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A cultural approach to
understanding and working with
Chinese migrants in New Zealand

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Juan Chen

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Abstract

When people migrate to a new country, they experience changes in many areas of life. Migrants are faced with the challenges of making sense of as well as dealing with these changes in life. This research is interested in understanding the experiences of Chinese migrants in New Zealand as well as exploring how to conduct ‘psychological intervention’ work with recent Chinese migrants to deal with the challenges associated with migration. This research consists of two parts. The first part is concerned with developing a better understanding of the way Chinese migrants make sense of their experiences after migrating to New Zealand. In this part, focus groups were held and a discursive approach was used to analyze participants’ accounts. Findings from this part show that negotiating meanings for “migration” and “fitting in” is the central process for Chinese migrants to make sense of their migratory experiences in New Zealand. In this meaning-making process, Chinese cultural meanings provide useful discursive resources for Chinese migrants to draw upon to better understand their experiences of migrating from China to New Zealand. Chinese sayings, such as “fish or bear’s paw”, “loss are accompanied by gain”, “life is about negotiating loss and gain”, are used by Chinese migrants in ways that allow them more flexibility in constructing their experiences in New Zealand. More importantly, adopting a dialectical sense-making embedded in traditional Chinese cultural knowledge is helpful for participants to transfer their discursive constructions from negative to positive aspects of their migration experiences. The second part of this research involves exploration and application of a culturally appropriate ‘psychological intervention’ with recent Chinese migrants in transition from living in China to living in New Zealand. This part draws upon the findings from the first part of the research. In the second part, two groups of participants were invited to attend a three-session group intervention. Useful discursive constructions around flexible meanings of “migration” and “fitting in” found in the first part of the research were introduced to participants. A discursive analytical approach was used to observe how participants take up these introduced meanings and to examine the discursive changes throughout the three group sessions. The second part of the research illustrates that participants took up the introduced meanings of “migration” and “fitting in” as a flexible process, and use these to further co-construct helpful meanings to negotiate their ‘problematic’ experiences. In all, this research articulates the importance of

cultural meanings and cultural ways of making sense of migratory experiences by Chinese migrants. It also shows the importance of building a shared experience, making use of Chinese cultural meanings, and taking a social constructionist approach in psychological intervention work with Chinese migrants. The implications of this research are discussed in terms of further research on migrants' experiences and how to conduct 'psychological interventions' with Chinese migrants.

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Thesis overview

Migration is both an old and new phenomenon. Chinese people, among many groups of peoples in the world, have been migrating to western countries in an unprecedented large scale and rate in contemporary time, along with the rapid development in China and ever closer economic ties between China and the West. More and more Chinese people are moving to western countries for different reasons, whether it is economic, educational opportunity, or lifestyle choice. In this process of migration and intercultural communication, the old civilization and culture that once has been long isolated and mystified by the westerners are gradually coming forward, despite receiving mixed reactions from the West. In the meanwhile, for Chinese migrants, moving and living in a new country means they are faced with new ways of being and doing, which may be bewildering. How to live with culturally and socially different others has become an imminent task in making sense of their experiences in the new country.

In the field of psychology, research on migrants has been focused on better understanding migrants' experiences of living in the receiving country. Traditionally, the understandings have been dominantly derived from western cultural knowledge. Although the western cultural perspective provides an outlook for the migrants, other understandings are often subjugated and marginalized despite the increasing recognition that understandings are socially and culturally specific.

In the practice of psychological intervention, there is a growing demand for culturally effective practice for people from non-western cultural backgrounds. The traditional western psychotherapeutic approaches are increasingly under scrutiny with regards to appropriateness for working with people from non-western cultural backgrounds.

As a Chinese migrant to New Zealand, I have experienced struggles similar to many other Chinese migrants. While studying psychology at a postgraduate level in a western institute in the past few years, I have been interested in understanding and working with the population of Chinese migrants in a meaningful and positive way. Therefore, this research is my attempt to explore how to provide a cultural approach

to understanding and working with Chinese migrants in New Zealand. In particular, my research aims are to address two questions:

- How Chinese migrants make sense of their experiences after migrating to New Zealand from China?
- How to conduct psychological intervention with recent Chinese migrants to help them in transition from living in China to living in New Zealand?

Accordingly, my thesis consists of two parts to explore these two topics. The first part provides a cultural perspective of making sense of Chinese migrants' experiences in New Zealand. The second part looks at how to conduct psychological intervention to offer meaningful and effective support for Chinese migrants in their transition from living in China to living in New Zealand. This thesis is made up of nine chapters. Chapter One to Four present the first part of my research, and chapter Five to Eight present the second part of my research. Chapter Nine is the conclusion of my thesis. The following gives an overview of each chapter of the thesis.

Chapter One is the contextualization of my research. In this chapter, I first provide an overview of the history of Chinese migration to the West and a brief introduction of the shared experiences of Chinese diasporas in western countries. I then investigate the socio-cultural and historical contexts of China which sheds light on the migration of Chinese to the West. Here I introduce the Chinese encounter of the West in modern history. Last, I locate Chinese migrants in the context of New Zealand, and explore Chinese migrants' experiences in relation to the discourses around how to deal with ethnic minority groups in New Zealand.

Chapter Two aims to provide an analysis of different cultural understandings of migrants' experiences. I start this chapter by presenting the existing studies on Chinese migrants' experiences in the West. Then I examine how non-western migrants' lived experiences are understood in the West. Following that, I introduce Chinese cultural perspectives from which Chinese migrants' experiences can be contextualized and understood.

Chapter Three elucidates the approaches to my research. I first provide the rationales for my research. Second, I articulate my theoretical approach. Third, I

point to the aims of my research. Fourth, I provide details of the research process.

Chapter Four presents the findings and discussion for the first part of my research. Here, I discuss how Chinese migrants make sense of their experiences in relation to constructing meanings for the event of migration and “fitting in” New Zealand.

Chapter Five begins the second part of my research which explores the development and application of ‘psychological intervention’ work with recent Chinese migrants in New Zealand. This chapter provides an overview of Chinese people’s encounter of western psychotherapy. The focus is to review the research on western psychotherapy with Chinese migrants in western countries. First, I present an overview of how Chinese migrants’ use of psychotherapy is studied through their help-seeking behaviors in western countries. Then I review the major psychotherapeutic approaches to working with Chinese in western countries. Last, I give a background of Chinese people’s use of western psychotherapy in China’s recent history and contemporary time.

Chapter Six provides an analysis of understandings of psychotherapy which will bear on my approach to psychotherapy in this research. First I introduce a cultural perspective of psychotherapy. From this perspective, I review the traditional approaches to psychotherapy in western culture. Then, I move to focus on the postmodern movement in western culture and the implications of social constructionist approach to psychotherapy. Here, I look at the major therapeutic approaches to therapy largely informed by social constructionism. Last, I provide an overview of the understandings and practices of healings from a Chinese cultural perspective.

Chapter Seven introduces my research on the development and application of psychotherapeutic work with Chinese migrants in New Zealand. First, I provide research rationale. Second, I introduce my research aims. Third, I explain my research approach in terms of theoretical stance and methodology.

Chapter Eight presents the findings and discussions for the second part of my research. The focus of the findings is on examining how participants take up introduced cultural meanings and how they co-construct new meanings under

facilitation in the group intervention.

Chapter Nine concludes with the key points driven from this research. It also gives the implications of this research for future research on migrants' experiences and discusses how the ideas developed here may be used by psychologists when intervening to assist Chinese migrants.

**Part One: Making Sense of Chinese
migrants' experiences in New Zealand**

Chapter One: The migration of Chinese to the West

Introduction

Nowadays, Chinese people make up one of the largest ethnic minority communities in many western countries (Liu, 2006, Pieke, 2006, Tan, 2007). The migration of Chinese people to the West¹ is not a new phenomenon, and the large scale of migration of Chinese people to western countries can date back to early 19 century (Ma, 2003). The blooming gold mining industry in many western countries in those old days attracted many Chinese men from coastal areas of China to sail thousands of miles away from homeland in seeking for new opportunities in life (Liu, 2006). As migrants' experiences are situated in the context of both their home country and the country of migration, the attempt to understand the experiences of Chinese migrants in western countries needs to take into consideration the social, cultural and historical context of both China and western countries. In this chapter, I first provide an overview of the migration of Chinese to western countries in recent history and in contemporary society. Next I introduce the Chinese encounter with the West in modern history which will shed light on understanding the background of Chinese migrants. Then I locate Chinese migrants in New Zealand. Here I provide an overview of Chinese migrants in New Zealand, and then explore their experiences in relation to the discourses around how to deal with ethnic minority groups in New Zealand in the last.

Chinese Diaspora in Western countries

It is estimated there are more than thirty million Chinese living outside Mainland China (Ma, 2003). Over time, the demographics of Chinese migrants overseas have changed dramatically. Prior to the 1960s, Chinese migrants were

¹ The notion of "the West" can have multiple meanings depending on different historical and socio-political contexts. In this thesis, the terms of "the West", "western society", and "western countries" refer to countries mainly in Western Europe, North America, as well as colony countries like Australia and New Zealand. Although the usage of "the West" may seem arbitrary and problematic given the increasing connection between countries and regions in the course of economic globalization, "the West" has become the most frequently used concept to describe important differences between these countries and other parts of the world. The assumption made here is that these western countries share more similarities in the aspects of cultural heritage, social norms and values, economic and geopolitical powers. More importantly, in regard to human migration, these countries have become the most popular destinations to attract migrants from all over the world in contemporary times.

primarily villagers from Guangdong and Fujian provinces in south China, who went abroad as labours, traders and farmers, and were scattered in many places. Since 1960s, many Chinese have emigrated from Hong Kong, Taiwan and different parts of Mainland China and Southeast Asia. In the later 1980s and early 1990s, there was a surge of out-migration from Hong Kong and Taiwan because of political reasons, such as perceived political uncertainties associated with the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, and the fears of military intervention from mainland China by Taiwanese. Therefore, income and employment are not the primary reasons for emigration because of the economic prosperity in both places (Ip, 2003a). In contrast, remigration of the Chinese from Southeast Asian nations (e.g., Indonesia, Malaysia) to western countries since the 1960s has been mainly due to overt discrimination, hostility and sometimes violence against the Chinese in these countries (Ip, 2003a). Differently again, emigration from Mainland China has only become common in the last two decades after the “opening door” policy of the Mainland Chinese government (Ma, 2003, Ip, 2006, Liu, 2006).

Most recently, with the changing economic and immigration policies in western countries, spurred by the rise of the China’s economy, an unprecedented diversity of Chinese migrants have entered the global migration stream in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Compared to early Chinese migrants, many recent Chinese migrants are well-educated, relatively well-off businessmen or professionals. Yet recent Chinese migrants still have diverse economic backgrounds due to the regions they came from (Liu, 2006).

Chinese are often seen as a homogeneous group to westerners despite the diverse backgrounds of Chinese living in Western countries (Skeldon, 2003). Being a very visible ethnic minority, Chinese are singled out for collective discrimination based on physical characteristics or ancestry (Ip & Pang, 2005). Oppression and discrimination by the dominant group has been noted as the common experience of Chinese living overseas, be it economic or political. For example, anti-Chinese legislation was adopted in recent history of many western countries, such as the United States Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Canadian Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, the New Zealand Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881 and its following amendments. Despite the abolition of this discriminative legislation long ago,

Chinese migrants continue to be subjected to prejudice and negative stereotypes in many western countries in contemporary times. The other noted shared experiences following migration involve negative changes in socio-economic status, employment and career, language and communication, family structure and dynamics (e.g., Inman & Yeh, 2007). And these negative changes are deemed stressful in their adjustment to western societies.

China's encounter with the West

To understand Chinese migrants' experiences in the west, it is necessary to know the place they came from, their collective experience at a particular historical time in Chinese society. It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss Chinese history in great detail, but the attempt here is to provide some background information on the Chinese encounter with the West in modern time which can shed light on Chinese peoples' migration experience.

In China's 5000 year history, the modern time of 19th and early 20th centuries have always been described as a period of shame and humiliation for Chinese people to remember (Zhao, 2004). Before the Opium War in 1840, China was closed and self isolated. The Chinese believed that their country was the "Heavenly Middle Kingdom", and their emperor was the "Son of Heaven" (Eberhard, 2005). The total defeat in the Opium War in 1840 and the following military attacks by western countries forced China to open its door to the West for the first time in its long history. The Opium War shattered China's false sense of superiority (Gernet, 1999). The treaties signed after the war opened Chinese ports, and along with it, Chinese markets to Western capitalism (Eberhard, 2005, Gernet, 1999). After the Opium war, China fell into the control of western countries and became a semi-feudal semi-colonial state. To the Chinese, the Opium War was a shameful defeat and they vowed to strengthen China in order to prevent it from happening again. The Opium War also gave rise to the stir of anti-Western sentiment and the rise of nationalism. Many believe that the crippled and humiliated history of early modern era creates in the Chinese mindset the "Strong China Complex," a dream of making the country strong and rich through economic and military modernisation that has sustained until the present day (Zhao, 2004). This has also influenced Chinese people's encounter of the west in the following coming years and to the present (Zhao, 2004).

The discourse, that China as an old and great dragon in the ancient East was physically crippled and psychologically humiliated by the west in early modern history, has circulated in Chinese people's everyday life for the last one and a half centuries (Callahan, 2004). In today's Chinese society, with the rapid economic growth of China, the gradual recovering or awakening of the dragon becomes increasingly voiced. These days China is often seen as a rising political, military and economic power in the eyes of the West (e.g., Callahan, 2004; Zhao, 2004). However, despite the increasing attention from the international community, China remains a mystery to most western people.

Meanwhile, ordinary Chinese people had been living harsh lives because of long-standing suffering during wars and political turmoil in the last one hundred and fifty years (defeat by western powers in 19th century, followed by warlords battles, Japan's invasion during the second world war, the civil war in the 1940's, and Cultural Revolution between 1960's and 1970's). China has missed out the period of development while many other countries has undergone. For many Chinese people there has been a yearning for going to western countries for economic and political reasons (Callahan, 2004, Zhao, 2004). However, before the Reform and Opening policy took place in China in 1978, there were few opportunities for ordinary Chinese people to go abroad. This further makes western countries more appealing to Chinese people. With the loosened policy and the improved living standard since 1980's, increasing Chinese people migrate to western countries for opportunities.

New Zealand context

New Zealand is known as a country of migrants. The immigration policies in New Zealand have traditionally favoured migrants from Britain and other western countries due to the history of colonisation (Bedford, Ho & Lidgard, 2003). It was not until changes in policy after 1980s that New Zealand opened its door to non-traditional sources of migrants (Sang & Ward, 2006, Ip & Pang, 2005). Since then New Zealand has witnessed an increasing large number of migrants coming from Asia. From the latest census of New Zealand in 2006, Asian people make up 9.2% of the population of New Zealand and it is the fastest growing ethnic group (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

Chinese in New Zealand

As the largest Asian ethnic group in New Zealand, ethnic Chinese contribute to about 42% of the Asian population and 4% of the total New Zealand population (147,570 Chinese) according to the latest census in New Zealand in 2006. The Chinese population has increased by 40.5% since the last census in 2001 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). As in other western countries, the Chinese in New Zealand comprise a very diverse and heterogeneous population, although mainstream New Zealand society often sees them as a homogeneous ‘Chinese community’. Chinese in New Zealand vary from local Chinese who are descendants of early settlers dating back to 19th century, to Chinese who have just arrived in New Zealand. Different Chinese form different cultures and communities in New Zealand, and these communities have little contact with each other (Ip & Pang, 2005, Ho & Bedford, 2006). Compared to early settlers, the recent Chinese migrants came from urban, middle-class backgrounds, either skilled professionals or business people. Even so, within the new arrivals, there is a variety of different Chinese migrants. The new arrivals of Chinese are mainly from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The three main source regions differ in more than geographical locations. They have divergent political experience, speak different dialects, and use dissimilar writing systems with separate sets of vocabulary. More importantly, there is the socio-economic divide. Chinese migrants from each of the three regions may be equally highly skilled, but those from Taiwan and Hong Kong are generally more affluent than their average Mainland Chinese counterparts (Ip, 2006). These differences undoubtedly have an impact on their adjustment experiences. For example, Ip (2006) compared the migration pattern of these three groups in New Zealand. According to Ip (2006), Hong Kong migrants often prefer Canada and Australia to New Zealand because of the bigger economy, greater business opportunities, and the familiar British cultural environment, whereas the Taiwanese are more aware of the environmental advantages, the education opportunities and the unique lifestyles options that New Zealand could offer them. In contrast, Mainland Chinese migrants tend to be more pragmatic, thinking largely in terms of the employment opportunities and social benefits that various host countries might have (Ip, 2006). Mainland Chinese comprise a larger percentage among most recent Chinese migrants, and have outnumbered Hong Kong Chinese and Taiwan Chinese migrants, who used to the

main sources of Chinese migrants in the 1980's and 1990's. The latest census shows that the People's Republic of China (Mainland China) ranked in second place after England in the list of overseas birthplaces of New Zealand immigrants (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The number of Mainland Chinese is also indicated as increasing more rapidly than Chinese from other regions.

Employment issues stand out as the most difficult experience for many recent Chinese migrants to New Zealand (Henderson, 2002, Ho & Bedford, 2006). It has been observed that many of these recent Chinese migrants undergo ongoing unemployment and under-employment in New Zealand (Henderson, 2002). Although Chinese migrants share the common experience of employment difficulty, the impact of the employment issue varies on different Chinese migrants. In general, the employment issue has a more severe impact on Mainland Chinese migrants than on Chinese Chinese migrated from Hong Kong, Taiwan or other developed areas in Southeast Asia due to the different economic situation (Ip, 2003a). Therefore, while most recent Mainland Chinese migrants (especially under skilled migrants category) were from middle-class background in China, many of them experience significant financial difficulties and struggle to make ends meet due to the lack of employment after migrating to New Zealand. As a result, many Mainland Chinese migrants take menial jobs to support their families, while others go back to school for upgrading skills and improving English proficiency (Ho & Bedford, 2006). This is in contrast to Chinese migrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan or other Southeast Asian countries, who usually come to New Zealand not expecting to be employed and can afford to live on their savings (Ip, 2003a). Meanwhile, it appears that "fitting in" continue to be the strongest concern for the recent Mainland Chinese migrants due to the experiences of vast cultural differences between Mainland China and New Zealand (Ip, 2006).

Multiculturalism or biculturalism in New Zealand

In New Zealand, two competing discourses co-exist about how to deal with social relations among different ethnic groups in New Zealand. One refers to as biculturalism and the other as multiculturalism. From the bicultural perspective, New Zealand is best seen as a bicultural society, reflecting as equal partnership between Maori (the indigenous people) and the Crown (Sibley & Liu, 2004). Biculturalism in New Zealand involves the relations of the group of indigenous Maori people with the

Crown (Liu, 2005). For Maori people, biculturalism is a way of expressing the notion of the centrality of the Treaty and of Maori as *tangata whenua* (people of the land) and treaty partner with the Crown, in the New Zealand state (McIntosh, 2005). However, with the increasing number of migrants coming from different countries, the demographics of New Zealand are changing rapidly and New Zealand society is becoming increasingly culturally diverse. For example, in the latest census in 2006, Asian population had replaced Pacific islanders as the third largest ethnic group in New Zealand. Accordingly, this leads to the view of using multiculturalism to represent New Zealand society. Multiculturalism is seen as entailing a commitment to the non-discriminatory treatment of all New Zealand's citizens, considered as individuals, by the Crown (Briggs, 2001). Multiculturalism expresses the idea of the political community as a collectivity of members with equal rights citizens (McKinnon, 1996).

There is a lack of research on migrants' view on the public debate about New Zealand's biculturalism or multiculturalism, but without doubt this has an impact on their experiences of adjustment and fitting into the society. For many migrants, they see the endorsement of biculturalism exclude them from the social and political arena. Instead they embrace the discourse of multiculturalism in New Zealand. At the same time, the ongoing public debate about the biculturalism or multiculturalism often lead to confusion about the attitudes towards migrants to New Zealand. According to Ip and Pang (2005), biculturalism and multiculturalism are often constructed as exclusive concepts. However, these two concepts do not need to be opposites. The bicultural model can accommodate diversity without eroding Maori interest. Similarly, expanding the notion of multiculturalism does not mean diluting the idea of Treaty-based nation (Ip & Pang 2005).

For Asians in New Zealand, they are considered to be in a disadvantaged position compared to other social groups in New Zealand (Ip, 2003a). Asians are often portrayed negatively or stereotyped in the media (Ip & Pang, 2005). This has an impact on Asian peoples' experience in New Zealand. For example, it has been noted that among Asian peoples, there are often fears of being perceived as "seeking privileges" or promoting a "culture of complaint". Asian peoples often have to negotiate the balance between asserting a place within the national culture and

drawing negative reaction from the mainstream media.

More so, it has been pointed out there is considerable variation in attitudes towards biculturalism amongst Asian peoples, from those deeply committed to biculturalism, to those who feel marginalised by the bicultural model and who would argue for a multicultural model (Ip, 2003b). The variation is also reflected in peoples' understandings of their relationship to Māori and Pakeha. For example, some Asian peoples find Māori protocols of welcome well suited to their traditional customs. For other Asian peoples, there is a sense of difficulty in being a "third" party to a bipolar context with underlying conflict (Briggs, 2001). Another example, a study on Chinese and Maori relationships found that Maori tend to hold negative views on migrants (Ip, 2009). "Migrants" were invariably referred to as "Chinese" or "Asian" by Maori participants. More so, in Maori participants' account, there was talk such as "Chinese are not original Treaty Partners", "Asians arrive with money and skills—'too smart'", "Asian arrival might be part of government ploy—to dilute biculturalism". In contrast, in Chinese participants' accounts, there was talk around "Maori enjoys privileges as a result of special treaty status", "Maori are not welcoming and jealous", and "Maori might side with Pakeha and Asians have nowhere to stand". However, Ip indicates that Chinese attitudes towards Maori are more multi-layered in general and Chinese are more aware of Maori than Maori of Chinese. For example, it is noted that in Chinese language media (e.g., TV, newspaper, radio, websites) there are often coverage of Maori issues, whereas Maori media is much more interested in Pakeha issues than Asian or Chinese issues. Early Chinese settlers have better understanding the Maori history in New Zealand and often sympathetic towards Maori, whereas more recent Chinese migrants prefer a multicultural focus in New Zealand society. This exemplifies the complexity of experiences of Chinese migrants in dealing with social relations in New Zealand.

