexible refugee policy and well-instituted social welfare and social service systems perceived to exist in Canada. Upon settling in Canada, MCRs begin to *tashang buguitu* (get on one ended road) -- willing to try to stay by any means; claiming refugee status is but one relatively effective means.²⁶

Immediate Responses and Reactions in Canada

Most MCRs, upon arriving in Canada, confront physical and social environments which differ markedly from those in China. Responding to their new surroundings, many, as demonstrated below, experience stress or what has been termed culture shock, and are likely to respond in various ways. Some treat the new environment as a terrible world and try to minimize conflicts by means of isolating themselves or withdrawing from contacts with the larger society. Others are more likely to employ personal networks and social institutions which will enable them to adapt to the new society more smoothly.

Clearly, not every one adjusts to their new environments equally well. One informant, Li Heping, for example, came to Canada hoping that he would receive financial support to attend a Canadian university as a graduate student and then arrange for his wife and his daughter to join him. In China, he had imagined Canada to be a democratic country, which meant that its citizens were allowed to do as they pleased within the confines of the law; in short, he reasoned that life in Canada could be no worse than in China. He soon discovered that his expectations did not match the reality of his situation in Canada: while his TOEFL score was high enough, he was not offered a scholarship from any graduate school (in part because of cutbacks due to the economic recession). He then decided to look for work but was disappointed when he realized that, lacking a work permit, no employer in the formal sector would offer him a position. He turned to the informal sector, but was fired *bu ji qi shu* (too many times to be counted) because he lacked effective labour skills. With my help he finally got a job, selling flowers on a street corner. The job offered no fixed pay: at 15 percent commission, he had to work from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. to make between fifteen to thirty dollars. Finding life really difficult, he felt a loss of self-value and realized that he could not achieve his wonderful dreams:

My best design couldn't be carried out, I had to give up. In China, my social status was much higher than here, I was a university teacher belonging to white collar class, I had the opportunity to speak out and to catch people's attention. In Canada you are a foreigner, you can do nothing. . . . When I was in China, I perceived that the West to be absolutely better than China, but now my mind has changed: I no longer think the Western is absolutely good. . . . It is clear enough that you are nobody in Canada. To do labour work is not my specialty, the boss is unhappy with me because I am not good at doing things. Now I am able to compare -- any society is not perfect. In Canada, you have to seek a livelihood first. Despite the freedom you have, you don't feel the importance of free speech, and you have to obey your boss. In China, you have a stable job, you don't need to worry about being fired, you can even complain to your leaders, but here you cannot speak democratically to your boss. I figured out when you are busy in making your three meals every day, you don't feel the

importance of freedom, but to survive is the most important thing. In China you cannot attack the top leaders, but you can criticize your direct leaders, in Canada the situation is just contrary.

While Li Heping is one of the highest educated MCRs among my fifty-six interviewed respondents, his narrative is similar to those of other MCRs in terms of recounting the experience of losing status. For Li, to have gone from being a university lecturer to (in his judgement) a useless person, from somebody who instructs others to somebody who is instructed, *shi yige feichang tongku de jinli* (was an extremely stressful experience). When he first settled in Canada, he found it difficult to forget his former occupational and social role as university lecturer. He enjoyed talking about Chinese, as well as international politics and economics, but found that few of his friends from mainland China shared these interests with him. Moreover, when he faced serious difficulties, few of his friends seemed to be able to help him since they themselves had their problems to deal with. Li felt totally lost.

Later, on his friends' encouragement, Li claimed refugee status. With \$600 welfare money each month he collected from the government, his life became better. Eventually, he learned to borrow work permits from his friends and made money in other illegal ways. Although he was fired several times, he kept a job as a gas station attendant by using his friend's social insurance number for eight months. "I adjusted myself," he told me at a party hosted by his friend:

I learned to lie. In China I never lie, but here you have to. If I didn't lie, I couldn't get refugee money from the government, if I didn't lie, I couldn't work to make money. I know this is illegal, but I have no choice. You asked me what is my feeling since I came here, I can tell you I am no longer the old myself, I have been changed, I become more concerned about the reality, more about myself. In this society, you must learn to help yourself by yourself, you must learn to obey your boss, you should never hope that the boss to be nice to you; if you are valuable to the boss, he will keep you. Otherwise, he will just ask you not to come tomorrow. I have been fired many times. You know that hurt my self-esteem. In the beginning, I couldn't understand, I couldn't bear

it, but now I get used to it, it's nature that if you couldn't help the boss in his business, there is no sense for him to keep you. This is capitalism, this is the private ownership system. You must face the reality. For me, I believe I will never get better in this system. I am an intellectual: my brain labour is stronger than my physical labour; in Canada I cannot use my brain but must use my physical labour to make living. I couldn't adapt to the society, so I have decided to go back, to find my old self in my country.

When he made the decision to go back to China, Li Heping felt relieved of the pressures he faced in Canada. He had saved every dollar he made, lived in a basement which was the storage place of a friend's business, bought food on sale, bicycled instead of taking the bus to work even in the winter time. He left Canada with the regret of having been dishonest to the Canadian government and the fear of being identified by the Chinese government as someone who had claimed refugee status in Canada.

International migration, as discussed, represents a situation in which individual immigrants, as "strangers" in foreign lands, must learn to cope with high levels of uncertainty and unfamiliarity. This is true even for the diaspora communities, although with more flexibility, the transmigrants or diasporas still need to familiarize themselves with the new social fields in which they are living. As Kim (1987:8) notes, "[t]he task of all cultural strangers is to acquire the necessary competence to function satisfactorily, at least at a minimal level (Kim 1987:8)." While Li Heping tried to cope with the change, in part by becoming more materialistic and individualistic than before, he found himself unable to function as he thought properly and regretfully returned to China.

Wei Limin, a thirty-five year old from Beijing, also experienced cultural shock upon settling in Canada. Although he came to Canada in 1992 as a visa student, he did not claim refugee status until the summer of 1993. He said that he went abroad for the main purpose of broadening his *yanjie* (viewpoint), to compare the relative merits of socialism and capitalism. A radical in China, he tended to look down on socialism, perceiving capitalism as a better system. Having been in Canada for two years, he still feels everything is fresh, but has also begun to re-evaluate his previous thinking about capitalism:

Only when I arrived in the West could I realize it's not as free and equal (as I thought). I began to look with favour on Karl Marx' critique of capitalism. I even believe now that socialism has its own values. All my previous knowledge of capitalism was from books. I feel it's strange that many radical people in China become conservative after going abroad. I have real personal experience with capitalism. I worked in a Chinese operated factory by borrowing my friend's *dagongka*, and witnessed how the capitalist tightly controls the workers: he installed several video cameras to monitor the workers, hired many big and small supervisors, made a series of rules to control workers. He treats the workers just like a machine. In China, the socialist political system lacks humanity, no human rights, but in its economical system, due to its being publicly owned, the factory is full of humanity, the relations between the workers are harmonious. But here, the relations between workers are competitive.

While Wei Limin has become disillusioned in some of the same ways as other MCRs, unlike those such as Li Heping (above), he does not feel so lost, but rather is more apt to treat his losses as learning experiences. Realizing where his "real" position is, Wei Limin has adjusted better than other MCRs. Arguing that one "cannot change the new environment you are facing but must find a way to fit in it," Wei said that there was:

No losing for me, everything is a gain. I know quite well that from the long term perspective, my hope is in China, and to get immigrant status (in Canada) is for my future development in China. Right now I feel that I am a marginal person since I don't have legal status, and even if I get the status later, perhaps I will still be marginal. It is not easy to get into the mainstream society, I cannot, because firstly I am a visible minority, and secondly my English is poor.

Nevertheless, when his refugee claim was accepted by the IRB in the Summer of 1994, Wei faced a difficult decision of whether it would be better to return to China or to stay in Canada. He finally decided that no matter where he ends up, at the moment he was in Canada, and thus, must first establish himself by following the ways of other Canadians.

While Li Heping and Wei Limin are highly educated, how about those MCRs who come from rural areas and/or are less educated? My interviews and observations indicate that the type of cultural changes such MCRs experience differs from that which Li and Wei first experienced. Many of those from rural China came with a limited understanding about the urban centres in China, let alone how people lived in the West. They often had oversimplified views of life in Canada, influenced by the information that population smugglers passed on to them: "I thought the life could be very easy and very nice here, my snake head told me I could easily get a job and make a lot of money to bring my whole family here," Zhang Pingtai, a refugee claimant from Fujian province, told me. He added that

. . . the reality is not like what the snake head said. Because I don't speak English, nor Cantonese, I simply couldn't find a job. I am living on refugee money from the government, with these \$600 I have to pay my rent, my food and my debt to the snake head."