Summary

In a nutshell, the migration of Chinese to western countries has a long history and is still taking place at a fast rate in contemporary time. Chinese migrants are not a homogenous group in western countries. They have diverse economic and socio-political backgrounds. However, being Chinese, no matter the length of time and location of migration, they have shared challenges and concerns in their lives due to

the same cultural heritage and the discourses around how to deal with culturally different others in western countries. The experience of Chinese migrants in New Zealand has commonality with those of Chinese living in other western countries. In a word, although cultural diversity is accepted and promoted as the principle to deal with social relations in New Zealand, due to the history of colonization, Pakeha (New Zealanders of European descendents) and Maori people dominate the debate of social relations in public. The debate between multiculturalism and biculturalism continues (refer to Liu et al., 2005), and it exerts influences on migrants' experience of fitting in New Zealand's society. Chinese migrants have varied views about the debate on the multiculturalism and biculturalism of New Zealand and it has an impact on their experience of fitting in the New Zealand society.

Chapter Two: Speaking of migrants' experiences

Introduction

In this chapter, firstly I give an overview of research on Chinese migrants' experiences in western countries. Second, I investigate how non-western migrants' lived experiences are spoken of in the West. Thirdly, I introduce Chinese cultural perspectives from which Chinese migrants' experiences can be contextualized and understood.

Studies on Chinese migrants' experiences in the west

The experiences of Chinese migrants in western countries have been studied from different disciplines. In the field of psychology, most research on Chinese migrants in western countries has traditionally focused on their adjustment to the host society (Khun Eng, 2006). This type of research often points out the negative impact of migration on Chinese migrants (e.g., Casado & Leung, 2001). For example, both poor physical and mental health have been noted in Chinese migrants in New Zealand, American and Canada (e.g., Abbott et al, 2000, Casado & Leung, 2001, Lai, 2004, Yeh, 2003).

The difficulties and problems faced by Chinese migrants, including those of the younger generation, are observed with respect to socio-economic change, cultural difference and acculturation (e.g., Schnittker, 2002), language and communication (e.g., Lee & Chen, 2000, Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002), inter-generational conflict (e.g., Yeung & Chang, 2002, Chung, 2001), institutional and social discrimination by other ethnic groups and the dominant cultural group (e.g., Juang & Cookston, 2009). All these difficulties are often seen as interconnected and impact on each other. For example, adult Chinese migrants' lack of English language proficiency is often seen as the cause of ineffective communication with the local people, which is seen as a result of their low level of acculturation. This can in turn lead to inter-generational conflict between migrant parents and their children, who are believed to be acculturated at different levels (e.g., Li, 2004, Qin, 2008).

Cultural identity or ethnic identity is also often suggested to link with adjustment outcome of Chinese migrants (e.g., Eyou, Adair & Dixon, 2000, Cheryan

& Tsai, 2007). The area of research on identity and acculturation concerns how Chinese migrants negotiate their identities both within the diasporic community and within the host society (e.g., Chia & Costigan, 2006, Eyou et al., 2000, Tsai, Ying & Lee, 2000, Lieber, Nihira & Mink, 2001). This type of research indicates that taking an integrationist approach is beneficial for adjustment. This involves keeping one's cultural identity as well as adopting aspects of the host culture (e.g., Eyou et al., 2000, Kim, 2007). However, it has been noted that identifying with the diasporic community can lead to conflicts and tensions with the host society, as these Chinese migrants are often seen as lacking in loyalty to the host society, while those who integrate more fully into the host society are seen as forsaking their cultural roots, thereby incurring criticism from their peer Chinese (e.g., Tsai, 2000, Ip & Pang, 2005, Ho & Bedford, 2006). Furthermore, it has been suggested the issues with identity and acculturation can lead to social isolation, adjustment difficulty and poor mental health for Chinese migrants (e.g., Lee & Chen, 2000, Shen & Takeuchi, 2001).

Therefore, it is clear this type of research argues that Chinese migrants have to cope with a series of stressors in their settling in western countries. In this context, different cultural ways of coping have been proposed to look at the adjustment issue of Chinese migrants in western countries. For example, Chinese collectivist culture and conflict avoidance coping style are often suggested as playing a role in Chinese migrants' dealing with difficulties in western countries (e.g., Yeh et al., 2006).

Speaking of non-western migrants' experiences in the West

The above demonstrates the way Chinese migrants' experiences are commonly understood in western countries. To make sense of how Chinese migrants' experiences are studied in western countries in this way, it is important to take a closer look at how non-western migrants' experiences are approached in the western literature because by and large it provides a framework to understand migrants' experience in the West.

Therefore, this section focuses on presenting the dominant understandings of non-western migrants' experiences of dealing with changes in western society. Here, I examine the dominant discourse around non-western migrants' experiences. The central thesis is that "non-western" migrants' experiences in western society have

been presented as problematic and to involve a process of “adjustment”. This process of “adjustment” is further achieved through construing the experience of non-western migrants in western countries as a process of coping with stress, together with a process of acculturation which involves dealing with identity issues and problematic inter-cultural communication. In the following, I unfold the process of how migrants’ experiences are constructed in western discourse. The term of ‘western discourse’ is adopted to refer to the prevailing way of speaking in western society.

The problematic nature of migration

The problematic nature of migrants’ experience has been articulated through the changes initiated by migration. Migration is first and foremost seen as a life-changing event. Migration brings out changes in migrants’ life (Ben-Sira, 1997, Chrysochoou, 2004). The areas of life that migrants experience changes range from socio-economic status, employment, language and communication, family relationships, so on and so forth (Berry, 2003). The negative or downward changes in these life areas are often seen as causing problems for migrants, because these changes are believed to be stress-provoking, and thus affect mental health of migrants (e.g., Bhugra, 2004, Watters, 2002). In light of this, migrants need to initiate coping strategies to deal with these stressors.

Another area of change is considered initiated from the perspective of culture. Migrants are considered to experience cultural differences between the country of origin and the receiving country (e.g., Ward, 2001, Berry, 1997, Kim, 2001). The term of ‘cultural shock’, introduced by Oberg in 1960, is widely used to describe the disoriented experience of new comers in a different culture (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). The concept of ‘culture shock’ assumes that entering a new culture is potentially a confusing and disorienting experience (Kim, 2001), which leads to the experiences of anxiety, ambiguity and frustration in new migrants (Kim, 2001). As a result, the belief of undesirable intercultural experiences has justified the effort of researchers in the west to study ways to help ease such predicaments (Kim, 2001).

These imply that viewing non-western migrants’ life changes as problematic has become the underlying assumption taken by most research on non-western migrants in western countries. In a nutshell, migration is seen as involving losses,

disruption to families and life patterns, exposure to multiple stressors and cultural shock. Further, migration is seen as particularly problematic for migrants from ethnic minority backgrounds because these people are subject to prejudice and discrimination due to unequal power relations between the dominant group and ethnic minority groups in western countries.

Accordingly, the life of non-western migrants in western countries has been commonly depicted as an adjustment process involving a series of dealing with as well as solving problems. The process of adjustment has been explored in different ways. In the following, I examine how the process of adjustment has been spoken of in the literature. Then I turn to look at how migrants' experiences of adjustment are presented in these ways.

Adjustment as coping with stress

In this section, I first look at how the stress/coping model has been adopted to understand dealing with changes in life in western discourse. Following that, I explore the notion of stress and coping from a discursive perspective. Here I examine the social and cultural context of the discourse of stress and coping. Then I look particularly at how it has been used to understand different cultural ways of dealing with changes. Last, I discuss the implications of the discourse of stress and coping for studying migrants' experiences in western society.

In western society, coping with stressful life events has been described as one of the "fundamental aspects" of human existence (e.g., Tweed & Conway, 2006). The concept of "coping strategy" has been widely used to describe the various ways people engage in dealing with stressful life events. In this regard, the most prominent understanding of coping with stress is derived from Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theorization of coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have categorized two coping styles, namely problem-focused and emotional-focused. According to them, behaviours such as direct problem-solving can be labelled problem-focused and behaviours such as distancing, self-controlling, accepting responsibility, escape/avoidance, and positive reappraisal can be categorized as

emotion-focused. Other behaviours such as seeking social support can be conceptualised as both problem and emotional-focused. The vast literature on stress and coping suggest that Lazarus and Folkman's framework have been extensively used to study coping.

There is no doubt that the discourse of stress and coping has become the dominant way of understanding of how people deal with negative changes in life in western culture (Wong, Wong & Scott, 2006, Pederson, 2006). Despite the fact that the notion of stress was first used to refer to the physiological adaptation of an organism to environmental influences (Pohlman & Becker, 2006), the concept of stress was adopted into the disciplines of psychology in the 1960s and since then stress was "translated from a physiological syndrome to a part of narrated life experience that was seen to require psychological investigation" (Viner, 1999, p.402). From this view, stress has been transformed from "a story told to the masses by a scientist into an experience told to scientists by the common person (Viner, 1999, p. 402). It has been suggested that these ideologies reflect dominant Western values of naturalism, individualism, and objectivity, and have influenced the direction of knowledge production and the practice of mental health care (Pohlman & Becker, 2006).

Furthermore, many have pointed out how the notion of stress has become widely circulated in the language of social science researchers and the public alike (Viner, 1999). For example, the concept of stress is used everywhere in western society to cover experiences ranging from health and illness, to work and relationships. All these areas of life are believed to be subject to stress which has an impact on people's lives to some extent. More importantly, from this view, stress is, above all, understood to be a problem for the individual. Given that it is seen as a problem, there is a sense that it needs to be resolved. Therefore, the talk of 'stress reduction' is pervasive in western society, from self-help advice to regular newspaper discourse. Dealing with stress is seen accomplished by focusing on the individual's coping. Individuals are told they can prevent stress by appropriately managing their life—by delegating, prioritizing, and learning to use methods developed to reduce stress. Stress reduction activities are spoken of as individualized activities, such as meditation, exercise, deep breathing, praying, visualization and receiving counseling.

All of these understandings have been broadly popularized in the media (e.g., television, magazines) as well as in research and professional health care discourses (Pohlman & Becker, 2006).

It is beyond the scope of this research to further conduct an in-depth analysis of the stress discourse and demonstrate how it is promulgated in western society (refer to Pohlman & Becker, 2006, Viner, 1999) for more in-depth analysis of the stress discourse in western culture). However, the attempt here is to make explicit the view that the notion of stress has become the dominant way of speaking of negative life changes in western culture, and also for migrants' experiences in western society.

In addition, increasing attention has been paid to the impact of culture on stress and coping (e.g., Wong et al, 2006). Within cross-cultural psychology, the traditional stress and coping model has been criticized for its lack of awareness of cultural values in coping. From this view, existing stress and coping models reflect western values. For example, Yeh et al. (2006) point out that western coping studies tend to favour coping behaviours oriented towards developing a sense of competence and self-esteem, which have been labelled as positive coping strategies assumed to result in positive consequences (e.g., use of skills, talents, and cognitive abilities to feel good about oneself). In contrast, coping behaviours, such as reliving tension through diversions (e.g., activities that provide ways of escape, denial, and sublimation), and avoiding confrontation and withdrawing have been labelled as negative strategies of coping which can be expected to result in negative consequences. According to Yeh et al. (2006), findings like this in coping research have reflected the value placed on problem-solving and personal agency which is characteristic of an individualistic culture. Therefore, the question has been raised as to how applicable the stress and coping models based on Euro-American values may work in other cultures and societies, because in those non-western cultures there are vastly different preferred values and very different kinds of pressing circumstances (Wong et al., 2006).

Therefore, this gives rise to a growing area of research in the last decade looking into how non-western cultural contexts impact on people's coping (Wong et al., 2006). From this point of view, culture is seen as having an impact on how people cope with stress. People may engage in different ways of dealing with stress in

different cultures. Such work has mainly been done in the field of cross-cultural psychology. In this field, research has focused on cultural differences in ways of coping with stress. The most noted cultural difference that has been extensively explored is within the framework of collectivism versus individualism. This comes as no surprise as the constructs of collectivism-individualism dimension has dominated research in cross-cultural psychology to explain differences between cultures over the last decades (Yeh et al., 2006). One of the most cited characteristics of collectivistic cultures is that individuals may be encouraged to subordinate their personal goals to the goals of some collective group, and an individual's behaviour is oriented carrying out social roles and obligations to their belonged group. In contrast, in individualistic cultures the behaviour of individuals focuses on achieving personal goals (Oyserman et al., 2002). Under the framework of collectivism/individualism, research on cultural differences in coping seems to agree that action-oriented coping is more associated with individualistic cultures, whereas cognitive-oriented coping is more associated with collectivist cultures (Chang, 2001).

Furthermore, "value" has been pointed out playing an important role in evaluating coping strategies. The different cultural values have been considered for the preference of different coping styles in different cultures. For example, western culture, commonly as representative of individualistic culture, is seen as putting value on mastery of nature and personal autonomy. Accordingly, problem-approach coping is seen as adaptive in western culture, whereas avoidance coping is seen as maladaptive because it means lack of motivation and effort. Chun, Rudolf and Cronkite (2006) claim that the problem-approach coping is further endorsed by a vast amount of research, but the issue with that is most samples in this type of research are people from western cultural background who embrace the value of proactively approaching problems. But this problem-approach coping may not be the case for people from non-western cultural backgrounds (Chun et al., 2006). For instance, Chun et al. (2006) argue that avoidance strategies may be more effective in collectivistic cultural contexts which values "fitting in" with the social and physical environment. This is because, in a collectivistic culture, a problem is seen as arising when the individual is not in a harmonious state with the environment. Thus the desirable behaviour is for the person to control one's own behaviour and beliefs (Chun et al., 2006). Chun et al. (2006) gave an illustration that avoidant and passive

coping strategies were shown to be linked with less psychological stress in Japanese-American women (Yoshihama, 2002, cited in Chun et al., 2006).

To sum up, although culture is increasingly seen as playing an important role in people's dealing with changes in life, so far the discourse of stress and coping has been adopted by most studies, in which other cultural ways of dealing with changes have been constructed as 'cultural differences in coping with stress'. In my view, by adopting the stress coping discourse as a framework to explain how people of different cultural backgrounds (both western and non western) deal with life changes, it tends to treat the discursive construction of "coping with stress" as a universal psychological mechanism. Yet, from a discursive perspective, "coping with stress" can be seen as a western cultural explanation/speaking of ways of dealing with negative changes in life (In fact, which changes in life are regarded as negative is also subject to cultural interpretation). Furthermore, this discourse of "coping with stress" has become the dominant discursive construction of the way that people deal with negative life events in western culture.

This has resulted in the stress and coping discourse being widely used to study migrants' experiences of dealing with changes in western countries (e.g., Ward et al, 2001). Under this model, migration is understood as a life change associated with stress. Stress is constructed as an inevitable part of migration. Stressors intrinsic in migration are often identified as issues in employment, language ability, family and social support networks. Migration is seen as a tremendous change in life that disrupts the entire life style, exceeding the capacity of migrants' anticipatory socialization in the country of origin (Ben-Sira, 1997). Consequently, migrants are considered to undergo a process of coping with stress to adjust to the life in a new environment. In this stress and coping discourse, the significance of life changes is highlighted (Hobfoll, 1998). The changes in life are viewed as precipitating stress, which results in affective, behavioural and cognitive responses. In addition, the stressors are seen as causing potential maladaptive responses- illnesses (both physical and mental) in migrants which again leads to negative connotations of migrants' experiences.

Adjustment as dealing with acculturation

Another line of investigation on migrants' experience is the so-called 'acculturation'. In the literature, the concept of acculturation has been extensively used to describe the experience of migrants in a new cultural context (e.g., Berry, 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Gibson, 2001, Kim, 2001). From this view, migration is a cross-cultural experience and therefore necessitates "acculturation", a process in which migrants are believed to experience changes in behaviours, values, beliefs, and identities (e.g., Berry, 1997, 2003, 2006b). For non-western migrants, this process is particularly seen as inevitable when they move to live in a western society, because of the differences in behaviours, beliefs, values, as well as identities between western and non-western societies (e.g., Berry, 2006b). In this section, I first introduce how acculturation is presented in the literature. Then I investigate how acculturation is understood in relation to migration. Lastly, I offer a critical view of acculturation to explore migrants' experience.

The concept of acculturation has been interpreted in different ways, but by and large acculturation is believed to occur when people from different cultural backgrounds come to form contact with each other (Berry, 2003, Castro, 2003, Ward, 2001), and acculturation can give rise to changes at both individual and societal levels (Berry, 2003, 2006a). At the individual level, acculturation involves changes in behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes. At the societal level, acculturation refer to changes in social structure, economic base, and political organization of the groups involved in the acculturation process (Berry, 2006a). Since my research concerns migrants' experience, acculturation is discussed at the individual level in the following, and I will examine how the acculturation process among migrants is presented in western discourse.

First of all, it is clear that research on acculturation has focused on changes in migrants rather than in members of the receiving country (Castro, 2003). This is because the acculturation process is often seen as having a greater impact on migrants than on members of the host or dominant cultural group, and also the changes are considered as more evident among migrants and ethnic minorities than among members of the receiving country (Castro, 2003). The process of acculturation in migrants is commonly considered as manifest in two dimensions: one pertains to the

extent to which migrants retain cultural heritage of the country of origin; the other relates to the degree that migrants adopt the culture of the receiving country (e.g., Berry, 2005, 2006b, Phinney, 2003).

Secondly, in looking at the process of acculturation in migrants, the stress and coping model has been widely used. For example, the term of “acculturative stress” was proposed by Berry to refer to stresses specifically arising during the process of acculturation. According to Berry (2006b), the acculturative experience is characterised by stress. Acculturation gives rise to demands which exceed migrants’ resources. Acculturative stress result in when migrants evaluate the experience of life changes as problematic. Acculturative stress is construed as the psychological effect of acculturation. Accordingly, the concept of “acculturation strategies”, proposed by Berry (1997, 2006b), is used to understand what migrants draw upon to deal with acculturative stresses. Acculturation strategies are defined as the plans or the methods that individuals use to respond to stress-inducing new cultural contexts. Based on the answers of “yes” or “no” to maintain one’s own cultural practices and to participate in the receiving culture, Berry classifies four types of acculturation strategies, which are “assimilation”, “integration”, “separation” and “marginalisation”. “Assimilation” refers to the one-sided adaptation to the dominant culture without preservation of one’s culture of origin. “Separation” is seen as the opposite of assimilation, which is the one-sided maintenance of culture of origin without seeking contact with the dominant group. Integration refers to the form of acculturation that favors both culture maintenance and adaptation, whereas “marginalization” is taken to refer to the rejection of both cultures (Berry, 1997, 2006b).

Thirdly, it is clear that the vast research on migrants’ cross-cultural experience has adopted Berry’s acculturation strategies approach to look at how migrants cope with acculturative stress. The result of this type of research often suggests that “integration” is the optimal acculturation strategy for migrants’ well-being, whereas “marginalization” produces the worst outcome (e.g., Berry, 2006b). Kim (2001) points out that most research on mental health-related issues in migrants has focused on examining the impact of the cross-cultural experience on migrants’ mental health, particularly the negative outcome of mental health. The underlying assumption is that there is a relationship between the acculturative strategies and migrants’

psychological well-being.

Increasingly, the acculturation model of migrants' adjustment has been criticized through the examination of the assumptions underlying the notion of acculturation (e.g., Rudmin, 2003). First, the notion of a universal process of acculturation among all migrants has been questioned. It has been pointed out that the model of acculturation strategies is based on the assumption that the acculturation strategies are universal to migrants (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Acculturation is seen as seeking underlying psychological processes that are taken as common for all migrants. This is illustrated in Berry's (1997, p.296) statement that although there are "substantial variations in the life circumstances of the cultural groups that experience acculturation, the psychological processes that operate during acculturation are essentially same for all the groups; that is we adopt a universalist perspective on acculturation". They also maintain the view that other psychological processes such as "behavioural shifts", "cultural shedding", "cultural shock", and "acculturative stress" are experienced in varying degrees by an individual undergoing acculturation (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). It is clear that Berry and his colleagues take up the position that migrants' acculturation strategies reveal the underlying psychological processes that unfold during their adaptation to new cultural contexts (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Bhatia and Ram (2001) point out that such a position dominates current research on acculturation as it provides an important theoretical basis for much research carried under the larger rubric of cross-cultural psychology. However, they argue this universal view of acculturation ignore people's complex engagements within their contexts. Especially, this view does not capture the experiences of non-western, non-white migrants' experiences in western countries. According to Bhatia and Ram (2001), the universal approach to acculturation "undervalues both the asymmetrical relations of power that exist within the diasporic communities, and the inequities and injustices faced by certain migrant groups from the dominant culture as a result of the nationality, race or gender" (p.70). Accordingly, they call attention to the complexities, contradictions and cultural specificities involved in the experiences of non-white diasporic communities.

Second, the categorization of acculturative strategies is seen as problematic. Hunt, Schneider and Comer (2004) maintain that the acculturation model posits the

existence of two different, identifiable cultural orientations: the ethnic versus the mainstream, and attempts to place the acculturating individual on a continuum between them. The acculturating individual is seen as moving away from “traditional” values and toward those of the “mainstream”. As Hermans and Kempen (1998) argue, migrants’ lives are more complicated than any linear process from culture ‘A’ to culture ‘B’. Further, this conceptualization turns minority group members into different types or categories of being and thus reflects the essentialist view of acculturation. People are classified and defined as, for example, assimilationists or separatists. The emphasis is placed on group identifications and attitudes of migrants, which are seen as mental characteristics and have influence on migrants’ behaviours. However, the relationship between intentions and behaviours is unclear. For example, people who adopt a separatist attitude or value may present with assimilation behaviour for the purpose of survival. More so, it is possible that people may use different acculturation strategies at different stages of their settlement, or in different aspects of their life. Bhatia (2002) elaborates on this complexity by pointing out that, at any given moment, people are not entirely free from the influences of race, gender and power in choosing their acculturative strategy.