As a farmer in China with only a five-year education, Zhang Pingtai had never even been to his county town before he came to Canada. He arrived not knowing how to use a telephone, how to open a bank account and understanding little about urban and market-driven economies. When I interviewed him at his residence, he was very happy to be interviewed but refused to tell me details on how and when he arrived in Canada, how much he paid for his *toudu*, and why he left China for Canada.

I interviewed Zhang in the 100 square foot room he shared with three MCRs from his hometown. While the interview progressed, two of his roommates were also present. When I asked them what they did everyday, one answered that they mostly sleep day and night, and sometimes they play cards together. They do not watch television, nor do they read newspaper because they all have difficulty reading *fantizi* (traditional Chinese characters).²⁷ Sometimes they walk around but never wander beyond Chinatown. When asked why they did not go to school to learn English, Qiao, the youngest one said: "I cannot go to school, I have no education, I cannot read books. In China you pay to learn English, here you don't need to pay but you don't want to learn." Given that reading Chinese is still a problem for them, their attitude towards learning English is understandable. Moreover, they regard

learning English to be not so important in view of the well established Chinese ethnic communities which exist in Toronto. While all four have been in Canada for more than one year, only one has managed to obtain a part time job -- washing dishes fifteen hours per week at the rate of \$5.5 per hour. One time when I found a job for Zhang as a dish-washer, he refused to take the job. "I am afraid to go out, besides, I may not be able to do it, I was told washing dishes is a very heavy duty work, I don't want to make myself too tired."

Another refugee claimant who used to be a fishmonger in Fujian complained that he could not find a job. One day when I met him at a videotape rental store, I offered him a part time job -- cleaning a church every day for two hours at the rate of \$6 per hour. He turned down the offer saying that he would rather stay home than go out to make only \$12 a day.²⁸ While the majority of MCRs I know are hard working, I think that the two cases above in which MCRs refused work are worth further analysis. In part, I think that the two who refused work reflect an attitude cultivated in and still evident among those who come from "traditional" agrarian sectors. More specifically, given the fact that China is still a developing country and the Chinese agriculture is still based on natural conditions, many in rural China are less competitive and more easily satisfied with lower standards of living than are those from urban centres. Although living in Canada, some MCRs retain values which are rooted in rural China, all the more so since they seldom interact with those in the larger society.

In short, no matter whether they originate from urban or rural regions, highly or less highly educated, all MCRs in Canada experience substantial cultural changes. At the same time, the way in which they respond to such changes differs as described above. The changed social environment requires them to cope and adapt, however the process of their adaptation is beyond the scope of this paper and is discussed elsewhere (Tian 1995).

Notes

1. Robert Guang Tian holds a Ph.D. from York University, Toronto. He can be reached via the internet at: gtian@yorku.ca.
2. Based on my personal knowledge and research, the

great majority of MCRs in Canada left China between 1988-1991.

3. The four sectors targeted for modernization are those of agriculture, industry, education, science and defense, as first outlined in Dr. Sun Yatsen's well known book *The International Development of China*, and as subsequently revived by a speech of Premier Zhou Enlai in 1964 (see Godley 1993).

4. Under the reforms, families are allocated land on leases of up to 30-50 years and are required to sell an agreed quota of their products to the state at fixed (low) prices. Farmers are then allowed to consume or sell surplus products at higher prices.

5. An egalitarian distribution system within which workers are paid equally regardless of effort.

6. The secure jobs provided by the state to the workers for life without considering individuals' productivity and contribution.

7. It has been reported that by February of 1995, China's population reached the 1.2 billion mark and it has since then exceeded the 1.2 billion upper limit originally set by the state for the year 2000. Consequently, the new goal was suggested to be 1.3 billion (cf. Harper 1994; Leeming 1994; Tisdell 1993 for more discussion on the problems of population in China).

8. Many goods, especially raw materials and producer goods, are labelled with two prices: fixed state prices and free market prices. State prices are used to maintain state control in the economy, whereas free market prices reflect the values of "supply-demand."

9. Those in high level leadership positions and their family members use their power and *guanxi* to buy goods at fixed state prices and then sell them at free market prices to unfairly make extra money.

10. The minority peoples in China for the most part occupy the territory outside the country's "core," the densely settled east. From a geopolitical and historical perspective, the minority groups might wish to break away from the country and foreign powers might be tempted to encourage such rebellions. In fact, thousands of Tibetan refugees left for India after an unsuccessful uprising in 1959, and about 50,000 Khazaks crossed the border to the USSR in 1962.