Last but not the least, the assumption on culture in acculturation studies has been challenged. The notion of culture has traditionally been understood as shared behaviours, values, beliefs, and attitudes of particular groups (Erickson, 2002). Culture has been widely used in the social sciences to explain differences in behaviours observed in people in different societies. In most research, culture has frequently been classified according to a dichotomy, such as traditional/modern, western/non-western, individualistic/collectivistic culture (e.g., Oyserman et al. 2002). The collectivistic culture is often used interchangeably with the traditional or non-western culture, whereas the western culture is closely related to modern or individualistic culture. Increasingly, this dichotomous categorization of culture has been criticized on both theoretical and methodological grounds (e.g., Kitayama, 2002, Fiske, 2002). Theoretically, there are concerns regarding the over-simplistic categorization of complex cultural systems. The argument is that there is substantial heterogeneity within cultures and massive differences between cultures that cannot be adequately explained by this individualistic/collectivistic dimension. Methodologically, there are questions about what the defining features of

individualistic and collectivist cultures are and how one can assess them. Oyserman et al. (2002) point out the initial notion of “culture” is used as a “sociological” construct rather than a “psychological” construct, yet the influence of social and cultural contexts on the value systems and behaviours is not straightforward at the individual level (Oyserman et al., 2002).

This traditional view of culture and its critiques illustrate that culture has been predominantly understood as a context in western discourse, despite the increasingly recognized importance of culture. This means that culture has been primarily seen as a social context or factor, which exerts an influence on psychological processes (e.g., culture is usually termed as “cultural background” in western discourse to describe its role in a person’s life). Underlying this notion of culture is the assumption that the psychological processes are universal, applying to people of all cultures. Accordingly, the apparent differences in behaviour between people in different societies are attributed to “cultural differences”. More so, this view of culture often implies culture as a bounded, discrete, self-contained entity, which are inter-exchanged with the terms of race, ethnicity, and nationality.

Increasingly, this common notion of ‘culture’ as an essential characteristic bound within a particular group of people is being contested by many theorists in social sciences, including psychologists (Bhatia & Stam, 2005; Hand, 2006). Many researchers contend that the bounded and static notion of culture fails to recognize processes of hybridization and consequently cultural dynamics and complexity (Shi-xu, 2005). Instead, they argue that ‘culture’ has no boundaries, and is moving and hybrid. In light of this, the use of ‘culture’ as a context to understand coping with stress as well as acculturation within cross-cultural psychology is at issue.

Under this influence, culture is emerging from being seen as the background context to the foreground of people’s life. From this viewpoint, culture is not an independent element or dimension or aspect of society, but involves the whole way of life of a people. Culture penetrates entire human experience manifest in artifacts, events, peoples, their patterns of thinking and feeling, speaking and acting, understanding and evaluating, and so on and so forth (Shi-xu, 2005). Human reality is cultural reality. This totalization of culture emphasizes the permeating or saturated character of culture in people’s lives (Shi-xu, 2005). Accordingly, researchers who

adopt this understanding of culture suggest culture be used as the ultimate explanatory tool in making sense of human behaviour.

To sum up, much of the criticisms of the mainstream acculturation studies point to the universalist and/or essentialist view of acculturation and culture, in which the existence of core properties within individuals is assumed to be present in all migrants. In these psychological studies, acculturation is conceptualized and examined as relatively stable or enduring internal dispositions. The focus is on the degree of identification and on acculturation attitudes that are defined by more enduring evaluative responses to issues of maintenance of original identity and intergroup contacts. Among the numerous studies on acculturation, the notion of identity changes appears to stand out as the focus of interest. Therefore, in the next section I will take a look at how migrants' experience of adjustment is constructed through the notion of identity.

Adjustment as a process of negotiating 'identity'

With the increasing interest in the study of identity, there appears to be a surge of research on migrants' identity (e.g., Phinney, 2003, Deaux, 2006). Most research on migrants' identity has adopted the framework of acculturation in cross-cultural psychology (Bhatia, 2002). The notion of acculturation suggests moving into a new society involves changes in understanding the self (e.g., Chrysochoou, 2004). Under this framework, migrants are considered to undergo identity changes as a result of the process of acculturation. This view is clearly illustrated in the following quote taken from prominent researchers in the area of migrants' identity issues.

“Although the identity is developing and changing throughout life, not many events cause it to change as profoundly as the immigration experience. A person coming to another country finds himself in a different reality, and must construct a corresponding new identity for himself. Suddenly, one is a member of an ethnic or racial minority, a “nonnative speaker” of a foreign language, often a member of a lower socioeconomic class. The social parameters in which identity is anchored are different. The successes, or a lack thereof, of mastering the many new tasks and challenges an immigrant confronts bring about the reconstruction of a different personal identity” (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006, p.4).

“The changes in ideals, values, and behaviours that occur during acculturation have clear implications for how immigrant people form, revise, and maintain their identity, either through imitation and identification or through exploration and construction. As an immigrant person is exposed to receiving culture ideals and interacts with the new social environment, his or her identity will likely change” (Schwartz et al., 2006, p.6).

It is clear that migrants are often seen as experiencing identity changes in a new country. More so, the concept of identity has been applied to explain the experience of groups of migrants in inter-group relations in western society. In this case, social identity theory, proposed by Tajfel in the 1970's, is a major theoretical framework in social psychology to study inter-group relationships (Hogg, 2006). This approach has investigated inter-group relationships in terms of group identities. Social identity theory proposes that group categorization, social comparison, and the need for positive differentiation are the key psychological mechanisms used for understanding intergroup relations (Hogg, 2006). Social identity theory has been extensively used in research to understand the negative experiences of migrants in western society, like prejudice and discrimination. For example, one study looked at the relationship between ethnic identity, problem approach-type coping and the discrimination/well-being of Asian Americans (Yoo & Lee, 2005). Their results found that individuals with a strong ethnic identity were more likely to engage in approach-type coping strategies, but the use of cognitive restructuring and problem solving coping buffered the effects of racial discrimination on well-being only when racial discrimination was low. This type of study often shows that the combination of a strong ethnic identity and a strong national identity promotes the best adaptation, which means keeping one's culture/ethnic identity can help migrants to deal with negative experiences, such as discrimination.

Likewise, the identity approach to understanding migrants' experience has been subjected to criticism although it has contributed to increasing understanding of migrants. Much of the critique to this social psychology approach to identity centres on the essentialist notion of identity. It has been pointed out that underlying this type of research is the assumption that there is a universal and linear development of identity (Bhatia, 2002). Critical approaches to subjectivity, language and culture, especially cultural studies, discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis and

culture psychology, have argued that identities, whether individual or collective, cannot be isolated from the cultural context and social practice in and through which they are formed, displayed, mobilized and so constituted (Hand, 2006, Shi-xu, 2005). Likewise, Social constructionism and postmodernism have suggested that identity, self, the person and the like should best be seen as products of historical and cultural discourse as well as agents of new discourse (Gergen, 2001, 2009). These scholars all converge on the point that language use is central to identity.

For example, the theory of a dialogical self has been proposed to understand and help people negotiate life difficulties and challenges (Hermans, 2001). The central notion of Hermans's (2001, 2002, 2003, 2006) dialogical self theory is that there is no core or inner self, but multiple positions or voices that a person can take up to construct meanings in the interaction and moving between these different positions. The dialogical self promotes new meanings and possibilities of actions to emerge through encouraging alternatives, diversity but as well as synthesis and unity (Ho et al, 2001). In the case of migrants, moving cultures and societies can present even more challenges which can be problematic for migrants, especially with the dominant dichotomous view of culture (Hand, 2006, Hermans & Kempen, 1998). The dialogical self can be used to explore how migrants take multiple positions and reposition themselves across cultures, time and space in a flexible way (Bhatia & Ram, 2001, Hermans, 2001). The dialogical self theory can also provide a different perspective from acculturation theory to understand migrants (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). More so, the dialogical self theory has been used extensively in psychological intervention work to help people who are struggling in making sense of their experiences (e.g., Verhofstadt-Deneve, 2003, Hermans & Lyddon, 2006, Lyddon et al., 2006).

From a cultural perspective, it has been contended that such a focus and preoccupation with the issue of identity may in fact be a phenomenon specific to western culture (Shi-xu, 2005). Identity is commonly understood to address the questions of "who am I", "where do I belong", and "how do I fit in" to achieve a sense of self (Oyserman, 2004). Shi-xu (2005) stated this notion of identity has traditionally been understood as the experience or consciousness of the self and considered as "primordial, individual, objective, centralized and stable across time

and space” (p.235). For example, identity has been defined as “the organization of self-understandings that defines one’s place in the world” (Schwartz et al., 2006). Also identity has been articulated primarily as a cognitive and affective process to influence people’s behaviour. According to Shi-xu (2005), this notion of identity has not only been a tremendous influence on traditional forms of western social science, but also has wide currency in everyday western culture (Shi-xu, 2005). Shi-xu (2005) argues that identity, as a discursive construction prevalent in western culture, may not be necessarily useful or even relevant to the non-western other and their discourse. This suggests that ‘identity’ may not be every culture’s concern. As Shi-xu (2005) points out, non-western discourse, in the case of the discourse from China, may not simply or always be ‘inward-looking’ and looking for identities, but rather it may perhaps be more oriented to re-establishing relationships, with each other, the West, and so on. Also, in some Asian cultures, ‘identity’ is understood and used differently than in western European culture (Shi-xu, 2005, p.169). In light of this, Shi-xu (2005) argues that identity can be approached as a way of understanding and assessing the building of relationships. Identity, as a discourse, can be seen as a situated construction of the self, in relation to social others, through discursive practice in a concrete socio-cultural context (Shi-xu, 2005).

A feminist approach to migration study also points out the problematic use of “identity” in understanding migrants’ experiences (e.g., Silvey, 2004). Silvey argues that identity has been traditionally understood as a shared understanding among a group of people about who they are. In this way identities have been seen as fixed definable characteristics of migrants. However feminist migration studies have increasingly emphasized the “constructedness of identities, and the ongoing nature of this process” (p.67). She contends feminist views of identity and subjectivity turn migration studies towards an understanding of the migrant self as constituted through a range of intersecting, sometimes competing, forces and processes, and as playing “agentic” roles in these processes. Studying the experiences and narratives of migrants’ interpretive voices can shed light into how the broader-scale structures are constructing particular understandings of migrants’ self and agency. Further, through understanding the ways in which migrants’ views of themselves and their actions take shape, migration research moves beyond deterministic formulations of push/pull factors towards a deeper appreciation of the interconnection between political-

economic and subjectivity formation processes. By including migrant subjectivities and identities as important research foci in themselves, feminists argue that migrants' self conceptions, their possibilities, and their proper places operate in conjunction with labour markets, regional wage differentials and legal and juridical regulations to produce particular migration patterns, meanings and experiences (Silvey, 2004).

Adjustment as a process of intercultural learning

As mentioned earlier, migrants are commonly thought to experience cultural differences between their countries of origin and the receiving country. Inter-cultural communication has been mainly understood as involving the exchange of knowledge, ideas, thoughts and emotions among people of different cultural backgrounds (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). Cultural differences are understood to exist in communication styles, which mainly manifest in language and non-verbal communication. It has been pointed out these communication styles reflect cultural rules and conventions, social norms and values (Masgoret & Ward, 2006).

It is clear that most research on inter-cultural experiences stress the importance of inter-cultural communication for migrants' adjustment. It is clear that migrants' inter-cultural communication experience is considered as problematic due to cultural differences in communication styles. Under this framework, research has emphasized how cultural differences impact on inter-cultural communication between migrants and members of the receiving society. Especially, conflicts and misunderstandings are believed as inevitable in intercultural contact (e.g., Masgoret & Ward, 2006). In light of this, misunderstanding is thought to be the cause of other problems in intercultural communication and relations. As a result, migrants' adjustment is constructed as involving a process of cultural learning (whether is it language or non-verbal communication skills) to reduce misunderstandings in inter-group contact.

From this view, the language barrier has frequently been seen as one of the reasons for migrants' problematic experience in the receiving country (e.g., Bleakley & Chin, 2004, Zhou & Cai, 2002). Language fluency is seen as essential to achieve effective communication with members of the receiving society. Slang, idiom, jokes, humour, metaphors, and other forms of language usage are highly nuanced and

contextual, requiring substantially intimate knowledge of the relevant cultural experiences of the native speakers (Kim, 2001). Therefore, understanding such language usage is difficult for migrants even when they have extensive formal “textbook knowledge” of the host language. Kim (2001) claims that only through extensive and continuous exposure to and participation in host social processes migrants are able to develop a deeper understanding of the pragmatics of the host language. According to Kim, migrants have to understand the cultural rules operating in the host environment to the extent necessary and possible in order to deal with the challenges of the host culture.

Apart from verbal language, nonverbal forms of communication are also seen as playing an important role in the inter-cultural communication process. Cultural-specific gestures, display of gaze, adoption of preferred body postures, all affect the quality of communication. Learning nonverbal forms of communication can present a bigger challenge to migrants than achieving language fluency because it is more subtly embedded within a culture (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). More so, misunderstanding in the non-verbal sphere tends to create unexplained emotional reactions no less than verbal communications. Hence, non-verbal misunderstandings often have a longer lasting effect than verbal ones.

Also within this context, the concept of ‘intercultural competence’ (or ‘cultural competence’) has been proposed. The notion of “intercultural competence” is understood as the knowledge and skills required for effective intercultural communication. It is believed that the more ‘intercultural competence’ one has, the less ‘misunderstanding’ one will have during intercultural communication, hence the more smooth and successful contact and relations one will have. For example, Scollon and Scollon (2001) argue that successful communication is based on sharing as much as possible the assumptions and knowledge about the world, which is largely influenced by common experiences in life. Shi-xu (2005) contends that this view of inter-cultural communication is the dominant discourse in western society, in which cross-cultural knowledge and skills are stressed. Also the ability to ‘translate’ linguistic and cultural differences, hence ‘intercultural competence’ is believed to enhance inter-cultural communication. Underlying this view is the assumption that members of different cultures have different sets of cultural and linguistic knowledge

and skills. Therefore, this is often used to explain ‘misunderstandings’ or ‘communication breakdown’ in terms of individual deficiencies in the relevant linguistic or cultural knowledge and skills and, ultimately, the linguistic and cultural differences outside the individuals and their practices.

As Shi-xu (2005) points out, the central problem with this notion of intercultural communication is that it obscures the power-saturated nature of intercultural contact and communication. That is, it presumes that different cultures are in equal relation to one another. According to Shi-xu (2005, p. 203), people are not simply ‘understanding’ each other during their interaction; rather, “they are acting with and upon each other” through constant interpretation and appropriation of the meanings. He argues that “understanding operates against the background of power differences, power practices and power interests” between different people (p.203). Consequently, communication cannot be analysed merely in terms of ‘understandings’ or ‘misunderstandings’. Shi-xu supports his view by pointing out that:

“through the entire modern world history, the West has never seen, spoken of, or dealt with, the non-Western Other as equal, or as merely or simply ‘different’. Rather, it has often treated the other as deviant, inferior and so to be controlled and controllable. In other words, the contact and communication between the West and the non-Western, non-White and Third World communities have always been a matter of power struggle” (Shi-xu, 2005, p 111).

This view stresses the power relations of the process of intercultural relation and communication which are mostly neglected in the study of migrants’ experiences of inter-cultural contact.

So far I have examined western discourses around non-western migrants’ experiences in western countries. Non-western migrants’ experiences are constructed as a process of adjustment. First and foremost, the adjustment of migrants is regarded as a process of coping with stresses. From this view, migration is seen as problematic and stressful. Accordingly, adjustment involves ‘problems solving’ and coping with acculturative stress. The stresses are seen as precipitated by negative changes, occurred in areas of life, such as employment, socio-economic status, family relations. Second, the adjustment of migrants is regarded as involving a process of dealing with

changes that are believed to occur in migrants themselves, including behaviours, beliefs, values, and identities. These changes in migrants have been theorized as acculturation. Third, the acculturation is viewed to lead to identity confusion and requires migrants to negotiate multiple identities. Forth, the adjustment of migrants is seen as a process of intercultural learning. This concerns how to deal with problematic intercultural communication among different cultural groups.

In this process of dealing with acculturative stresses, acculturation strategies are also categorized into domains, namely separation, marginalization, assimilation and integration. Migrants are considered to adopt these coping strategies in their adjusting to life in western countries. Among these strategies, integration is regarded as the optimal strategy as well as outcome for migrants' adjustment. The discourses of 'coping with stress', 'acculturation', 'identity', and 'intercultural communication' are all used as ways of speaking of non-western and non-white migrants' experiences of adjustment in western countries.

It is clear that most studies have adopted the concepts and instruments derived from western cultural understandings to account for other cultural ways of dealing with changes (including studies in cross-cultural psychology which use the framework of stress and coping to examine cultural differences in coping). In this way, the human experience of dealing with negative changes is constructed as a universal process of coping with stress. More so, because research on migrants' adjustment has been mainly conducted by researchers from western cultural backgrounds or researchers trained in western institutions, they have commonly adopted western discourse of coping with stress to explain non-western migrants' experiences. In doing so, all the other non-western understandings are marginalized, and non-western migrants' experiences are essentialised as a process of coping with stress.

However, as I have argued, the discourse of "coping with stress" can be seen as western cultural way of speaking of how to deal with life changes, and there are different understandings of how to deal with life changes in different cultures. This means that the process of coping with stress treated as a universally relevant meaning for people of different cultural backgrounds needs to be challenged.

From a social constructionist' view, knowledge is socially and culturally

specific. Every society has its own concepts, values and outlooks. Coping with stress can be seen as one version of knowledge (Western dominant discourse) on how people deal with negative changes in life, and it reflects western cultural values of life, and ways of dealing with changes (e.g., Pederson, 2006, Leung, Koch & Lu, 2002). However, there are different understandings and values in different cultures and societies regarding the nature of life, changes in life, and ways of dealing with changes in life (Wong et al., 2006). From this viewpoint, the adjustment of migrants can be understood differently by taking into different socio-cultural contexts and values.

In my view, western discourses around migrants' experiences can be seen as bearing on two issues. One issue concerns about how to deal with changes in life. While the discourse of 'coping with stress' appears to be used to deal with changes in life circumstances, the concept of 'acculturation' is more concerned with changes in individuals, whether it is behavioural, or more abstract constructs, such as values and beliefs in self. The other issue is to do with how to deal with social, particularly cultural others. 'Identity' as a discourse is used to categorize people into two opposite polar: 'self' and 'cultural others', whereas 'intercultural communication' is constructed to deal with the reality of social interaction among different groups of people. Furthermore, all these discursive constructions are interconnected and jointly produce a western way of speaking of non-western migrants as 'different others' and of their experiences as problematic, therefore involves a process of adjustment.

As we know, migrants from non-western cultural backgrounds often have their own understandings of dealing with changes in life in their country of origin, and these understandings and values may differ from their western counterparts. Looking at different cultural understandings and values can open up possibilities for different ways of speaking migrants' experiences than the western discourses. More importantly, when people migrate to another culture, they usually bring along their 'old' ways of being and doing to make sense of their experience. Although western discourses can offer one valuable version of understanding of non-western migrants' experiences, migrants need opportunities to voice their experiences from different perspectives, especially from their own cultural backgrounds.

In the following, I introduce Chinese cultural perspectives regarding how to

deal with changes in life and deal with others in social relations.

Non-western discourse – introducing Chinese cultural understandings

A Chinese perspective of dealing with changes

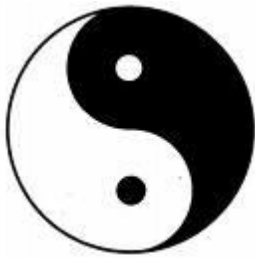
Perhaps the best way to characterize Chinese cultural way of dealing with changes is by an illustration of the story of “Mr. Sai’s horse” in a Chinese idiom “赛翁失马，焉知祸福”. The proverb of “赛翁失马，焉知祸福” (“Mr Sai lost his horse, who knows whether it is a misfortune or fortune?”) is related to an ancient story about an old village man, Mr Sai. One day Mr Sai’s horse went astray. His neighbours came to comfort him for his loss, but Mr Sai replied “what makes you suppose that this is a misfortune”? Later the horse returned accompanied by several wild horses. This time the neighbours came to congratulate Mr Sai on his good luck. “What makes you think this is good luck?” he said. Several weeks later, when his son tried to ride the wild horse, the boy fell down and broke his leg. Once again the neighbours came to express sympathy for Mr Sai and once again the old man asked how they could know that this was misfortune. Then next year a war broke out and all the young men in the village were drafted, except Mr Sai’s son, who was rejected because of his leg. All the young men died in the war, but Mr Sai’s son survived.

The idiom of “赛翁失马，焉知祸福” is commonly used in Chinese people’s everyday life to speak of their experience of negative changes in life. This story illustrates a version of the Chinese understanding of life and stance toward life. Life is seen as constantly changing and is full of contradictions. Life changes always involve fortune and misfortune, just like two sides of a coin. The way to deal with changes in life is to be aware of the two sides and accept the both sides that brought by changes.

The understanding of life change implied in this story is suggested to reflect Daoist thought in Chinese culture. Daoist thought of change is embodied in the principle of *yin* and *yang*, a cosmic symbol of primordial unity and harmony. The *yin* and *yang* image, probably the best-known symbol in East Asia, is illustrated in a circle being equally divided by a curved line forming the black and white areas (see

the figure below). *Yin* and *yang* are regarded as representing two polar opposite elements which form everything that exists in the universe. *Yin* is considered to stand for the negative, passive or female aspect of nature, whereas *yang* stands for the positive, active, or male aspect of nature (Chen & Swartzman, 2001).

The sign of the Dao



It is worth noting that in the sign of the Dao there is a dot of black in the white, and a dot of white in the black. This suggests that there exists neither absolute black nor absolute white. Opposites contain within them the seeds of the other and together form a dynamic unity (Chen & Swartzman, 2001). *Yin* and *yang* depend on each other, exist within each other, give birth to each other, and succeed each other at different points in time. In other words, every universal phenomenon embraces both *yin* and *yang*, embraces both the black and the white, and embraces contradiction, paradox and change. *Yin* and *yang* are described like the two sides of a coin, which are always connected, depending on each other but also constraining each other. *Yin* cannot exist without *yang*, and vice versa (Wong et al., 2006).

More importantly, *yin* and *yang* are seen as interchangeable. The extreme of *yin* is *yang*, and the extreme of *yang* is *yin* (Chen, 2002). The reversion of *yin* and *yang*, good and bad, fortune and misfortune is well illustrated by Chinese proverbs, such as the above story of “Mr Sai”, 否极泰来 “Out of the depth of misfortune comes bliss”, 乐极生悲 “Extreme joy will bring about sorrow”. These proverbs and idioms reflect a dialectic view of changes in life for Chinese people (Wong et al, 2006). According to the *yin/yang* principle, change is dynamic and involves unified polarity. Change takes place in a cyclical or circular pattern in which everything eventually reverts to its opposite. This view of change leads to a view of life that acknowledges the both sides exist in every life change, and embraces both sides. This is pointed out

as in contrast with the dominant western view of change, in which change is seen as dichotomous and linear, “a mechanical opposition of the positive against the negative” (Chen, 2006, p205). Similarly, Pederson (2006) points out that western culture tends to adopt a linear “either/or” way of understanding the world. In contrast, many eastern cultures depend on a “both/and” alternative way of thinking. It is not either this or that, but both these and those. Compared to the western way of thinking, the eastern ways of thinking is more dialectic and paradoxical (Pederson, 2006). This suggests that while westerners believe that their own futures will move continuously in a single-direction—from bad to good, or good to bad, Chinese may expect their lives to undergo reversals of fortune—from good to bad to good, or from bad to good to bad (Nisbett, 2003). The Chinese are inclined to find the middle way between extremes and assume reversion rather than advance (Pederson, 2006). Although none of these generalizations apply to all members of a particular group, it clearly shows that there exist different meanings to make sense of changes in life between traditional Chinese culture and western culture.

“有得必有失” (“gain is always accompanied by loss in life”) is another saying commonly used in Chinese culture to describe situations in life. “有得必有失” implies that loss and gain are always present in life. As a result, life involves negotiating loss and gain. This view of life as negotiation between loss and gain can be traced back in Daoism and Confucian thoughts in traditional Chinese culture. Taoist view of change leads to a view of life that acknowledges the both sides exist in every life change, and embraces both sides. As a result, life changes are understood in terms of loss and gain in traditional Chinese cultural understanding. Everything in life can be seen as involving loss and gain, which are like two sides of coin, and “有得必有失” (gain always accompanies loss). “有得必有失” is a common discursive construction that Chinese people draw upon to make sense of negative changes in life.

“有得必有失” is also congruent with the concept of “中庸之道” (“the golden mean”) emphasized in Confucian thought. “The golden mean” is often interpreted as against having too much or too little. Everything needs to be right in moderation (Yan, 2005). “The golden mean” has been used to govern Chinese

people's social life. According to "the golden mean", expressing emotions of delight, anger, sorrow, and joy in the extreme, without proper control, is regarded as causing a disturbance in the person's mental condition. Furthermore, "the golden mean" applies to the way of dealing with interpersonal conflicts and problems. It has been pointed out that the Confucian concept of the golden mean is one of the most useful principles for coping with problems in Chinese culture (Yan, 2005).

"Fish and bear's paw" is another saying in traditional Chinese culture (from Mencius, 372-289 B.C. the disciple of Confucius) that has been widely used to describe making a choice between two desirable things. In Chinese culture, fish and bear's paw are two desirable dishes. This saying implies that an individual has to make a choice between two desirable things, and one cannot have it both ways in life.

Chinese perspective of dealing with social relations

Establishing a harmonious interpersonal relationship is the main focus in Chinese social relations. It has been suggested that harmony is highly valued in Chinese culture. Harmony governs Chinese people's social life. The emphasis on harmony has been widely used to explain the social behavior of Chinese people, suggesting Chinese people tend to use forbearance and suppression of personal goals to maintain a harmonious relationship (Chen & Swartzman, 2001).

The notion of harmony has widely been considered to be influenced by Confucius and Daoist thoughts in traditional collectivistic Chinese culture. Confucianism has imparted rules to govern Chinese people's social life for thousands of years, and it still exerts a significant influence in contemporary social life of Chinese people (Bond, 1996; Chen & Swartzman, 2001). Confucianism is viewed to offer teaching on how to deal with human relationship in Chinese society. In Confucian thought, harmony is stressed as the basic principle for interpersonal relationships (Yan, 2005).

The notion of harmony in Confucian thought is emphasized in its concept of the Golden Mean (中庸之道). The belief embodied in the Golden Mean is that everything should be right in moderation (e.g., Nisbett, 2003, Yan, 2005). For example, it is suggested that expressing emotions of delight, anger, sorrow, and joy in

the extreme, without proper control, will cause a disturbance in the person's mental condition. It is not merely a matter of regulating emotions, but also dealing with conflicts and problems.

Often, the notion of harmony is interpreted as conflict avoidance in western understanding (Leung, Koch & Lu, 2002). Harmony is mainly seen as a cultural value of Confucianism, leading people in collectivistic cultures to employ the strategies of conflict avoidance in order to maintain a harmonious relationship. Although Chinese people may show the apparent avoidant behavior in westerners' eyes, Leung et al. (2002) argue that the view of harmony as the equivalent of conflict avoidance is inadequate to understand harmony-seeking behaviors observed in Asian culture. Huang (1999) classified two types of harmony in Chinese people: one she labeled as "genuine" harmony, while the other as "surface" harmony. She refers to the former as "holistic and sincere harmonious relationships", while the latter as "surface relationships which may appear smooth, but conflicts remain underneath the surface" (p. 89). Hwang (1997) describes that the Chinese, particularly in situations where the relationship is very important, do not openly disagree. Instead they will preserve the harmony of the relationship by agreeing with the other person in public while pursuing their goal in secret. In this sense, Leung et al (2002) argue for the instrumental perspective of harmony, in which "harmony is viewed as a means to a typically materialistic end", whereas conflict avoidance behavior is "primarily driven by the instrumental motive" (p.201).

Furthermore, Leung et al (2002) point out that contrary to popular belief, Confucius also encouraged diversity of views in spite of the emphasis on harmony. According to them, the Confucian notion of harmony is based on disagreement and open debates. It means that even though there are differences among people, those differences do not necessarily prevent people from being able to coexist and strive together toward goals. Instead, the differences will allow people to be complementary to each other for their mutual benefit. There is no need to force every person to become the same (Yan, 2005).

The Western discourse of 'collectivistic culture' often depicts collectivistic culture as characterized by the priority of group benefit and social harmony over individual interests. Chinese society is commonly viewed as a collectivistic society

compared to the west. Chinese individuals are believed to have interdependent view of the self. It is said that Chinese tend to see themselves as bound by relationships which emphasize common fate. From a discursive perspective, this may as well mean that in Chinese cultural way of speaking there is less concern about “identity” than about the social relations. In light of this, a Chinese person’s ‘identity’ can be understood as manifest in various forms of relations with others.

The Chinese way of dealing with social relations can be understood in terms of the speaking of ‘others’. The others can be loosely classified into two groups: one is 自己人 *zi ji ren* (our own people), and the other is 外人 *wai ren* (outsider). For the others with whom they already have a fixed relationship, a connection (which the Chinese call 关系 *guanxi*), they call *zi ji ren* (our own people). For the others that they perceive as not having established the connection, they call *wai ren* (outsider).

In the following, I first look at the notion of *guanxi*. Then I provide an overview of how Chinese people dealing with *zi ji ren* (our own people) and *wai ren* (outsiders) based on *guanxi*.

Guan xi (关系)

The term *Guan xi* is often translated as social connections and networks in English. *Guan xi* is very important in Chinese people’s life (Chen & Chen, 2004). These connections operate like a series of invisible threads, tying Chinese to each other with far greater tensile strength than mere friendship. The importance of connections and networking in traditional Chinese society has been widely noted (e.g., Chen & Chen, 2004, Hwang, 2000, Yang, 2002). Although individuals are in a web of a number of networks, the strength varies as to the personal connections between two persons in each network. The focus on social connections draws attention to the context of social interactions between individuals when Chinese people deal with others. The first thing to do is to understand the specific context. For example, who is the important figure, and what kind of relationship is appropriate with that figure. There is no universal ethic to be applied across the board to all people and in all situations. Ethics in China is traditionally determined by connections that vary with particular people and situation. In Chinese culture, the

ability of adjusting oneself to different social situations and acting and speaking accordingly is considered essential for an individual's success (Yang, 2002). Yet this ability is seen as built on the person's acute understanding and apt dealing with various social connections. More so, the way a person relates to others depends on these connections (Chen & Chen, 2004, Hwang, 2000, Park & Lou, 2001).

Guan xi is established in various ways. One of the most common ways to establish *guanxi* is through 老乡 *lao xiang* or 同乡 *tong xiang* (people from the same native place). In Chinese society, persons from the same hometown, county, or even province, form an automatic connection with each other (Park & Lou, 2001). The connection is stronger the more local the common place, county or town or village. Academic and scholarly ties are also significant sources of connections. For example, people who graduate from the same school, college or university often share a type of alumni connection, and this type of connection is often used to get things done or seeking employment. These social connections shape the practical social realities of Chinese people (Park & Lou, 2001). Social connections are seen as a *must* to get things done. It is no exaggeration that in every arena of life, people have used their personal social connections to get what they want or need (Chen & Chen, 2004).

Family relations

Families can be regarded as the most important *zi ji ren* (own people) in Chinese notion of *guan xi*. It is often said that Chinese people are family oriented. Family is regarded as the basic building block in Chinese society in contrast to the individuals in western society. Family relationship is valued as the most important relationship in Chinese people's social life. Filial piety is perhaps the most well-known Chinese cultural way of dealing with family relations (Chow, 2009, Cheng & Chan, 2006, Chen, Bond, & Tang, 2007). There is no concept of an individual's rights within the family in traditional Chinese culture; rather the notion of "responsibility" and "obligation" is emphasized. The meanings of filial piety are manifested in many aspects. But the often noted meaning is to do whatever is necessary to provide for the physical and psychological needs of parents in a spirit of respectful obeisance. The Chinese cultural value of respecting elderly can be seen as a form of filial piety. There are many popular stories about the dimensions of such action. For example, there is an ancient story about the filial son who cut off flesh from his own thigh to feed a

starving parent. This kind of story has been circulated in China to educate children to fulfill filial piety to their parents.

Dealing with wai ren: the outside “other”

Chinese people regard other people as *zi ji ren* (our people) if they have established *guan xi* (social connections or networks). In contrast, those with whom a person has not established connections are called the “other” (*wai ren*). We can get a glimpse of the way of dealing with outsiders from the way different ethnic groups are dealt with in China. There are officially 56 ethnic groups in China, with Han ethnic as the majority group, whereas the other 55 ethnic groups as minority groups (Xu & Wang, 2007). In contrast to western society, in which ‘ethnicity’ is more or less linked with race or physical differences (e.g., skin color), in Chinese culture the understanding and use of ‘ethnicity’ is more based on language, customs and culture rather than race (Zhu & Blachford, 2006). For example, there are minor differences in physical appearance between many ethnic minority groups and the dominant Han group in China. In Chinese culture, the dominant discourse around dealing with ethnically different others emphasizes on retaining the differences (such as preservation of language, culture and customs of ethnic minority groups), as well as establishment of harmonious relationship among different ethnic groups (Xu & Wang, 2007). Meanwhile, ethnic minority groups in China are under protection of the dominant Han ethnic group due to the different power relations. Therefore, in traditional Chinese culture dealing with the outside “others” emphasizes maintaining a harmonious relationship while keeping aware of the differences, especially the power difference between groups. “Difference in harmony” can be seen as the principle of negotiating differences between various social groups in Chinese society.

Summary

In this chapter, I have first discussed the speaking of non-western migrants’ experience from a western cultural perspective. I have argued that non-western migrants’ experiences are constructed as a process of adjustment. In this process, migrants engage in coping with stresses, dealing with acculturation issues, negotiating identities and intercultural learning.

Then I have contended that there can be different ways of speaking of non-

western migrants' experiences by taking different socio-cultural contexts into account. I have argued western discourses around migrants' experiences can be seen as bearing on issues that are inseparable from cultural understandings of how to deal with life changes and how to deal with different others. Following that, I have provided a Chinese cultural perspective on life changes, ways of dealing with life changes, as well as how to relate to the different others. In the next chapter, I move on to elaborate my research approach to making sense of Chinese migrants' experiences in New Zealand.

Chapter Three: My study—making sense of migratory experiences in New Zealand

Introduction

In this chapter, I first provide rationales for my research. Second, I articulate my theoretical approach. Third, I point to the aims of my research. Fourth, I provide details of the research process.

Research rationales

In the introduction, I have analyzed the dominant discourses of migrants' experiences in western culture and have examined the ways that migrants and their experiences are constructed in these interconnected discourses in the literature. Changes in migrants' lives are viewed as problematic, manifest in stresses initiated by migration, identity confusion, inefficient intercultural communication, and so on. Successful adjustment requires migrants to deal with these problems by all means, such as the use of coping strategies, acculturative strategy (preferred integration), negotiation of multiple identities, and intercultural learning. The process of adjustment is understood as a one-way direction towards achieving a desirable outcome in the receiving country.

I have pointed out that most research on Chinese migrants in western countries has traditionally focused on the issue of adjustment to the host society (Khun Eng, 2006) and drawn upon western discourse to various degrees (e.g., coping with stress, acculturation, identity negotiation) to understand Chinese migrants' experiences, and thus the interpretations are meaningful from a western perspective.

However, there is a lack of research on how migrants themselves draw upon cultural knowledge to make sense of their experience. The way that migrants understand and deal with changes in life are shaped by the discourses and cultural meanings in which they are socialized. Migrants of non-western cultural backgrounds may have different ways of understanding their experiences of adjustment than the ones constructed in the dominant western discourses (e.g., coping with stress, acculturation, and identity negotiation). However, as pointed out earlier, the research to date on migrants' experience in western countries has largely been shaped by

western cultural understandings. In fact, the psychological research can be regarded as a practice of western culture. As a result, increasing concern has been raised about the use of western cultural knowledge to capture the experiences of people of non-western cultural backgrounds.

I have discussed and illustrated that Chinese cultural knowledge offers a different way of looking at dealing with changes in life. If we accept the assumption that our understandings of the world are socially and cultural dependent, then migrants' experiences of adjustment are subject to different cultural interpretations. However, far too little attention has been paid to considerations of non-western cultural understandings to make sense non-western migrants' experiences, which may be more culturally relevant to their experiences.

In the context of New Zealand, the Chinese population is growing rapidly. Chinese have become the largest sub-Asian group and contribute significantly to the noticeable change in the demographic make-up of urban New Zealand, in particular the biggest city of Auckland (Ip, 2006). More so, the group of Chinese migrants from Mainland China is increasing faster than Chinese from other regions. However, no research has been done to date on how Chinese migrants make sense of their experiences of changes after migrating to New Zealand from Mainland China. This research aims to provide an analysis of Mainland Chinese migrants' understandings of their migration experience in New Zealand.

Research approach

Social constructionist approach

In this research, my understanding of the meaning-making process is informed by certain versions of social constructionism (e.g., Burr, 2003, Crotty, 1998). I adopt the view that "meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, p. 43), and therefore meanings cannot be separate from either human beings or the world. This view challenges objectivism's 'truth' claim of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). According to this view, all forms of knowledge are socially, culturally and historically contingent, and thus there is no 'truth' out there to be discovered; rather it is constructed by human beings (Burr, 2003). On the other hand, I dispute the subjectivist's view that meanings originate in

people's minds (Crotty, 1998). Meanings are not created, but are dependent on our interactions with the objects in the world (Crotty, 1998). By adopting social constructionism, I do not deny the materiality of the world, but merely believe that understandings of the world are subjected to people's experience and practice in particular time and space.

I am also influenced by a Foucauldian perspective on the relationship between knowledge and power. From a Foucauldian discourse analyst's view, discourse, knowledge and power are intricately associated (Burr, 2003; Carabine, 2001). There are a few ways to understand the relationships between these three. Firstly, knowledge is understood as a particular construction of a phenomenon, which has gained the dominant status as 'truth' at a particular time in a particular culture and society (Burr, 2003; Carabine, 2001). Therefore 'truth' can be regarded as the dominant discourse of an event. Secondly, discourse supports or limits what can be said, and thus power functions discursively. Put another way, power is understood as something that is not possessed by a group of people; rather power is exercised when some discourses are privileged while others are marginalized (Willig, 2001). Thirdly, power is important in producing what counts as knowledge; thus power and knowledge always go hand in hand (Burr, 2003; Carabine, 2001). Fourthly, and more importantly, dominant discourses are considered as always being contested by other discourses. Knowledge is always subject to further interpretation and argumentation, and some version is always more justified in a particular time and space than others. The different forms of knowledge are subjected to power relations through the legitimization of certain forms of knowledge as 'truth' and the marginalization of other forms of knowledge. Therefore, there is always resistance (exercise of power) where there are dominant discourses (Burr, 2003; Carabine, 2001).

Taking this stance on knowledge makes me refrain from making truth claims and leads me to take a critical stance towards the taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world (Burr, 2003, Harper & Spellman, 2006). Also, it requires me to be mindful of the ethical consequences of my research practice. That means I need to be clear whose interest the research serves (Shi-xu, 2005). In the case of my research, I attempt to challenge the social practices of oppression and marginalization of non-western/non-White migrants in western countries.

Discursive approach

This research is also influenced by my understanding of discursive approach to psychological research. The ‘turn to language’ in the late 1960s and 1970s called for a new paradigm in psychology, which emphasized the important role of language in constituting social and psychological life, in contrast to the laboratory-experimental approach to psychology which was criticized for neglecting the life-worlds that people live in (Parker, 2005). It was within this context of the ‘turn to language’ that discourse analysis emerged as a methodology for qualitative research in psychology (Parker, 2004). Discourse analysis concerns how meanings are constructed through discourse and it is often considered as one key approach to social constructionist research (Willig, 2000).

Discourse has been defined in many different ways. In this research, discourse is understood as “versions of events”, and “ways of speaking” about the world (Burr, 2003, Parker, 2005, Shi-xu, 2005, Willig, 2000). Shi-xu (2005) argues that discourse serves the function of building relations. It forges relationships of various kinds and thereby accomplishes other practical goals (Shi-xu, 2005). In this way, people can be seen as constantly negotiating relations with other individuals, families, groups, institutions, nations, cultural patterns and so on and so forth in their daily discursive practice. Often, even though what is said is of no importance, but the fact that something is said, in particular ways, may serve to establish or maintain a certain social bond. This view is supported by Parker (2005, p.88-99) who states that discourse produces certain kind of “social bond” and “each bond includes certain kinds of people and excludes others”. Parker (2005, p. 89) asks researchers to pay attention to the way people are made to “fit into certain categories” and “marked out as different” in discourses, and “how the contradictions in and within the categories work”. Influenced by this way of understanding discourse, I have provided an analysis in the last chapter of how non-western migrants have been constructed as the ‘different others’ who have to undergo a process of adjustment through dominant western discourses.

One characteristic of a discursive approach to psychology is that psychological issues are examined as discursive practices and constructions rather than as cognitive-perceptual processes (Verkuyten & Wolf, 2002). For example, Parker (2005, p. 89)

proposes that the analysis of discourse should “look out for the multivoicedness of language instead of searching for underlying psychological process or themes”.

In this research, I attempt to explore socially and culturally available patterns of meanings (or discursive resources, ways of speaking) to make sense of Chinese migrants’ experiences. These patterns of meanings can be regarded as shared, pre-existing interpretative resources with which people can build their accounts (Verkuyten & Wolf, 2002). This does not mean that these discursive resources have fixed meanings. The fact that discourses can be used in different ways and in various contexts indicates that these resources do not determine people’s talk and understanding. Attention needs be given to what people are doing when they use particular resources for producing an account (Verkuyten & Wolf, 2002). In light of this, the focus of my analysis is on how people draw on these socially available patterns of meanings in organizing accounts to give meanings to their experiences. In other words, I am not only interested in meanings per se, but more importantly, how meanings are reproduced and constructed relevant to some specific situations through discursive practice (Shi-xu, 2005).

Cultural-centered approach

This research takes a cultural perspective on psychological research.

First of all, I regard culture as not fixed, static or homogeneous, but rather fluid, changing and dynamic. I agree that the traditional essentialist understanding of ‘culture’ should be problematized. Culture does not consist in some fixed and essential structure. Culture can be reproduced, sustained and transformed by individuals and groups (Shi-xu, 2005). However, it does not mean we should give up ‘culture’ as a contextual framework to understand people as some postmodernists suggested. As McLeod (2006a) said,

“A person is born into a culture, and is assigned an identity (e.g., a name, a birth story, a family role) that is drawn from the identity repertoire available within that cultural system. From the beginning, the way that the child is touched, held, and fed constructs a pattern of relationship and emotional life that replicates the fundamental way of being that is characteristic of the cultural world into which the person has been born” (p. 49).

From this view, ‘culture’ can be an important and useful framework to

understand people's experience, especially to understand migrants who 'live in two cultures and speak two languages' (Wierzbicka, 2005). Accordingly, in this research I use the notion of western and non-western cultures to signify different meaning systems (re)produced and located in different socio-cultural contexts.

Secondly, I emphasize individuals' action upon culture. Culture is realized in social practice. According to Shi-xu (2005), culture is primarily a process of constructing and acting upon reality. People and things are cultural beings, but they are so only because they are always involved in the carrying out of practical tasks in life. People create, reproduce, change and utilize cultural reality-symbols, beliefs, facts, or whatsoever, by performing various forms of social action (Shi-xu, 2005). Many have pointed out the pitfall of viewing culture in a way to imply any kind of cultural determinism while minimizing human agency (e.g., McLeod, 2006a, Katonah, 2006). This is congruent with the view that culture is not static, rather is fluid and changing. Cultures are creative expressions of meaning shared by groups of people. Culture can be understood as the way that a group of people live their lives.

"Although we are shaped by our context, there is always "the more", lived in the body, about to be formed out of the person's actual experiencing now. No experience is a repeat of an already know patterning. In actuality, human living is an interaction in which the organism can bring its own responsive order to cultural meanings such that a known meaning is transformed into a furthering of newly patterned living" (Katonah, 2006, p67).

"Culture is built upon individual human agency and reflexivity. Cultural values and practices are never static, but shift to reflect the ways that individual members develop strategies for responding to environmental, political, and technological events and processes" (McLeod, 2006a, p. 53).