11. *Danwei* is an administrative term referring to the organization of almost all urban workplaces under the authority of the central government, it functions politically, socially, and economically in urban Chinese daily life and has a strong influence on urban families. Although in recent years, China has introduced a new category named *getihu* (private business sector) in which the urban people are self-employed, the majority of urban Chinese are still involved in the *danwei* system (see Henderson & Cohen 1984 for more discussion).

12. Usually, it is not easy for ordinary employees to switch from one *danwei* to another.

13. In Mandarin Chinese the phrase *yanjiu* means study, discuss, consider, etc., here it stands for consider, it is pronounced similarly to the two words *yan* (cigarette) and *jiu* (wine). In modern Chinese society, when ordinary people ask the leaders to consider a personal request, the leaders will say it needs *yanjiu*, however, in some cases when bribes are given the personal request may get approved quicker and easier. People satirize this phenomenon as *yanjiu yanjiu jiu shi yan jiu yan jiu* (discussion or consideration is nothing but cigarettes and wine).

14. One relatively common way to obtain passports is through *shetou* (population smugglers); acting as middlemen of sorts, *shetou* buy from people who have extra passports and sell to "clients" who need them to leave China (see Calgary Herald April 22, 1988: A18; Montreal Gazette July 6, 1994:A13; August 8, 1990:B1; April 18, 1990:A1,A2).

15. According to news reports (see Montreal Gazette August 8, 1990:B1; April 12, 1990:A1, A4; October 16, 1990:A1, A2; Calgary Herald August 8, 1990:A2) one ring alone had smuggled approximately 40 people a month from China to Canada between the years of 1987 and 1990. On average, mainland Chinese would have had to pay \$15,500 to be smuggled into Canada in 1989, \$35,000 in 1994, \$70,000 in 1995 (Kaihla 1995), and an additional \$5,000 to go on to the United States.

16. There was an earlier such group, to France, between 1919-1922.

17. Many *liuxuesheng* who lived in Japan experienced difficulties with *jiejue shenfen wenti* (resolving their status problems) because of the strict immigration

policy subsequently transferred to countries like Canada, where they can more easily obtain landed status either by immigrating or by claiming refugee status. Fourteen (25 percent) of the MCRs I interviewed had previously lived as *liuxuesheng* in Japan.

18. A program designed to clear the backlog of applications for refugee status by a wider range of criteria at the initial interview stage which gives more opportunities for refugee claimants to remain in Canada "for humanitarian and compassionate reasons" (see Richmond 1994:172-173).

19 Neither the IRB nor Statistics Canada release statistics about refugee claimants' intended destination.

20. With eight "no answer" cases.

21. Zhu was returning to China after having completed a training session in the United States when the Tiananmen Square tragedy took place. Informed by a friend that Canada was willing to grant Chinese students permanent residency status, Zhu then decided to come to Canada for *shenfen* by *toudu*: "If no June 4 (Tiananmen Square tragedy), nor did Canada give Chinese the legal status, I would certainly *huiguo* (return to my country)." [sic]

22. The Canadian government requires that all mainland Chinese visa students have a sponsor; the sponsor must write a notarized letter which indicates that they can and will provide financial support to the sponsored person.

23. It is illegal for non-permanent residents to work in Canada without work permits.

24. The Nationalist Party (N.P.) had, until recently, feuded with the C.P.C. When the C.P.C. took over mainland China, N.P. officials and their families had suffered for their service.

25. One respondent told me that of any 1000 Chinese refugee claimants, 999 will have cooked up their stories, and that not a single one could be persecuted if sent back to China. However, most of them are hesitant to let the Chinese government find out that they have made refugee claims in Canada for fear of their families in China may suffer serious consequences. Since

hundreds of thousands people were involved in or donated to the Tiananmen demonstrations, it is impossible, nor is it in their best interests for the government to punish every one who participated, although there might be the possibility of local party leaders "settling" local accounts with particular persons.

26. I have no direct evidence to prove whether this is a common phenomenon for refugee claimants in Canada from other countries. However, as suggested in a letter from an officer of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ottawa, many Iranians claim refugee status for reasons similar to MCRs (The Toronto Star, May 15, 1995:A16).

27. There are two types of Chinese characters, *fanti* (traditional style) is used by all the Chinese societies except in Mainland China where *jianti* (simplified style) has been used since the late 1950s. For the young generation with less education, it is very hard, if not impossible, to read *fanti* newspapers, like this case.

28. Geiger (1993) faced a situation similar to mine when, in response to offering a refugee family help in obtaining a newspaper delivery business, he was told by the family and their refugee friends that he was crazy. They enjoy their lives on food stamps rather than working.

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