Thirdly, in this research I stress the relationship between culture and power. Culture is not seen as in harmony, but as characterized by social division and asymmetry of power. Shi-xu (2005, p. 55) argues that cultures need to be seen as "not merely 'different' from each other, but in tension, competition and contestation, both within and without, often along the borders of gender, race and class". In everyday life, where cultural differences are perceived, they are usually not seen in the cultural other's perspective, but often from one's own and hence as deviations, deficiencies, or sources of trouble. Shi-xu (2005) stresses the importance of "the historically evolved relations of domination, exploitation, exclusion, prejudice and resistance between

ethnicities, classes, genders, East and West, the North and the South, the empire and the colony, the superpower and the Third World, and so on” in understanding cultural differences. In that sense, he argues that ‘cultural differences’ are basically differences of power. Culture is seen as a site of “power struggle” (Shi-xu, 2005, p. 55).

To sum up, this research takes a cultural-centred approach to discourse analysis to examine how people make sense of their experience in life. By the cultural approach I mean that culture is seen as an underlying aspect of living. I see that culture comes into play in people’s constructing meanings in the following ways. First, the meanings of life and social practice of life are culturally specific. Second, the meanings that people draw upon to understand their own experiences are embedded in cultural contexts. Third, the process of constructing meanings is culturally specific (e.g., different ways of speaking of things and people in different cultures).

Research aims

The present study has two aims.

First, I am interested in exploring what culturally located discursive resources are used to account for their experiences of dealing with life changes in New Zealand.

Second, I am interested in examining how these discursive resources are used in their accounts to allow them to make sense of their experiences in New Zealand.

Research Methods

Participants

My recruiting criteria for participants were ethnic Chinese people who were born and grew up in Mainland China, migrated to New Zealand and have been living here for at least two years.

Focus group discussion

The focus group, as a method to collect qualitative data, has been increasingly used in psychology over recent decades (Wilkinson, 2008). In this method, a small

group of participants gather to discuss a particular issue under the guidance of a moderator, who preferably plays a detached role. The discussion, which usually lasts between 60 and 90 minutes, is normally audio- and/or video-taped, and then transcribed and analyzed.

Focus groups are considered of particular value for their ability to allow researchers to study how people engage in collective sense-making. Willig (2001) points out that one advantage of focus groups over semi-structured interviews is that it allows us to explore how the meanings are jointly constructed. The interaction among participants in focus groups can provide an opportunity for them to challenge or resist dominant discourses, and take up alternative discourses. This might be especially helpful when the research question concerns how participants draw upon cross-cultural discursive resources to construct meanings. In my view, group discussions can offer a space to generate more culturally shared accounts than individual interviews.

Meanwhile, it is claimed that focus groups enable researchers to study and understand a particular topic from the perspective of the group participants themselves (Wilkinson, 2008). In addition, focus group is seen as providing a means to access participants' own way of speaking in their social context (Wilkinson, 2008). In focus group, because participants talk primarily to each other rather than to the researcher, they are not primarily concerned with providing explanations to a researcher as is often the case in interviews. Therefore, participants are more likely to talk in a way that is much closer to everyday conversation than is a one-to-one interview (Wilkinson, 2008).

In this research I am interested in exploring culturally shared meanings drawn upon by Chinese migrants to make sense of their experience of adjustment in New Zealand, as well as exploring the shared cultural ways of making sense of these experiences. Therefore, focus group discussions were considered as appropriate to collect data.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling. I approached acquaintance who were Chinese migrants and Chinese community coordinators in

Auckland, introduced the research and gave them an Information Sheet (both in Chinese and in English, the English version is the translation of the Chinese version, see Appendices). The people that I contacted were asked to hand out the Information Sheet to the people they know, and to ask around if these people would be interested to participate in this research. Interested individuals were asked to contact me and then I would ask them to form a group of four to five acquainted people to attend a group discussion. Some of my acquaintances agreed to participate in my research themselves and to help arrange a group of acquainted people. Other people that I contacted introduced their acquaintance to me. Then I asked them to get together a group of five to six interested people to attend a focus group discussion. Getting together participants who know each other in a group is based on the consideration that it will make it easier for them to talk shared experiences.

In this way, five focus groups were obtained. There were twenty-four participants in total, ten males and fourteen females, with an age range of 28 to 75 years. All the participants were *Han* ethnic Chinese. The duration of residence in New Zealand ranged from two years to ten years. Each group had both male and female participants, except one group had all female participants. I did not set rules for the make-up of the focus groups. However, each group ended up with participants of similar demographic backgrounds. Overall, the focus groups covered a range of Chinese migrants. One focus group was made up of five recent migrants without children aged between 28 to 33 years. One focus group consisted of five middle-aged migrants in their 40s with dependent children who have resided in New Zealand for less than 5 years. One focus group had five middle-aged migrants in their 40s with dependent children who have resided in New Zealand for more than 5 years. One focus group was four women who are housewives in their 40's. The last focus group included five elderly migrants over 65 years old who were sponsored by their adult children to live in New Zealand.

To participants' convenience, two of the focus groups were conducted in a study room in the library at Massey University, Albany campus. One focus group was conducted at a participant's house, and the other two were conducted in school classrooms organized by participants themselves. I facilitated all five focus groups. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions before the group discussion started.

Pu tong hua (the national standard spoken language in Mainland China) was spoken for all the focus group discussions. Refreshments were provided for participants during the discussions. In the beginning of each focus group, I familiarized myself with the participants by introducing myself and asking each participant to briefly introduce themselves by turn. An open question of “how do you find your life in New Zealand” was used to generate participants’ discussions. Then I would let participants engage in conversations. A range of opening questions were asked to prompt the discussion, such as “what areas of changes you have experienced in life after migrating from China to New Zealand”, “how did you deal with the changes”, “what and how did you make sense of that experience”, “what you found helpful to adjust to the changes in life as migrants?”, “what helped you to make sense of that experience”. I tried not to interrupt their discussion except when the period of silence last more than 10 seconds, some individual participant had not spoken for a while, or the topic being discussed became irrelevant to their migratory experiences. During the discussion, I attempted to elicit participants’ understanding of their particular experiences by following up with questions which focus on the meanings they make out of their experiences. The focus group discussion duration ranged from one-and-a-half to two hours. The focus group discussions were tape recorded and transcribed literally by me into Chinese afterwards. The five focus group discussions were completed over the period of two months.

Ethical Considerations

This research was approved by the Human Ethics Committee, Massey University, Albany Campus. Confidentiality was considered a concern that may arise in the group discussion. The researcher was aware that the Mainland Chinese community is relatively small in Auckland and migrants can easily identify each other through social networks or acquaintances. The researcher was also mindful that disclosing personal difficulties or family conflicts to outsiders is seen as shameful in Chinese culture and participants may be concerned about the ways the information would be used to against their interest. Therefore, it was regarded very important to emphasize confidentiality issues before conducting the focus groups.

Participants were assured that their names would be kept confidential, and pseudonyms would be used in any written information (e.g., transcripts, data analysis,

reports, and publications). The tape readings would be stored securely and only be accessible to the researcher, and would be destroyed at the end of the research. Participants were also asked to keep confidential any personal information discussed by participants in the focus group discussion. Participants were fully informed of the purpose, procedure, and use of my research. Participants who agreed to take part in the focus group discussion were asked to review the details of the Information Sheet and given opportunities to raise questions before the group discussion began. Then participants signed a consent form at that point. The researcher also pointed out the implications of the research (for helping other Chinese migrants to better understand and adjust to the life in New Zealand) to encourage open communication.

The researcher was also aware that there might be a small possibility of mild distress caused by disclosure of their unpleasant experiences as migrants (e.g., discrimination). Therefore, the researcher paid attention to the emotional reactions of the participants during the discussion. It was considered that when any situation of serious distress disclosed, the researcher would direct a change of the topic and provide referral information for appropriate mental health services or community support services. It was noticed that no serious distress appeared to arise during the discussion.

Data analysis

I transcribed the data and conducted preliminary data analysis after each focus group discussion was completed. I engaged myself with the transcripts, reading and re-reading through them, at the same time writing notes and revising these as I went back to re-read the transcripts. The transcripts were made in Chinese as I considered it more appropriate for analysis in order to understand the full meanings of the participants' accounts. Also I did not initially plan the specific number of group discussion, but it became clear after conducting five focus groups that the initial analysis of five transcripts showed there was substantial commonality in the data to provide a thorough analysis.

The focus of the analysis was on identifying the shared way of making sense of their experience of changes in life. First, I attempted to identify the common areas of changes that participants spoke about as brought out by migration across the

different groups. For example, I identified that frequently spoken areas included communication, employment, socio-economic status, family relationship, etc. Then I took a close look at what changes/difficulties were encountered by participants in each of these areas. For example, in terms of communication, participants spoke of language difficulties. When it comes to employment, participants spoke of the lack of employment opportunities which match to their qualification and work experience in China. It became clear that even though these were shared concerns, the contents of concerns differ according to age groups due to their developmental tasks. For example, despite the fact all participants spoke of language and communication difficulty, young participants mostly talked about it in their experience of job hunting, middle aged participants mentioned it in terms of how to relate to others at work, while elderly participants talked of it with regard to the sense of loneliness and adjusting to the lack of friends and family in New Zealand and difficulty in making friends with the local people. Also, some participants spoke explicitly about the experiences of migration are different for migrants of different age and it needs to be looked at from the perspective of age. Therefore, the age difference was noted at this stage of analysis.

Next, I focused on exploring the ways that participants spoke of how they understand these areas of changes. Here, I investigated the discourses that participants drew upon to make sense of these changes. I paid particular attention to identify cultural metaphors and sayings in this regard. It was at this stage, I identified the Chinese cultural meanings manifest in sayings, metaphors, idioms and poems, such as “fish or bear’s paw”, “loss and gain are inseparable”, “the story of Mr Sai’s horse”. Following that, I considered how participants drew upon these cultural meanings to speak of their experiences.

In addition, it became clear that participants frequently mentioned the term of 融入 (fitting in) in making sense of their experience. Unlike other areas of life that participants have to make sense of, the term of “fitting in” presented challenges to understand. On one hand, the difficulty with “fitting in” is used to explain their experience of difficulties in life in New Zealand, on the other hand “fitting in” is constructed as the perceived goal for adjustment. Participants expressed ambivalent feelings (striving versus rejecting) as well as disagreement about it. Therefore, I drew

attention to the different ways participants talk about “fitting in”, and how this is related to their making sense of their experiences.

More so, I attempted to focus on how participants construct/co-construct positive meanings out of their negative experiences, and how they drew upon their strength to improve their living in New Zealand. In this regard, I paid attention to what participants spoke of as helpful in understanding their experience. Here, I noticed that talk was around constructing new meanings for migration, such as “choice”, “flexible and no longer a once and for all process”, “resources”, as well as Chinese sayings on encouragement and dialectic sense-making (e.g., “loss and gain are inseparable” and therefore “life is about negotiating loss and gain”). In this way, participants accepted their negative experiences as losses, and were able to look to the positive side.

It also came to my attention that talk of “time” and “place” were often drawn upon by participants to make sense of their experience. For example, participants talked about the timing of migration impact on migratory experience, and how it takes “time” to adjust. “Place” is also mentioned as migration involves moving from one place to another place and participants’ talk locates their experiences in certain places. More importantly, time and place are constructed as inseparable from socio-economic, cultural and political influences. Therefore, in terms of the structure of the analysis, I decided to organize the reporting of my analysis in a way to capture how participants make sense of their experiences over time.

It is clear that Chinese migrants construct meanings for their experiences of life in New Zealand involving two aspects. The first aspect involves making sense of their experience in relation to the event of migrating from China to New Zealand. Here, participants negotiate their perceived loss and gain as a result of migrating to New Zealand, as well as giving new meanings to migration and migrants themselves. The second aspect concerns their understandings of how to “fit into” New Zealand society. This involves their negotiation of the meanings of “融入” (loosely translated as “fitting in”) regarding how to deal with the “others” in New Zealand. These two aspects seem to bear different salience at different times in their settlement. At the beginning of their settlement, participants are preoccupied with the changes

that migration brings about to them in significant areas in their lives, such as job prospect, employment, language, communication, and family relations. The understanding of adjustment experience is surrounded by the attempt to make sense of the changes in these areas, which they can make a reference to their past experience. As participants stay on, the focus of concern appears to shift from comparing with the past to dealing with the present. Participants are increasingly concerned about how to fit into the society of New Zealand. Experience of adjustment revolves around constructing meanings for "fitting in" to make sense of their experiences in New Zealand. Here, participants negotiate the differences in relation to social others in New Zealand society to understand their "fitting in". The analysis is presented in relation to these two aspects of the meaning-making process. The first investigates how participants make sense of their experience of changes in relation to the migration event. The second focuses on how participants understand their "fitting in" experiences in New Zealand society.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

Make sense of experiences in relation to “migration”

Participants’ experiences, first and foremost, revolve around making sense of the event of migration. Giving meaning to migration is shown as important for participants to make sense of their experience of changes in life. It is evident that first of all, participants construct migration as a desirable choice to justify their decision to migrate to New Zealand. This is illustrated in the following extracts.

“It is very crowded and polluted in China. Everyone lives in apartments. I had always dreamed of living in a place with fresh air and nice environment without complicated interpersonal relationships to deal with. More so, we had always wanted to own a house with a garden. I thought New Zealand would be a good choice before we migrated here.” (Ms. A, 42-year-old)

(Extract from Group One)

It is common for participants to talk about the “push” and “pull” factors for migration and in a way that migration is seen as a desirable choice in their life prior to migration. Consequently, they bear high expectations of life in New Zealand. However, as they become settled down in New Zealand, the dramatic changes they undergo in life in New Zealand bring about a sharp contrast to their expectations.

“All my expectations of migration are met. I enjoy the beautiful natural environment of New Zealand. I own a house now. But at the same time, I found all I had before were gone. Like, I had a well-paid job in China and didn’t have any financial worries back then. But right now I can’t get a job that matches my skills and qualification. I am struggling with paying the mortgage here. All the things I have gained through migration become unnoticeable any longer for me because I have to deal with the financial demand here. ... I came to realize migration is a choice between “fish and bear’s paw”. You gain something and lose something else at the same time. You can’t get both.” (Ms. A, 42-year-old)

(Extract from Group One)

The downside changes in certain areas of life draw participants’ attention to what their life was like before migration. This leads participants to talk about the good

side of their life prior to migration. In this way, participants no longer see their decision for migration as an all-good thing, rather as the choice a person has to make between two desirable things. Here, the quotation of 鱼和熊掌 (“fish” and “bear’s paw”) is drawn upon to give meaning to the event of migration. In Chinese culture, fish and bear’s paw are two desirable dishes. This saying implies that an individual has to make a choice between two desirable things, and one cannot have it both ways in life. It is evident that participants draw upon this saying to construct migration as a desirable choice for them. By making this choice, they gain something desirable, but at the same time lose other desirable things in life. Participants speak of their reason for migration as a result of the negotiation of the ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors. “Fish or bear’s paw”, a Confucian saying from Mencius (the Chinese philosopher, Confucius’s disciple, BC 372-289), therefore can be used to characterize the way Chinese migrants comprehend the experience of migration.

Because participants construe the downward changes in their life as losses, “migration”, the once desired choice, becomes understood as bringing about losses in life. This is shown in the following.

“I guess the way I make sense of migration is “有得必有失” (if you gain something, you have to lose something else”). As a result of migration, we lost well-respected jobs, social status we used to have. In our early days here, my husband had to work in a restaurant washing dishes because he couldn’t find jobs and we were having financial hardship at that time. He used to be a lecturer in a University in China. He was ashamed at the beginning, but soon felt ok about it. Well, you had to accept the reality.” (Ms. B, 42-year-old)

(Extract from Group One)

Here, participants draw upon the Chinese saying of “有得必有失” (which means “gain is always accompanied by loss in life”) to explain the painful experience of loss brought by migration. It is clear that many participants take on this Chinese cultural discourse of life changes to understand their experience of migration. Participants consider migration as a change in life which brings about both loss and gain. In this way, they make sense of their experience of changes after migrating to

New Zealand. The following shows how participants negotiate loss and gain in different areas of life.

“Both my husband and I worked as medical doctors in hospital in China. We used to have night shifts at work. Sometimes both of us had to work on the same night. So I had to take my child with me to work. It was very cold in winter and the working condition was terrible. There was no heater there. I felt sorry for my child. If I stayed in China, I would be promoted very quickly. But my child would be neglected. Like my colleagues, they just work so hard but their children don’t get good care. Although I lost my job and can’t work as a doctor in here, I can look after my child very well. I feel satisfied about it. We have just chosen another way of living.” (Ms. C, 39-year-old)

(Extract from Group Two)

The above extract gives a glimpse that participants often draw upon their children to justify their motive to move to New Zealand. For migrants who brought families with them to New Zealand, children become the area of gain they often draw upon to make sense of the area of loss. What they perceive as loss is replaced by the satisfactory outcome with their children. For example, participants speak of when asked by the locals about “why you give up all those things you had in China and instead coming here to work as labour”, they often refer to children as the reason for their migration. In particular for women participants, although they speak of their disappointment of not being able to get a satisfactory job, they claim this disappointment has been compensated by what has been gained in their children. Being household mothers, some women participants consider the well-being of their children is worth the loss of their professional career. The perception of children’s well-being as an area of gain is achieved through comparing with their counterparts in China (as illustrated in the above extract). Another area of negotiation of loss and gain for migrants is parenting.

“I think our children have gained so much too (as a result of migration). They have become so independent. They are not so spoiled as the children in China where they are treated like emperors. Also there is not much homework, and children can play. Whereas in China, children are under so much pressure to achieve, they have to work all day and all nights and even weekends. But the downside of this is that our kids become very opinionated, and they don’t listen to us. We can’t have too much

control in their life.” (Ms. D, 39-year-old)

“It is different here. Children are respected and treated as an individual person, not our possession. They have to take responsibility for themselves, not us. It is good for them in the future. Children in China are always taken care of by their parents. When they grow up they are still very dependent on their parents.” (Ms. C, 39-year-old)

“It is called 有得必有失 (gain is always accompanied by loss).” (Ms. E, 43-year-old)

(Extract from Group two)

It is often noted that Chinese parents have enormous involvement in decision-making regarding their children compared to parents in Western culture (Chen & Davenport, 2005). The Chinese value of parenting emphasizes hierarchical roles of parents and children. Chinese children are socialized to respect and obey parents. Here, participants talk about how their children “become more independent” and “not obedient”. This seems to lead to a sense of loss of control from a Chinese parent’s point of view. In this regard, participants negotiate the different cultural beliefs of parenting by assigning more responsibility to their children to take in charge of their own life. They speak they should not impose their own values on to their children or demand their children to do what they think is right for them. To justify it, participants talk about the changes in their children will give advantages to them for their future compared to their peers in China. In doing so, participants emphasize their gain during migration by accommodating the New Zealand parenting value which encourage independence. This illustrates that on one hand, migrant parents construct a sense of loss in Chinese parenting values; on the other hand they construct “the gain” in their children’s ability. And they draw upon the Chinese understanding of “lose and gain” to make sense of the change in parenting style.

In addition, this view of migration for the purpose of children is challenged. As one participant puts it,

“We often told others the reason for migration was giving better educational opportunity for our son. But now looking back, I think the decision of migration was for myself. At that time in China, I felt I was so stuck. I could easily see what my life

would be like in twenty years if I stayed in China. I was so determined to migrate to New Zealand even if I know I would probably only end up working as a labour. I just wanted a change and new experience in life”. (Mr. L, 43-year-old)

(Extract from Group five)

Interestingly, through discussion many participants come to agree that the “real reason” for migration was for themselves rather for their children. The discontent with their situations in China was the main reason for their emigration. Participants speak of their ‘true’ motivation for migration as a longing for changes in life regardless of the changes for better or worse. The feeling of stagnancy was seen as what pushed them out of China.

For the elderly participants, they construct loss and gain in the area of “filial piety”. This is shown in the following.

“As elderly, when we migrated to a new country, the changes are enormous. It is inevitable we will encounter difficulties here. We can’t speak English or drive, so it is difficult to communicate with others or to live independently. The culture is different, and the social system is different. There are so many areas of life we have to adjust to. For me, the family issue is the biggest change I have to deal with. We lived with my daughter and son-in-law for a while when we first arrived here. They have treated us very badly. They took control of our finance, and we were not allowed to drink milk while they do. They set the limit on the frequency and time we can use the shower. We were only allowed to have shower once a week for no longer than 15 minutes each time.....” (Mr. G 70-year-old)

“That’s disgusting. There is no filial piety from them. That’s supposed to be their obligation.” (Mr. M 68-year-old)

“Well, I understood they had financial difficulty.” (Mr. G 70-year-old)

“The young generation has lost their moral values.” (Mr. H 74-year-old)

“My son-in-law has his own argument. He called it social Darwinism. We are weak and they are strong, so it is ok for them to exploit us financially.” (Mr. G 70-year-old)

“That’s unacceptable. They were brought up and supported by us when they

were young and now it is time for them to return the generosity.” (Ms. M 66-year-old)

“I came to realize that I can’t expect my children to return anything. I need to depend on myself. That’s the best solution. Now my wife and I live on our own and we are very happy. The happiness is not a result of lack of difficulties but derives from overcoming the difficulties in life. Plus we have gained so much from migrating to here, the nice natural environment, the fresh air. We live in a much healthier environment that is what matters to us elderly people, isn’t it? Also the social and political system here is very good for our living. We have got so much help from the local government and people here and they put effort and resources to help us out. So it shows bad things can turn into good things. We need a positive attitude to look at the losses.” (Mr. G 70-year-old)

(Extract from Group Four)

Often, how to deal with the changed relationship with their adult children becomes a salient area for elderly Chinese migrants to make sense in their experience in New Zealand. It is common for adult Chinese migrants to sponsor their elderly parents to live with them in New Zealand. However, it appears that the relationship between the elderly and their adult children has undergone changes after the elderly parents migrate to New Zealand to live with their children. The loss through migration is constructed as the loss of filial piety in their children. Very common elderly participants disclose family conflict with their children. They talk about the children are not fulfilling their obligations. They point out that the traditional value of filial piety is being lost in the young Chinese generation as China is going through the ‘modernization’ and “westernization” process. They attribute their children’s not fulfilling their obligation of filial piety to the lack of proper moral education due to the Cultural Revolution, and also the current social problems in Chinese society (e.g., lack of honesty and trustworthiness). More so, elderly participants point out that the migration process intensifies the conflict between elderly parents and adult children. For example, their children’s financial difficulty exaggerate the conflict between them (e.g., living together under one roof to save money). In this way, elderly parents construct a sense of loss through migration. In Chinese culture, filial piety is the dominant discourse around adult children’s moral obligations for their elderly parents. Elderly parents generally expect their children, especially sons to take care of them at

an old age. It is clear that participants draw upon the discourse of filial piety to make sense of their experience of loss.

Despite the perceived loss in filial piety, elderly participants are able to see the gains through migration –the talk around the “good big environment”. This includes good natural environment for their health (e.g., fresh, clean air and water), safe social environment (low crime, less discrimination against Chinese compared to other countries, Indonesia, America, etc.), financial support from the government, friendly and law-abiding local people, democratic system, trustworthy interpersonal relationships, etc. Participants see these as helpful to overcome their losses in New Zealand.

This shows that elderly participants draw upon discourses around the historical and socio-cultural contexts in both China and New Zealand to make sense of their situation and their adjustment as migrants to the new context. The attribution to social influences reflects the elderly Chinese participants adopt a Chinese way of understanding the self, which is to explain the self in the term of broad social context.

It is clear that as participants speak of migration as involving both loss and gain, they start to view the interchange of loss and gain as a normal part of life. Life in New Zealand thus is seen as a process of continuous adjusting to changes, which involves two sides, loss and gain.

“I guess this is life. You have to deal with loss and gain. Loss is always accompanied by gain, vice versa. It is about how you look at it.” (Ms W. 42-year-old)

.....

“If I didn’t migrate to New Zealand, I would always think about what it would be like. I think life is about experience. Migration is just another experience in life. We want to experience things we haven’t experienced before whether we live in our home country or abroad. It doesn’t change or disrupt your life at all. It is just a part of life.” (Mr M. 43-year-old)

(Extracts from Group Five)

Participants’ talk illustrates how they draw upon Chinese understanding of life

to make sense their experience of migration. As mentioned earlier, participants construct migration as involving loss and gain. In this way, participants put their experience of migration in the context of a normal part of life experience. Participants see their experience of adjusting to changes in New Zealand as no longer the experience exclusive to migrants, but as a part of life everyone has to deal with in the journey of life. In other words, participants construct their experience of changes as part of life, which has nothing to do with migration or not. Therefore, migration is not seen as disruptive to life. This seems to function to normalize their experiences. In this way, participants make sense of their experience of changes associated with migration.

In summary, so far the analysis has shown how participants construct a complex picture for migration by drawing upon different discourses. They construct migration as a desirable choice by drawing upon “fish or bear’s paw”, make sense of positive and negative changes in different areas of life brought out by migration through seeing them as the “loss” and “gain” in life. More importantly, they construct a dialectic way of looking at the loss and gain, that means gains are accompanied by loss, and the vice versa. Through discussion of dealing with the “loss”, participants come to draw attention to the gain brought by “migration” experience. By viewing life in terms of “loss and gain” and every change in life as involving both loss and gain, it opens up possibilities for participants to challenge the dominant discourse of migration as a stress-provoking change in life; rather they construct migration as a normal experience in life. In this way, participants make sense of their experience of migration.

“Migration” no longer “once and for all”

It is clear even though participants have constructed helpful meanings to understand their experiences in New Zealand, the choice of staying put or leaving New Zealand remains a constant struggle which needs a lot of negotiation. Different age groups have different take on in this matter. But it is through constructing new meanings for migration as a no longer “once and for all” process that participants of different age groups reconcile their situation of choosing to stay or leave. The following shows how different age groups of participants negotiate the area of concern-to stay or to leave.

'Sitting on the fence' for young migrants

For young participants, they have ambiguous views on their long-term settlement in New Zealand since they see the decision depend on whether they will find a satisfactory job in New Zealand in the near future.

“It is hard to find a satisfactory job here. Many young Chinese migrants I know of have left New Zealand. Some have gone back to China, and some have gone to Australia or other countries. I am finishing up my degree. If I can't get a job after graduation, I think I will choose to move to Australia.” (Ms W, 27-year-old)

“I heard for the same job the salary is much higher in Australia than here. No wonder so many people choose to leave.” (Mr X, 28-year-old)

“But the discrimination against Asian is worse over there. My friend is in Melbourne. He told me it is very difficult for an Asian to get a full-time office job there, like accountant. There are many part-time positions or blue-collar jobs available.” (Ms Y, 27-year-old)

“As long as you have skills and are patient, you can still get a job here (in New Zealand). It just takes time. ... It is probably more difficult to get a job in China nowadays if you are not outstanding. There are so many fresh graduates every year and it is very competitive. The time has gone when overseas qualifications give you the advantage unless you are really capable.” (Mr. Z., 31-year-old)

“Here is not too bad. At least there is social welfare system to support people.” (Ms Y, 27-year-old)

(Extracts from Group Three)

Young participants have no children, either studying at university or working in low skilled jobs. Their talk is surrounded by their concern about job prospects in New Zealand. Young participants compare job opportunities in New Zealand to China and other western countries to put in perspective their experience of job difficulties (e.g., under-employment) in New Zealand. Although China is seen as full of job opportunities, participants see the increasingly competitive job market as well as the lack of job security puts mounting pressure on young people in China. Young participants talk about going back to China cannot guarantee a good job as before.

Given that obtaining an overseas qualification from a western country has been highly regarded in China and thus has been sought after by young people in order to gain a better job prospect, participants' changing view regarding job prospects in China seem to make them feel less uncomfortable with their experiences of job difficulties in New Zealand. Meanwhile, participants discuss the possibility of moving to other western countries for employment. For example, they talk about how many young Chinese migrants think of moving to Australia for work. Participants compare the job opportunities between New Zealand and Australia. Although participants agree that the salary is higher in Australia than in New Zealand, they speak that it is more difficult to obtain a white-collar office job in Australia than in New Zealand. They also mention the discrimination against Asian people in job market is more severe in Australia than in New Zealand. The perception that most qualified Chinese migrants in New Zealand will obtain a relevant job in the long run seems to counter their intention to move out. It is through the comparisons with other Chinese in China or overseas that young participants weigh up the advantages and disadvantage of the options of leaving or staying, and there is perceived flexibility in terms of their options.

'Rerooting' for middle-aged migrants

With respect to the middle-aged participants, there are more variations in terms of leave or stay based on different financial, educational backgrounds and family structures.

For skilled professional migrant participants who come as a family unit, they regard themselves as "having no way back" and have to re-root themselves in the new environment. This group of participants used to hold good jobs and income in China, while here they have to work non-skilled jobs or go back for retraining in hope for a better job prospect. Participants view this socio-economic change as a painful loss in their life. "Leave the past behind and start from scratch" is frequently mentioned as the way to deal with this change. The following illustrate how participants draw upon a story to make an analogy about their own experience in this regard.

"I like the story of eagle. Eagle is a powerful bird and can live up to 70 years old, one of the longest in the animal world. However, when eagle reaches the age of 40 years old, its feather will become heavier and heavier until it cannot fly. Its beak will

also become blunt and soon it will not be able to chew food. At this point of its life, eagle has to face a painful choice, either to die or to reborn. If it chooses to reborn, eagle has to climb up to the top of a steep mountain, use its own beak to pull out its entire feather, and then sharpen its beak with stones. After that, eagle has to wait until the entire feather to grow back and then it can fly to the sky again. I feel our experience in New Zealand is just like the reborn of the eagle.” (Ms. A, group One)

.....

“My friends in China often ask me about my experiences overseas and many of them are keen to emigrate to western countries. I always told them you need to have the courage to leave the glory behind and start from the scratch if you want to migrate to a new country. If you don’t have that courage, then you will be better off staying home.” (Ms Z, Group Two)

There is another type of migrant family usually called as the “astronaut” family. In an astronaut family, wives with children come to live in New Zealand, whereas husbands stay back in China to support the family’s living cost in New Zealand. There were a few women participants in this situation in the group. These women are faced with the dilemma of whether to stay or leave. On the one hand, they express that they are reluctant to go back to China to live as they have adapted themselves to the life in New Zealand. They speak of their values and attitudes having changed after migration, and they enjoy the relaxed life style in New Zealand. On the other hand, they are aware that they are faced with the issue of being separated from their husband for a long time. They are aware that it would be difficult for their husband to come here and start from scratch because they have a comfortable life back home, even though they want their husbands to come to join them. Through the discussion, these female participants construct their dilemma as not being able to negotiate loss and gain. They claim that it is the unwillingness to give up what the couple has in different countries leads to their dilemma. However, one has to give up something in order to gain something. The female participants agree that their husbands and themselves need to weigh up “what I want to get” and “what I have to give up” and then to make a choice between “fish” and “bear’s paw”. This is demonstrated in the following accounts.

“I am not sure whether to stay or to go back (to China). I like here (New

Zealand). I enjoy the lifestyle here. My son and I live here and my husband comes to visit us a couple of times ever year. He stays here for a week or so every time.” (Ms. E, 40-year-old)

“So you don’t have much time spent together. It is hard on the marriage.” (Ms A, 42-year-old).

“Yes, but I don’t want to go back and he doesn’t want to come here. I like the peacefulness and quietness here. I prefer the lifestyle here. I want my husband to come to live in New Zealand, but he has got his business in China he needs to look after.” (Ms E, 40-year-old).

“I am in a similar situation as you. But I don’t want my husband to come over here (New Zealand). I know how hard it can be to get a job. And he will have to start from scratch. I don’t think he can stand that or adjust to the differences. But I prefer to live here.” (Ms F, 45-year-old)

“Well, both of you don’t want to give up what you have here, nor do your husbands want to give up what they have back in China.” (Ms A, 42-year-old)

“Right, we have to give up something. We have to make a choice between fish and bear’s paw at some point.” (Ms E, 40-year-old)

(Extract from Group One)

Flexibility in choosing to stay or leave in elderly migrants

In contrast, elderly participants show the greatest flexibility in choosing “stay or leave”. Elderly participants speak of how they will choose to live in the place where they feel most comfortable, whether it is New Zealand or China. Participants talk about how they are ready to move back to China anytime when “things turn sour” in New Zealand. This seems an effective way for them to dealing with their adjustment issues in life in New Zealand.

“For us elderly people, we can almost choose to go back (to China) anytime we like. Here (New Zealand) has nice natural and social environment that is definitely more suitable for us to spend our golden age, but if things become too difficult we can always go back. We have lived in China for the most of our life. We have been through so many hardships in the past few decades, plus millions of other Chinese

live there, so I can't see why we couldn't go back if we want to." (Mr H. 74-year-old)

.....

"We have the choice. Migration gives us another means to living." (Mr G. 70-year-old)

(Extract from Group Four)

Elderly participants construct their gain by comparing New Zealand favourably against China with respect to the political, social and environmental factors; in this way to justify their choice to stay in New Zealand and how they need to adjust themselves as migrants to the new life in a new country. For example, the concern for a deteriorating health makes them appreciate the better natural environment in New Zealand than China. As they put it, "you cannot buy fresh air or water no matter how wealthy you are in China." They admire the values for honesty and trustworthiness in New Zealand society, the democratic political system and secure welfare systems. Meanwhile, they speak of the traditional Chinese feudal society has left Chinese people with the attitude of minding their own business (reflected in a Chinese saying "be worldly wise and make oneself safe") and compliance to authorities. They see the fast-changing Chinese society has resulted in demoralization of people, especially among younger generations, which results in the loss of "filial piety". Elderly participants speak of self-reliance as the key for them to adjust to the change as a result of migration. This illustrates the way they negotiate the perceived loss (e.g., filial piety) and gain (e.g., independence, good social environment) to make sense of their adjustment experience.

It has been pointed out that adjustment of migrants has a long-standing meaning associated with "settlement" in a new country. In the past, long-term settlement was expected to follow the act of migration. If a migrant is unable to settle down in the new country, the person would be considered as not adjusting well to the new environment. However, with the globalisation and the growing economic interdependence between countries in the world, the pattern of migration also takes on new shapes. It increasingly becomes common for migrants move back to their home country or step-moving from one country to another country. This suggests that migration is no longer a once-for-all or one-way direction from the country of origin

to the receiving country. Migration no longer necessarily leads to long-term settlement. Therefore, the experience of migrants is no longer limited to how to settle down and stay put in the receiving country.

Ip (2003) points out that recent Chinese migrants in New Zealand, unlike local Chinese or earlier settlers, fit better into the longer-term ‘transnational’ paradigm or the more transient ‘astronaut’ mode. These new Chinese migrants continue to commute between their country of origin and New Zealand, and often fly to third countries as well. According to her, these recent Chinese migrants show little tendency to settle down. It is within this context that participants negotiate the meanings for migration.

Participants’ accounts clearly show that “whether to stay or leave New Zealand” is an area of concern in their lives in New Zealand. Through constantly weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of staying or leaving New Zealand, participants construct meanings for their experience in relation to migration. Migration becomes seen as a resource in life. Participants see themselves to obtain the choice to leave or stay, which their counterparts in China do not have. This way of considering migration, as bringing about more choices in life, seems empowering for participants. Accordingly, adjustment is no longer construed as settlement in one location of the receiving society, but also is viewed as flexible as being able to move between the country of origin and the receiving country. It seems that the process of negotiating loss and gain is also used by participants to resolve their concern of whether to stay or leave in New Zealand.

Drawing upon cultural resource of “strength”

In addition, drawing upon Chinese cultural meanings to construct positive meanings for their experience of life changes seems to be useful for participants to recover from their difficult experiences. They often quote Chinese poems or sayings for aspirations and encouragement. For example, one participant transfers his experience of difficulties in New Zealand into positive experiences by drawing upon a Chinese poem regarding four happiest moments in life.

“When I arrived in New Zealand it was around Chinese Lantern Festival. At that time a local Chinese newspaper was recruiting essays to celebrate the festival. So I

thought about contributing an article to this newspaper. As we know, according to a traditional Chinese poem there are four happiest moments in life “洞房花烛夜，金榜题名时，久旱逢甘露，他乡遇故知²”。When we arrived in New Zealand, we encountered many difficulties. So I thought about how to interpret our encounters in New Zealand by drawing upon the four happiest moments in life. Regarding the first moment, I thought about sleep. I never slept well in China. Because the apartment I lived in is located in the main street. Every morning we were woken up by the traffic from 4am, and the noise can last until 2am. New Zealand is very quite. I can have sound sleep every night. It reminds me of my wedding night because it was so quite, so it is the first happy thing for me in New Zealand. Regarding the second moment, I had been waiting for permanent residence for a while and it was finally approved so I could come to live in New Zealand. The excitement was like I succeeded in the Chinese civil exam. As to the third moment, we were having financial difficulty when we first arrived here. Then we went to language school to study English and the student loan was approved. So we had income to support ourselves. I felt the money was like the rain for the drought. Without the income, we might not survive in here. With respect to the last moment, I have made many friends here through studying even though we had never met before in China. It feels like meeting an old friend in a foreign country. Especially for us elderly people, we have many life experiences, and plus there is no competition among us, therefore it is easy to make friends with each other.” (Mr.G. 70-year-old)

“That’s right. There is no conflict of interest among us elderly people, unlike young people. We are not interested in getting jobs. We just want to live comfortably approaching the end of the journey in life.” (Mr Z. 68-year-old)

“We can treat the difficult like the poem says 山穷水复疑无路，柳暗花明又一村” (the poem says when you doubt there may be no way forward during the journey after traveling for a long time, you may find a way hidden in the trees and flowers alongside the road) (Ms M. 66-year-old)

² The first happy moment is the moment at the wedding night with candles on in the bridal chamber. The second is the moment when success in the civil examination was notified, a way to become government official in Chinese imperial time. The third is the moment when it rains on a long drought land, and the last moment is when coming across a close friend of many years' standing in a foreign land.

(extracts from Group Four)

This illustrates how participants' talk often draw upon Chinese poems, sayings and proverbs to encourage themselves to deal with hardships. In this sense, Chinese cultural meanings can be a useful source of strength for participants to draw upon to construct their experience. It is evident that drawing upon Chinese cultural meanings is particularly common among elderly participants. They are very knowledgeable about traditional culture and are adept at employing these cultural resources to make sense of their experiences in New Zealand.

In summary, this part of analysis shows how participants draw on Chinese cultural meanings to make sense of their changes in life after migrating to New Zealand. "Fish or bear's paw", a Confucius saying, can be used to characterize the way Chinese participants comprehend their life-changing experience of migration. Migration is first seen as a desirable choice between "fish" and "bear's paw". Further, participants draw upon a dialectic way of making sense of life changes--- "gain is always accompanied by loss" ("有得必有失"), embodied in the Chinese philosophies of Confucianism and Daoism, to construct migration as consisting of both loss and gain. Because loss and gain are seen as a part of life, migration experience is normalized as part of life and no longer seen as a disruptive event in life. More so, participants make effective use of the complex dialectic relationship between loss and gain in Chinese cultural meanings, in which life is seen as involving reversals of fortune----from good to bad to good, or from bad to good to bad (Nisbett, 2003). Participants deal with their negative experiences by constructing both loss and gain through migration as tentative and constantly changing as illustrated in the story of Mr Sai's horse. It is through the process of constructing new meanings for migration and negotiating the perceived loss and gain in different aspects of life, participants make sense of their experience of difficulties and challenges faced in life in New Zealand.

Make sense of migratory experiences in relation to “融入” (“fitting in”)

Living in New Zealand is an ever evolving experience. The analysis above focuses on how participants construct meanings for their experience in New Zealand

in relation to migration. In this process, participants pay attention to their experiences with reference to this decision in the past in a way to explain their present situations. However, it is clear that as they reside longer in New Zealand, there is growing concern about how to interact with others in New Zealand society to achieve a sense of fitting in. The understanding of their experience in this regard involves making sense of their experience of dealing with others. “Fitting in” is an area of negotiating the perceived differences between themselves and others in order to achieve the goal of living together with differences. The following analysis shows the process of how participants construct meanings for their experiences around “fitting in”.

The problematic “fitting in”

“融入” (*rong ru*) is the most spoken phrase used by participants to describe the aspect of experience of social relations New Zealand. There is no exact English translation of the phrase “融入”. “融入” is made up two Chinese characters: “融” (*rong*) and “入” (*ru*). Both characters have multiple meanings in Chinese and can be used as either verb or noun, depending on the context. For example, “融” can mean such as “melt”, “blend”, “fuse”, and “be in harmony”; whereas the character “入” can mean “enter”, “into”, “join”, “conform to”, and “agree with”, etc. I adopt the English phrase of “fitting in” to capture participants’ speaking of “融入”.

It is evident that “fitting in” has been used both as a verb and a noun in participants’ talk at various times and places. When it was used as a verb, participants describe “fitting in” as their effort or action for change, whereas when it is used as a noun, “fitting in” is more like a position or situation they think of as a goal or outcome for them to achieve in New Zealand. More so, despite its various meanings, “fitting in” has been seen as a major problem in their experience in New Zealand whether it is an action or an outcome. The problematic “fitting in” is constructed through construing differences between themselves and others. The differences are manifest in two aspects. First is from the perspective of culture, participants construct cultural differences to make sense of their experienced difficulties in communications. The second is from the perspective of power relations. In this regard, participants

draw upon the discourse of “power difference” to make sense of their experience of discrimination (e.g., in employment and negative media report). Furthermore, the construction of a problematic “fitting in” leads participants to negotiate new positive meanings for how to deal with social relations in New Zealand.

Dealing with cultural differences in inter-group communication

The English language has often been viewed as the barrier to efficient inter-group communication (e.g., Ward, 2001). It is evident participants first see English language as a barrier to their fitting in. The following extract illustrates how participants draw upon this view to explain their experience of difficulties in employment.

“I know many Chinese migrants here with very good educational background and working experience have difficulties in getting employment. I think the reason is that they cannot speak fluent English. They cannot even explain themselves very well. The employers would not waste time on you if they don’t understand what you are talking about. I believe once Chinese migrants overcome the language barrier, it will be no more difficult for them to get jobs than others.” (Mr. X, 40-year-old)

(Extract from Group Five)

The lack of English proficiency is considered as causing difficulties in Chinese migrants’ daily life, workplaces and job market in New Zealand (Ip, 2005). It is clear that participants agree on the importance of English language proficiency for them to be able to communicate adequately with Pakeha people. However, the language barrier is not thought of as the only contributor for poor communication. The nonverbal communication is mentioned as another area that participants find problematic during contact with Pakeha people.

“To communicate effectively with them is more than just overcoming the language barrier. It is also about changing the way you carry yourself, your tone, voice volume, gaze, eye expression, and even the way you sneeze. For example, I notice that it is regarded as rude here if you don’t cover your mouth when sneezing. But the Chinese people are not used to do that. So these are all the things we now have to deal with.” (Mr L., 43-year-old)

(Extract from Group Five)

Above extract gives a glimpse into participants' experience of subtle changes in ways of non-verbal communication, such as eye expression. It has been pointed out that every society has its own "unspoken assumptions about 'normal' ways of speaking, thinking and feeling, which may reveal themselves, often quite painfully, in the experience of immigrants" (Wierzbicka, 2005, p124). The different rules for speaking, thinking and feeling are often linked with different ways of behaving. This applies, most obviously, to non-verbal communication (Wierzbicka, 2005). Participants' talk in the above extract clearly illustrates this point made by Wierzbicka.

In addition, young participants speak of their common experience in having no problem in discussing "superficial" or "work-related" topics with Pakeha colleagues. However, they find difficulty in generating or maintaining conversations with Pakeha in casual social activities, such as during breaks at work, after-work gathering or at parties, especially when there are more people together. Participants mention many occasions when they are unable to understand jokes or engage in casual conversations with Pakeha people because of a lack of understanding of the social topics (e.g., rugby, TV dramas, and celebrities). Below are examples of participants' talk around their experiences in this regard.

"My colleagues and I have no difficulty in communication when we talk about work stuff. It is when we go out for drinks that the problem comes up. We have nothing to talk about. I don't get their jokes." (Mr. X, 40-year-old)

"I was often invited to go to those parties in my supervisor's house when I was doing my PhD a few years ago in XX city. I felt obliged to go, even though I did not enjoy those parties at all. I don't understand how they (Pakeha people) can just stand there, holding a glass of wine, and talking about their dogs for hours. We have nothing in common to talk about." (Ms. J, 43-year-old)

(Extract from Group Five)

Wierzbicka (2005) points out that the meanings of words reflect shared ways of thinking prevailing in a given society, which can be foreign to outsiders and newcomers, like migrants. She suggests that by listening to the voices of migrants and other 'crossers of cultural boundaries', we can better appreciate how words matter in

people's lives. Wierzbicka (2005) illustrates this point by the word "dobbing". According to her, to be a successful immigrant to Australia one has to learn the concept of 'dobbing'. This means that one doesn't have to start using the words *dob in* and *dobber* oneself, but one has to learn to understand the 'local' way of thinking reflected in them.

This view is resonated in the participants' discussion about the role of meanings of words played in communication.

"I think communication is not limited to the form of language. The meaning conveyed in the language is more important. For example, right now we are speaking in Chinese in this group discussion. What if we are required to discuss this topic in English? Wouldn't it be more difficult for us to do so? The point I am making is that we have to think before we speak. Speaking English requires us to think differently....." (Ms. W, 27-year-old)

"I agree. I think there is more to it. There are cultural differences in ways of thinking and meaning expression... .." (Mr. Z, 31-year-old)

(Extract from Group Three)

Here participants attribute the communication difficulty with other cultural groups to the impact of the different ways of thinking on the communication. As Kim (2001) points out, knowledge of the English language functions to enable newcomers to access the accumulated records of the host culture and to learn to think in the way the native speakers think. It is evident that participants point to "cultural difference" to make sense of the difficult experience. Participants see "the lack of shared experience" as the main reason for their inadequate communication with Pakeha people. This is further explicated in the following extracts derived from two participants from different focus groups.

"Lots of social conversations involve cultural and historical backgrounds. If you don't have those understandings, it will be very hard to engage in conversations. For instance, they can laugh at jokes, but I wouldn't have a clue why a joke is funny even though I understand the literal meaning of the joke. After all, we grew up in different cultures and societies... .. it may become easier for us to understand their way of thinking as we stay on here longer"(Ms J., 43-year-old)

(Extract from Group Five)

“We are already grown-up when we came here. There are more than 30 years of different experiences in our lives. We don’t share all those early years of experiences in life. It has been missed out. So it is understandable that we cannot communicate well with them. It is the reality we have to accept. There is nothing we can do to change it.” (Mr. X, 40-year-old)

(Extract from Group One)

More so, participants draw upon cultural difference to explain their situation of job difficulty. For example, young participants often speak of themselves unfavourably compared with the local Chinese in terms of job opportunities. They talk about that local born or grown up Chinese have no difficulties in getting jobs as they are already “acculturated” into the mainstream culture.

“When the employers review the CVs of job applicants, they will immediately tell whether you are a local or not just by looking at the high school the applicant graduated from. For those Chinese who grew up and went through the school system here, they are just as local as others. They have local friends, networks and so on. So there is no cultural difference for them to adjust to in the workplace. They are already part of the mainstream society. Unlike us, we came from a different country. We are *wai lai ren* (outsiders).” (Mr. X., 28-year-old)

(Extract from Group Three)

The above talk shows how participants construct difference between themselves and others in a way to position themselves in a disadvantaged position compared with local Chinese. The way of seeing fitting in as a process of “acculturation” seems to put participants in a disadvantaged position as they consider themselves as less acculturated than local Chinese and culturally different from the locals.

By constructing this inter-group communication difficulty as the result of lacking in shared cultural experience lead participants to construct the difference as resulting in problematic “fitting in” . This seems to work for them to make sense of their experience of interaction with other cultural groups. Seeing the communication difficulty from a cultural perspective seems to ease the blame on themselves for the

inefficient communication because the dominant discourse is around migrants' lack of English skills to account for the communication difficulty.

It is pointed out that in Chinese culture, language and communication serve the function not so much to assert individual self or identity as to seek to maintain and strengthen relationships, thereby achieving social and communal harmony (Chen & Chen, 2004). Here, the drawing upon the discourse of "shared experience" to account for their experience of interaction with other groups can be better understood given the Chinese perspective on proper social relations. As introduced earlier, in Chinese culture, *guanxi* (关系) is one of the keys to social interaction. *Guanxi* refers to "the network of mutual obligations that bind people together". In other words, the interpersonal relationship of Chinese people is reciprocal and based on mutual obligations to a large extent. It is clear that this kind of *guanxi* is not seen as established during their interaction with Pakeha people. As a result, this lack of "shared experience" or *guanxi* is used to explain their intercommunication difficulties.

Furthermore, participants' accounts exemplify the viewpoint that a particular language reflects shared cultural understandings. This means that a common word or expression carries a particular attitude or assumption shared by a cultural group. "Language is not only a medium of a culture; it constitutes it as well" (Ali, 2004, p. 342). "A culture can be discovered in its language, but the significance of some aspects of language can only be appreciated by recognizing the cultural assumptions they embody" (Stratton, 1998, p. 157, cited in Ali, 2004). Therefore, it is apparent that participants see themselves do not share the meaning of that word or expression, and hence, do not share the understanding of the attitude or assumption reflected in it.

Dealing with power differences in inter-group relationships

Participants' accounts also show they construct the problematic "fitting in" from a perspective of power to explain their experience in New Zealand. In this regard, their talk revolves around the discourses on "the mainstream society", and the relation between ethnic minority groups and the dominant group in New Zealand society.

It is apparent that participants' understanding of experience in this regard

involves constructing meanings of New Zealand society, as well as their positions relating to others in New Zealand. The understandings of New Zealand society revolve around their discussion about the notion of “mainstream”, whereas participants’ understandings of how they relate to others are embedded in their perceived power relations of different groups in New Zealand.

When participants speak of New Zealand society as having a mainstream, their understanding of problematic fitting in is construed in terms of how to fit into the mainstream society and their talk of interacting with others centres on how to deal with Pakeha people. However, it is clear that fitting into this mainstream is problematic for participants. The perception of stereotyping and discrimination is drawn upon to make sense of the problematic fitting in. This is shown in the following.

“There are not many job interview opportunities for Chinese job applicants these days. When the employers see the name on the CV appear to be Chinese name, sometimes they don’t even give us interview opportunities. It may be partly because our English is not good enough and they feel they can’t communicate with us. But I think a lot of times it is because they have bias on us and we are discriminated against.” (Mr X, 28-year-old)

“They are scared that we are taking away their jobs. That’s why they are protective of their own people, especially Maori.” (Ms. Y, 27-year-old)

“It is so hard for us to fit into the mainstream society. The media depicts us so negatively. If we make the same mistakes as Pakeha or Maori people do, they would exaggerate our wrongdoing. It is unfair.” (Mr. Z, 31-year-old)

.....

“We are a disadvantaged group in society. We are in a worse position than the ingenious Maori people. We don’t have the power.” (Mr X, 28-year-old)

(extract from Group Three)

It is clear apart from taking account of the lack of English proficiency and communication difficulty in contributing to their job difficulties, participants draw upon the discourse around stereotyping and discrimination against Asian migrants in

the mainstream society, particularly in the job market and the media to explain their difficulty in fitting in. Another way participants understand their difficulty in getting employment is by drawing upon the “economic competitors’ discourse (e.g., “the local people are scared we would take their jobs away. They are protective of their own people”). Ip and Murphy (2005) note that in New Zealand, Asian people have always been regarded as economic competitors of Europeans. Early Asian settlers have undertaken menial jobs and worked hard at the bottom of the society. As a result, they have been looked down upon. In contemporary times, more recent Asian migrants are better off than their early settlers, and are expected to establish international links and strengthen the export market to benefit New Zealand’s economy. However, Asian people are still seen as competitors for jobs, and increasingly as competitors for social and natural resources. Also Ip (2006)’s work shows this perception of “competitors” is more pronounced among the indigenous Maori people than among the Pakeha people.

As pointed out by Ip (2005), fitting in New Zealand society has always had an implicit meaning of assimilation into the mainstream culture. Asian minorities in New Zealand have generally totally assimilated and largely abandoned their culture and identity due to their small number and low profile. She further illustrates this by pointing out the fact that very few local born Chinese were literate in their mother tongue by the 1970s. The implication is that although it has never been explicit as a policy, to assimilate into the New Zealand mainstream culture (middle-class white culture) has been expected of Asian migrants as their adjustment in New Zealand society (Ip, 2005).

Participants construct the power difference between themselves and others to explain their experience of social interaction with others. It is clear that participants see themselves as in a disadvantaged socio-political position compared to both the dominant group and the indigenous group while recognizing that Maori people are also being disadvantaged in today’s New Zealand society due to the colonization history.

So far, the above analysis shows how “fitting in” has been constructed as a problematic issue for participants when they construction cultural differences and power differentials between them and other groups (Pakeha and Marori) in New

Zealand. The problem with “fitting in” is seen as a dilemma faced by participants. On the one hand, participants attempt to fit in; on the other hand, they recognize there are limitations to achieve “fitting in”. It is evident that participants start to negotiate new meanings for “fitting in” to address their problem with the discourse of fitting into the mainstream society.

First, participants resist the notion of “the mainstream” by drawing up the multicultural discourse of New Zealand society. This is shown in the following:

“I don’t see New Zealand have a mainstream society. New Zealand is a country of migrants. It is multicultural. There are just many different people forming different social circles. You just need to socialize in your own circle and connect to the circles around you. You don’t have to try to fit in the mainstream.” (Mr L., 43-year-old)

(extract from Group Five)

Participants draw upon the discourse of multiculturalism to reject the notion of a mainstream culture. Participants see the multiculturalism as a positive aspect of New Zealand. Participants see themselves as well as other ethnic groups as comprising a significant part of the society. Therefore, participants reject the common sense understanding of fitting into the mainstream as the goal for the successful adjustment of ethnic minority groups in western societies. In light of this, participants construct their contact with the dominant group as well as other Chinese in New Zealand.

“Contacting with Pakeha people can be helpful in adjusting to life in New Zealand. For example, at the beginning of the settlement, you can go to Kiwi church to gain information about the society and communicate with them to improve your English. They have more experiences in some aspects of life than us, like how to sort out insurance, how to fix cars. These will be useful for us.” (Mr X., 40-year-old)

“I don’t think we have to force ourselves to enter their social circle. It is fine as long as we can communicate with them about work-related stuff at workplace. But we don’t have to socialize with them.” (Ms J, 43-year-old)

(extract from Group Five)

The above shows that participants start to shift their attention to social relations with non-dominant groups (non-Pakeha others) in society and seek new

meanings for their “fitting in”. In this regard, participants question about the possibility of fully fitting into the mainstream. As mention above, the lack of shared experience is considered as the main reason for the inefficient communication with Pakeha people. Participants draw upon the “cultural difference” during their interaction with Pakeha people to construct the goal to fit into the mainstream as problematic.

Here participants construct the meaning for their contact with Pakeha people as instrumental. It seems that participants’ emphasis on maintaining a harmonious relationship with the dominant group is not because they value harmony but it is used as a means for their fitting into the society. Leung, Koch and Lu (2002) point out that the instrumental nature of “harmony” has been overlooked. By using the term of “instrumental”, they emphasize the practical importance of harmony. Harmony is more seen as a means to help people achieve other goals rather than as an end *per se*.

Although maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship is widely observed in social interaction among people from collectivistic cultures, the notion of harmony needs to be examined more closely. It has been pointed out that the notion of harmony may be overemphasized for its value perspective rather than its instrumental perspective. Participants’ above accounts show that the discourse of “harmony” is adopted to achieve their individual goal for better adjustment in New Zealand, rather than they hold onto the notion of harmny because they ‘believe in’ it.

Second, participants construct the “fitting into the mainstream” as unnecessary. A participant talks about her experience of interacting with colleagues at work.

“Well, I don’t think it is necessary to fit into Pakeha people’s social circle. To force yourself to fit in will only make both yourself and other people feel uncomfortable. We can develop our own social circle and socialize within our own circle. For example, in the company I am working for, employees are from more than twenty countries. Some colleagues are from UK and they speak fluent English. During breaks, they will just get together and won’t show interest in chatting with others. If we tried to engage in conversation with them, they would slow down their speech. That would make themselves feel uncomfortable. At the same time, we would look quite stupid if forcing ourselves to talk to them, and only to find out that they are not

that interested in talking to you at all. But I must admit they are very supportive at work. So after a while, I realize that efficient communication is more than just language. In fact we don't have common topics to talk about. So we began to form our own social group. In our social group we have Chinese, Indians, Sri Lankans, and Koreans. We enjoy talking to each other. So I think we don't have to force ourselves to enter into their social circle." (Ms L, 40-year-old)

(extract from Group Five)

The above account illustrates how participants come to see the cultural difference in communication and how they construct a sense of community ("our own social group") to share common experiences. It is clear that they point to the importance of interacting with other Chinese and other ethnic groups for their social interaction.

Another important area of negotiation of social relations from the perspective of power is how to deal with the negative image of Chinese in the dominant discourse in New Zealand, because the notion of "Asian invasion" has its place in New Zealand mainstream society. As an example, the leader of New Zealand First Party, Winston Peter, has always demonstrated his negative view on Asian migrants. He used the term of "Asian invasion" in public to demonstrate his negative view on New Zealand's immigration policy regarding Asian migrants in 2002. Ip and Murphy (2005) point out that while no one has yet clearly defined what 'New Zealand identity' is, most people seem to accept that Asians do not 'have' New Zealand identity. Asian migrants are often looked upon as the very antithesis of New Zealand culture. The discourses of "they don't mix and keep to themselves", "They don't speak English" are often found in the description of Asian migrants in the media. It is clear that participants are aware of the negative view of Asian migrants in New Zealand in their account. One strategy they use to offset this negative image seems to be by drawing upon the discourse of "harmony" to explain their position in New Zealand society.

"I think Chinese people as a group are very flexible. We can adapt ourselves to everywhere we go. We don't invade other cultures and we just live harmoniously with others. Harmony is the way we live by. This helps us to deal with difficulties in life as migrants." (Ms. P, 43-year-old)

(extract from Group Two)

Above extract shows how participants react to the dominant discourse of “Asian invasion” by drawing upon the discourse of traditional Chinese value for harmony to counter the negative image of Chinese. Influenced by Confucian thought, Chinese culture values the maintenance of a harmonious relationship during social interaction with others. As a result, conflicts are avoided by all means. It is clear that this Chinese notion of harmony is drawn upon by participants to explain how their interaction with other groups in New Zealand should be conducted.

Drawing upon positive aspects

Another way participants deal with the problematic “fitting in” is to construct positive meanings in their adjusting to the social life in New Zealand. The following conversation illustrates how the group of elderly participants co-construct positive meanings to deal with the problematic fitting in.

“We can’t fit into the mainstream society, but neither do we should be the burden of the society. So we need to do our best to learn the language even though we can survive here without speaking English.” (Mr. H, 74-year-old)

“Right, learning English can help us to understand the New Zealand society and then later maybe we can contribute to the society, like doing voluntary work. I see many elderly volunteers in hospital.” (Ms. M, 66-year-old)

“New Zealand has a very safe environment for us to live. Unlike some countries such as Indonesia, Chinese are against, even outcast there. New Zealand government treats us very well. It provides us elderly people with benefits. It gives us the means to overcome hardships.” (Mr. G, 70-year-old)

“That’s right. If I was in the US and my daughter maltreated me like this, I would have long gone back to China. We don’t have to depend on our children for support here. The New Zealand government is very supportive of us.” (Mr. Z, 68-year-old)

... ..

“It is easily for us to feel lonely here because we are so far away from our home country and we can’t fit into the mainstream society. The most important thing to

overcome loneliness is to seeking for things that interest you. Don't isolate yourself from others." (Mr. H, 74-year-old)

"Coming here to learn English is a great way for us to socialize with each other. We can make friends here. We can also exchange useful information to help us adjust to the life here. Like my classmate can let me know where to buy the fresh Chinese vegetables. We can create our social circle." (Ms. M, 66-year-old)

(Extract from Group Four)

It is evident that elderly participants tend to speak positively about the New Zealand government. They compare New Zealand government favorably against other countries. At the same time, participants express their reluctance of being constructed as a "burden" for the mainstream. In New Zealand, a prevalent discourse around elderly migrants is that they are the burden of the welfare system of New Zealand, as they do not contribute to the local economy. The talk of elderly participants illustrates they construct meanings for their adjustment in relation to this dominant discourse about elderly migrants' dependency on the welfare. The way participants resist being depicted as "burden" is to focus on their self-reliance. They speak of learning English language as an attempt to be able to communicate with local people so as to not depend on their children, although the English language proficiency is not seen as their goal or crucial for their fitting in. For instance, participants talk about they attend English language classes to learn what they call "survival English", the basic everyday English for communicating with others in New Zealand (e.g., being able to ask the price in the supermarket). Elderly participants see learning English as a means for self-reliance and autonomy which are regarded as important for their adjustment. Also, actively seeking social support from peer Chinese is also seen as important to overcome the feeling of loneliness.

Further, elderly participants emphasize the importance of self-respect in dealing with other groups in society. This is showed in the following.

"It is difficult for us to overcome the English language barrier. But we shouldn't be shamed of that. English is their first language, while Chinese is our first language. It would be very hard for them to learn Chinese as well, not mention to traditional Chinese poem. So we shouldn't look down upon ourselves, or think of us as inferior to them just because we came from a poor country. As a matter of fact, from my

observation, I found their medical care system is no better than ours. They heavily rely on medical equipment. But we have a much bigger population and thus have more complicated cases. The doctors in China see many more patients and are much more experienced than the doctors here. Therefore, everything has two sides. Good thing can turn bad, and bad thin can turn good.” (Mr. G, 70-year-old)

(extract from Group Four)

The above extract is derived from an elderly participant who used to be a medical doctor in China. He draws on the differences in medical systems between China and New Zealand to allow participants to be aware of the strength in Chinese migrants.

More so, elderly participants see the local people as friendly and law abiding which they see is lacking in Chinese people. For example, they mention about the values for honesty and trustworthiness in New Zealand society. Therefore, elderly participants do not see themselves as disadvantaged or marginalized, on the contrary they are very conscious of the impact of traditional feudal system on the morality of Chinese migrants. As a result, they point out that Chinese migrants have lots to learn from the mainstream culture in New Zealand.

So far, the analysis has shown participants’ construction of “fitting in” concerns how migrants have to negotiate their places in relation to the dominant group in New Zealand. When Chinese community is taken into consideration as an important social arena for migrants’ participation in society, participants start to challenge the narrowed meaning of “fitting in”. Participants of all age groups share the view of building a strong Chinese community for their “fitting in”.

“The Chinese population is rapidly increasing in New Zealand. This is the biggest help for us to adjust to life in here. In the old days, there were not many Chinese in New Zealand and they were scattered and surrounded by them (Pakeha people). Now it is the opposite. Look at Northcote, there are so many Chinese here. Many services have Chinese people working there, like the bank, supermarket. We have our Chinese supermarket too. We can buy anything we want from China. The prices are going down too. So life here becomes easier and easier for us.” (Mr. H, 74-year-old)

(extract from Group four)

It is clear that participants emphasize the importance of Chinese factor in New Zealand for their adjustment. “The arrival of new Chinese migrants since 1990s witnessed much more concerted effort to enhance the “Chineseness” of the community” (Ip, 2003). There are local Chinese radio stations, newspapers, TV stations established in Auckland. They all appear to be well subscribed, especially by new migrants who do not usually use the English language media.

More importantly, participants consider that socializing with other Chinese migrants and developing stronger Chinese communities as a way of for emotional support. For those participants who have very limited English skills, Chinese community is regarded as particularly important for them.

In this way, “fitting in” as an outcome is no longer seen as a one-way process towards assimilating into the mainstream society, rather is regarded a negotiation between the mainstream and the ethnic community. The new meaning for “fitting in” can be seen as living in harmony while keeping differences.

In summary, this part of analysis shows that participants make sense of their aspects of experience in relation to different “others” by negotiating the meaning of “融入” (fitting in). It seems “fitting in” is problematic for participants as there are no clear or consensual understandings about “fitting in”. However, what is evident is that participants attempt to negotiate the meaning of “fitting in” through constructing meanings for New Zealand society as well as through constructing their interaction with other groups. The outcome of “fitting in” is achieved through the negotiation between mainstream society and Chinese community, a negotiation of finding and maintaining one’s proper places among others, and more importantly, a negotiation of differences between themselves and others. It has been pointed out that a collectivistic culture values “fitting in” which is in contrast to an individualistic culture in which “standing out” and uniqueness is valued. People from a collectivistic culture value group harmony, and face-saving to a greater extent, and they are less willing to engage in activities that might be seen as disruptive to the larger group. Therefore, Chinese participants’ emphasis of “fitting in” in making sense of their experience can be seen as embodying a cultural way of making sense.

Conclusion

The analysis shows how participants make sense of their experiences of changes in life in New Zealand from two aspects. First, participants construct meanings for their adjustment in relation to the event of migration. Second, participants construct meanings for their adjustment in terms of “fitting in” New Zealand society. I argue that participants construct ‘alternative’ meanings to the dominant western cultural discourses of migrants’ experience of adjustment in both these two aspects. More specifically, my analysis focuses on making the following points:

First and foremost, life in New Zealand is constructed by Chinese migrants as a process of negotiating loss and gain, which differs from the dominant understanding of adjustment as a process of coping with stress. Negotiation of loss and gain is seen as a way of living and a way to approach life changes in Chinese culture. This indicates that participants make sense of their experience of migration by drawing upon Chinese cultural meanings. The ways participants draw upon Chinese cultural understandings can be seen as reflecting a ‘Chinese way’ of being and doing. The analysis shows that participants make use of a large number of Chinese idioms and proverbs in their account to explain their experience. Tseng et al (2005) note that in Asian culture people customarily use proverbs in their daily lives, particularly in times of distress, as philosophical guides to coping with their problems. Proverbs are often cited in daily conversations, in writing, in formal speech, and in folk or professional counselling. Since proverbs are commonly known, they are powerful instruments by which to convey the thoughts and meanings they contain. It is a common practice in China for people to use proverbs, sayings to make sense of their difficulties in life (Tseng et al., 2005).

Second, life in New Zealand is seen as a process of negotiating their social interactions to make sense the meanings of fitting in New Zealand society. Participants’ understandings of fitting in raise questions about the dominant understanding in this regard in western culture, in which fitting in is considered as the preferred acculturative strategy and outcome. Chinese participants would be regarded as “integrationist” according to Berry’s acculturation theory, because they appear to hold positive ‘attitudes’ towards Chinese culture as well as show a willingness to

participate in the host society. This would imply a change in their values and beliefs according to Berry's acculturation theory. However, the analysis illustrates that participants' account suggest they still draw on Chinese cultural understanding to explain their "fitting in" behaviour. This means that they may not have changed their Chinese values in order to elicit the behavioural change. This phenomenon has been pointed out as a discrepancy between 'values' and 'behaviours' in the acculturation process (Kim, 2001, Chen & Davenport, 2005). Kim (2001) argues that values and behavioural dimensions represent two distinct process of acculturation. For example, a Chinese migrant who appears behaviourally to be acculturated into western society does not necessarily mean his or her values have changed from traditional ones (Chen & Davenport, 2005). Clearly, my analysis shows that the construction of acculturation as the universal psychological process for migrants needs to be problematised.

Third, the analysis shows that participants construct meanings of strengths to make sense of their problematic experience of migration and fitting in. The strengths are drawn upon from Chinese cultural discourses (e.g., "loss is accompanied by gain") as well as the discourses in New Zealand society (e.g., "multiculturalism"). Participants are able to make the positive out of the apparent negative side of their experiences to achieve a more balanced view of their experience in New Zealand.

Last but not the least, the analysis suggests that Chinese migrants make sense of their experiences in a dialectic way. The dialectic way manifests itself not only in the way they deal with the loss and gain brought out by migration (as showed in the first part of analysis on how participants negotiate loss and gain), but also in the way they deal with the changed social relations among themselves as well as other groups (the second part of analysis on how to negotiate social relations with different others). In a sense, this dialectic way of sense-making can be considered as influenced by both Daoistic thought and Confucian thought in traditional Chinese culture. Daoism teaches people see change as circular as a way to deal with life changes, particularly negative life changes. In contrast Confucian thought emphasizes the "golden mean" and "fitting in" which teaches harmony as the way to deal with social relations. In a similar way, the concept of a dialectical self has been used to describe people from East Asian cultures, including Chinese to demonstrate their ways of dealing with

changes in life (Spencer-Rodgers et al, 2009). From this perspective, Chinese traditional cultural knowledge provides valuable resources for people to make sense and deal with both sides of change. This means that while these Chinese people have migrated to New Zealand, they still can draw upon Chinese cultural meanings to make sense of their life in the new cultural context.

In my view, the dialectic way of sense-making derived from Chinese traditional culture can also be used as a framework to better understand (which I have demonstrated in the above analysis) as well as work with Chinese migrants in psychological intervention (this will be explored in the next part of this research—Part Two) to help them better make sense of their experiences in a new country.

Part Two: Applying psychological intervention with recent Chinese migrants

This part of research concerns the exploration and application of psychological intervention work with recent Chinese migrants in New Zealand.

Chapter Five: Chinese encounter of psychotherapy

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of Chinese people's encounter of psychotherapy. First, I present an overview of how Chinese migrants' use of psychotherapy is constructed through their help-seeking behavior in western countries. Second, I review the major psychotherapeutic approaches to working with Chinese in western countries. Last, I take a look at Chinese people's use of western psychotherapy in China both historically and currently to situate Chinese migrants' experience in their homeland.

Making sense of Chinese migrants' under-utilization of psychotherapy

With the rapid growing population of non-western migrants in western countries, increasing attention has been drawn to their mental health. As pointed out earlier, non-western migrants often experience life changes in socio-economic status, language proficiency, family relations, social interactions with other groups, and so on. All these changes are seen as stressful and can put migrants' mental health at risk (e.g., Bhugra, 2004). Accordingly, research on mental health of non-western migrants has traditionally focused on their emotional distresses associated with migration, as well as their utilization of mainstream mental health services. This type of research often suggests that migrants in western countries tend to underutilize the mainstream mental health services (e.g., Breaux & Ryujin, 1999, Fung & Wong, 2007, Nadeem et al., 2007).

In making sense of this underutilization, most research has focused on the barriers to access mainstream mental health services. Apart from practical barriers, such as low socio-economic status, English language difficulties, several factors have often been implicated in their help-seeking patterns, including high levels of stigma regarding the use of mental health care, low awareness of mental health services, lack of culturally and linguistically responsive mental health services, different cultural values and beliefs, and use of other formal (i.e., medical, social services, alternative healing practices) and informal help (family and friends) before mainstream mental health services are sought (e.g., Barrett et al., 2003, Chan, 2003, Chiu, 2004, Daley,

2005, Hong & Ham, 2001; Fung & Wong, 2007, Kim & Omizo, 2003, Nadeem et al., 2007, Hsiao et al., 2006, Hwang et al., 2008, Yeo, 2004).

The literature on Chinese migrants' help-seeking behavior is mostly located in the United States (Kung, 2003). These studies suggest like other ethnic minority groups, American Chinese underutilize mainstream mental health services (e.g., Yeung & Chang, 2002, Kung, 2003, Kung, 2004, Kung & Tseng, 2006). Often Chinese culture factors are drawn upon to explain for this underutilization (Kung, 2004).

It is said that Chinese have a holistic view of the mind and body in understanding health. In traditional Chinese understanding of health, body and mind are not separate but two distinctly different aspects of the same life force *qi*, with the body serving as the root of the mind. Therefore, there is no classification of physical and mental health in traditional Chinese culture, and the mind is seen as an external factor (manifest in emotions) to exert influence on health (Bond, 1996). Also it is claimed that Chinese people do not conceptualise their problems in emotional terms. In this regard, the prevailing discourses are around the tendency of somatization in Chinese expression of emotional distress (Kung & Tseng, 2006). The "somatization" is often interpreted as a function of the traditional Chinese healing system (traditional Chinese medicine) which encourages people to define their psychosocial problem somatically and search for Chinese medicine practitioners for help (Chung & Wong, 2004). In turn, the "somatization" often leads to the interpretation that Chinese tend to hold in emotions, emotionally inhibited and unwilling to seek help compared to westerners (e.g., Tsai et al., 2004). This is further interpreted as evidenced by the focus on the harmony with social and natural world in traditional Chinese Confucian and Daoism thoughts. All these interpretations of Chinese culture raise questions as to whether the western 'talk therapy' focusing on emotions and feelings can be applied to working Chinese population who are seen as "emotionally inhibited".

Indeed, the Chinese tendency to 'somatization' can be explained from the perspective of language use. In Chinese language it is common to use body-related verbal expression to describe a wide range of personal and social concerns, including

feelings, thoughts, and images (Ye, 2002). For example, the Chinese term 生气 (*sheng qi*) means “feeling angry”, however it literally means ‘producing qi’ in Chinese language. 上火 (*shang huo*) is to describe the state of irritability and frustration, but it literally means “over heating”. Another example, one of the phrases for happy (happiness) is 开心 (*kai xin*) which literally means “open the heart”. These examples vividly illustrate how Chinese people express their emotions through bodily language.

However, it is important to recognize that in Chinese language, proverbs and metaphors are commonly used. This means that the use of bodily phrases is a metaphor for how one is feeling, rather than a reference to the organs of the body (Yu, 2002). As Yu (2002) point out, although 开心 (“open the heart”) is so commonly used in Chinese culture that few Chinese speakers would fail to understand, it is used to express the feeling of happiness rather than taking its literal meaning. Yet this may be mistaken as somatic complaints when someone is not familiar with the language and cultural expressions of this kind. Yu (2008) further notes the Chinese use of body terms to express emotion is associated with traditional Chinese philosophical thinking and traditional Chinese medicine. In light of this, the impression that Chinese tend to somatize their emotional problems can be seen as a result of the westerners’ unfamiliarity with the Chinese language use and cultural connotations.

Meanwhile, it is elsewhere noted that Chinese cultural meanings of dealing with problems also mainly take the form of philosophical sayings (e.g., Confucius and Daoistic sayings), proverbs and metaphors, which are rooted in practical terms in Chinese language (Cheung, Gan & Lo, 2005). Therefore, a closer look at the metaphorical/symbolic use of language characteristic in Chinese culture suggests working with Chinese need to take a different form of language that is used to construct their experiences. More importantly, this view suggests it is simplistic to reject the western “talk” therapy just because of its focus on feelings and emotions.

To sum up, a vast of research demonstrates Chinese migrants tend to under-utilize psychological intervention in western countries, and this can be related to specific cultural ways of expressing and speaking emotions and experiences. In the

following, I will review the major psychotherapeutic approaches to working with Chinese in western countries.

Western psychotherapeutic approaches to working with Chinese

In general, much less research has been done on the psychotherapeutic work with migrant populations in comparison to the dominant group in Western society. The limited psychotherapeutic work with migrants has mainly been conducted in the field of cross-cultural psychotherapy and counseling. Research in this field has focused on cultural knowledge as well as cultural competency on the part of therapists to work with culturally different clients (e.g., Sue, 1998, 2003, 2006). More so, there is much debate around the appropriateness and efficacy of western-style psychotherapy for non-western migrants.

Many western psychotherapeutic approaches, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), family therapy, psychodynamic and humanistic approach, have been used in working with Chinese migrants in psychological intervention in western countries (Hong & Ham, 2001). However, the rationales of these commonly known psychotherapies are seen as based on such western values as individuation, self-control, and self-efficacy (Kirmayer, 2007), whereas Chinese culture is regarded as more collectivistic oriented. As a result, continued controversies exist as to whether such 'western products' work in the Chinese context. For those who support the use of western psychotherapy to work with the Chinese population, the importance of modifying western psychotherapies has been emphasized (e.g., Hwang, 2006). Therefore, increasing research is looking at how to take consideration of Chinese cultural values and beliefs in psychotherapeutic work with Chinese.

In this regard, there is research to support the effectiveness of western psychotherapy with Chinese clients. CBT, among them, has been given the most credit to working with Chinese (e.g., Hwang et al., 2006, Chen & Davenport, 2005, Shen et al., 2006, Wong & Sun, 2006, Wong et al., 2007, Wong, 2009). Particularly, CBT has been pointed out to have features that may be compatible with Chinese values and beliefs (e.g., Chen & Davenport, 2005, Hodges & Oei, 2007, Shen et al, 2006). According to Hodges and Oei (2007), there are similarities between traditional Chinese value of Confucianism value and CBT. For example, CBT typically provides

time-limited, structured treatment that is based on an educational model and focuses on problem solving. This is consistent with the Chinese value on learning and education. Furthermore, CBT regimens do not require in-depth discussion of developmental experiences or intrapsychic conflicts, and therefore may be better suited to a culture that values emotional restraint (Kim, Atkinson, & Umemoto, 2001). This view is supported by research which shows Chinese clients rate therapists more positively if they display a directive as opposed to a nondirective style (Li & Kim, 2004) and if they provide an immediate resolution to problems as opposed to focusing on insight and exploration (Kim & Atkinson, 2002). Another study shows that in Asian Americans, behavioural acculturation occurs more rapidly than value acculturation such that three successive generations of Chinese living in the United States (US) displayed significant differences on a behavioural measure, but none on a value measure (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999). These authors suggest that while Asian Americans may adopt the behaviours of the US culture, which are needed to survive, they may maintain their Asian cultural values indefinitely. This further implies that in working with the Chinese migrants in psychological intervention, caution needs to be taken about the potential discrepancy between behaviors and values because many Chinese migrants may still hold traditional Chinese values, and their values and beliefs need to be taken into consideration (Chen & Davenport, 2005; Kim et al., 1999).

To sum up, there is research to support the effectiveness of western psychotherapy with the Chinese population. More so, the support for the use of modified western psychotherapy is not just occurring in the west, but also happening in China. The following section looks at Chinese people's contact with western psychotherapy in China.

Chinese people's contact with western psychotherapy in Contemporary China

Chinese people may have been practicing healing for thousands of years, but the practice of western psychotherapy and counseling is a relatively new phenomenon since it was introduced to China in the 1950s (Yang, 2004). Under the increasing influence of western culture in China, western psychotherapeutic discourse is made available to Chinese and increasingly accepted by Chinese with the public's increased exposure to Western life style as well as ways of expressing and coping with distress

(Yang, 2004). The increasing demand for counseling services in modern Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai has been noted. This appears to contradict popular descriptions of the Chinese as unwilling to disclose personal information to strangers, being prone to psychosomatic presentations and more comfortable with authoritarian, structured interactions with health-care providers, and preferring medical solutions to their problems (Lee, 2002).

Although influenced by western approaches, contemporary Chinese forms of counseling and therapy have attempted to take into account Chinese cultural beliefs, philosophical traditions, and help-seeking practices. For example, indigenous healing approaches, such as tai ji and qi gong, are recommended to be practiced alongside western new therapeutic technologies. The application of a holistic approach to mental health care is consistent with the person's expectations of treatment, as well as traditional Chinese understanding of the interconnections between the mind and the body.

In the meanwhile, interest is growing in developing modified western psychotherapy by taking into account Chinese cultural knowledge which target specifically Chinese people (Lin, 2002, Young et al., 2002). For example, Zhang et al. (2002) combined elements of cognitive therapy with Taoist philosophy and developed Chinese Taoist cognitive psychotherapy for Chinese clients with generalized anxiety disorder which has been shown effective. Chang et al (2005) use an analogy to describe the practice of western counseling and psychotherapy in China: "letting a hundred flowers bloom". That means western approaches are welcome to practice alongside traditional Chinese healings as this is believed to meet the diverse needs of Chinese population, due to geographic, cultural and economic diversity of the Chinese people. For example, more traditional Chinese may derive more benefit from treatments that are a closer cultural match, while more Westernized Chinese may be drawn to those very approaches that represent a departure from traditional value orientations. However, it has been pointed out there is a lack of research on western psychotherapy process and outcome with the Chinese in China compared to the research on Chinese migrants in western countries, therefore it remains unclear how western psychotherapeutic approaches are being interpreted and practiced by the scores of newly trained mental health professionals in China (Chang et al., 2005).

Summary

In summary, although the practice of western psychotherapy is a relatively new phenomenon for Chinese living in China as well as in western countries, there is an increasing demand for psychotherapeutic work with Chinese both in China and abroad. Although western psychotherapy still undergoes a lot of criticism and skepticism as to its suitability for Chinese people, increasing attention has been paid to cultural consideration and modification of the goal and format of psychotherapy to work with Chinese people (e.g., Chen & Davenport, 2005, Lin, 2002). There is growing evidence to support using western psychotherapy with Chinese (or present evidence for the adaptation of western psychotherapy to work with Chinese). With adaptation, western psychotherapy can be used to meet Chinese migrant's mental health needs. More so, there is a call for integration between western approaches and Chinese indigenous approaches to working with the Chinese population.

Chapter Six: Understanding psychotherapy

Introduction

In this chapter, I first introduce a cultural perspective of psychotherapy. From this perspective, I review the conventional approaches to psychotherapy informed by western cultural values. Then, I move on to focus on the implications of a social constructionist approach to psychotherapy under the influence of the postmodern movement in western culture. Here, I look at the major therapeutic approaches to therapy largely informed by social constructionism. Last, I provide an overview of the healings and therapeutic practices in Chinese culture.

Psychotherapy from a cultural perspective

Psychotherapy can be understood in different ways. From a cultural perspective, psychotherapy can be regarded as a cultural practice (Hoshmand, 2006). It reflects cultural ways of valuing as well as ways of knowing. Psychotherapy is inseparable from its social and cultural context. This means that the constructions of the theories, objectives, and methods, as well as practice of psychotherapy are profoundly influenced by the socio-cultural context from which it emerges and in which of is practiced (Ancis, 2004, Hoshmand, 2006).

A number of researchers have noted that psychotherapy is a practice embedded within specific social and cultural context, and western psychotherapy reflects western values and ideologies (e.g., Hoshmand, 2006, McLeod, 2006a, Christopher, 2001, Tseng et al., 2005, Toukmanian & Brouwers, 2001, Wampold, 2001). In western society, psychotherapy has become a taken-for-granted aspect of life. It is seen as offering a means of solving real or potential problems. It has been argued that all aspects of common psychological practice in western society, including the assessment, diagnosis, treatment goals, interventions, concepts of mental health and illness, as well as the underlying theories of personality and development, are developed in western culture and thus reflects western values and ideologies (Christopher, 2001, Toukmanian & Brouwers, 2001).

In addition, it has been noted that the practice of psychotherapy in western society is based on the psychological theories which are mostly driven from clinical

experiences and research of western scholars and clinicians with western European and northern American clients (Tseng et al., 2005). This type of research often argues that western culture is an individualistic-oriented culture, in which self-reliance, self-determination and independency are valued. As a result, mental health is judged by autonomy and independence. Psychologically healthy people are expected to be self-aware, self-determined, and self-interested in western society (Cheung et al., 2005). This leads western psychotherapy to seek for the meanings of distress within the individual, in the person's personal history and idiosyncratic view of the world. Thus the emphasis in psychotherapy is placed on introspection, self-understanding, and self-awareness for change.

Despite the different approaches to psychotherapy, the value of individualism is seen as common in these approaches. Toukmanian and Brouwer (2001) examine three most widely used approaches to psychotherapy in the west, namely psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, and humanistic-existential psychotherapies. According to them, these three traditional approaches share two value orientations that are specific to western culture. First, the individual is given predominance in all these approaches to psychotherapy. Second, human beings are viewed as having self-control and insight towards their internal world. For example, they point out that in the psychodynamic approach, change is considered to occur from the individual's awareness of his or her unconscious processes and thus the goal of therapy is to develop an understanding of self from the perspective of how the current problems are connected with the past. With regard to the cognitive-behavioural approach, psychotherapy is commonly viewed as a learning process in which the client learns to monitor their thoughts and actions, and the goal focuses on helping clients acquire new ways of thinking and behaving. As to the humanistic-existential approach, the idiosyncratic experiences of the individual are emphasized and the goal of therapy is to help clients understand themselves from the viewpoint of their internal world.

Nelson-Jones (2002) calls for multicultural movement in psychotherapy. Multicultural movement in psychotherapy draw our attention to cultural differences in different societies. This multicultural movement arises as a result of the increasing cultural diversity in western societies and a growing need to provide culturally appropriate mental health services to people from different cultural backgrounds

(Draguns, 2002, 2004). Multicultural movement in psychotherapy raises concerns about the appropriateness of applying western value based psychotherapy to people from non-western cultural backgrounds. The critique from the multicultural movement in psychotherapy argues that the traditional approaches to psychotherapy reflect the individualistic value in western culture that may not be adopted by people from non-western cultural backgrounds (e.g., Ivey et al., 2002, Johnson & Nadirshaw, 2002). As a result, there is a calling for cultural awareness in psychotherapy, and this subsequently gives rise to the research field concerning cross-cultural adaption of western psychotherapy to non-western contexts. According to Tseng (2004a), the adaption can be considered from three levels, namely technical, theoretical and philosophical aspects. Technical adjustments in psychotherapy concerns how to modify the skills and techniques in therapy to fit the background of the patient, such as the consideration of the ethnic match between the therapist and client, the cultural communication style, and the selection of the relevant modes and goals of therapy. As to the theoretical adjustment, one example is that the popular theory of personality development in psychoanalytical approach may be subject to cross-cultural modification in order to apply to people from different socio-cultural backgrounds. The philosophical adaption involves the consideration of both the therapist and the client's views and attitudes towards human beings, society, and life, because these are relevant to the key understandings in psychotherapy such as normality, health, problems and solutions to problems. These in turn can shape the course and goals of therapy (Tseng, 2004a).

Therefore, it is evident that in the multicultural movement in psychotherapy, culture is seen as a salient factor to be taken into consideration in the practice of psychotherapy. However, it seems that the issue of culture tends to be addressed in working with people from non-western cultural backgrounds rather than people from western cultural background. For example, McLeod (2006a) points out the growing interest in cultural dimensions within counselling and psychotherapy within the last 20 years in the emergence of multicultural approaches to counselling, primarily has been driven by a paradigmatic worldview. This means "it has largely focused on an analysis of the culture of the "other", most of the time from a rather detached stance" (p. 60).

McLeod (2006a) promotes the idea of seeing counselling and psychotherapy as forms of cultural work. He argues for “the role of counselling or psychotherapy as a means of gaining access to cultural resources that can be used to solve or resolve problems in living, and to construct a life that has meaning and purpose” (p. 48). This process of constructing meanings is seen as a construction of “personal niche” (McLeod, 2006a). McLeod (2006a) uses the notion of the “personal niche”:

“The personal niche is the space in which a person develops his or her interactive effectiveness. By this we mean that actual part of the environment with which they truly relate. In this personal niche, individuals relate to the material environment and to other people.” (p.57)

McLeod (2006a) argues, the notion of the personal niche, as articulated by Willi (1999), provides an immensely valuable means of beginning to make sense of the relationship between the person and his or her cultural environment. McLeod (2006a) has pointed out that “the discourses and practices of psychology have not been consistent with cultural curiosity and the cultivation of cultural resources” (p.59). In his view,

“the perspective on the world that is inculcated by mainstream psychology education and training, results in what Bruner (1986) characterised as a “paradigmatic” way of knowing, based around the application of abstract, timeless, decontextualised categories and if-then formulas, leading to what McAdams (1996) has described as a ‘psychology of the stranger’ ” (p. 59).

Cultural resources, in McLeod (2006a)’s view, can be understood as “the material from which a personal niche can be constructed” (p.53). He goes on to claim that “anything that has meaning to a person can be a cultural resource” (p.53). McLeod gives an example of cultural resources by referring to the Bible. According to him, the Bible is a “highly visible” and “pervasive” cultural resource within western culture, which “provides a way of thinking, a set of narratives, a range of personalities and identities, and a way of talking” (p.53). A person can draw on this cultural resource in many different ways to construct his or her personal niche. Also, there can be many different types of cultural resources that can be used in the construction of a personal niche -- stories, places, objects, art, music, work, sport.

Psychotherapy from a postmodern perspective

In recent years, under the influence of the postmodern movement in western society, the understandings of psychotherapy are undergoing rapid changes. The common-sense of psychotherapy is being challenged by approaches to psychotherapy informed by postmodernism. In the following I look at these approaches to psychotherapy informed by postmodernism in western culture.

Postmodernism (referring to the philosophical movement rather than the artistic movement) offers a broad challenge to the culture, traditions, and practices of the helping professions. It invites us to examine our conventional practices that reflect particular values and assumptions. From a postmodern perspective, western psychotherapy, for much of the 20th century, has been built largely on modernist notions such as the search for universal truths, the possibility of attaining objective knowledge of reality, an emphasis on morally neutral scientific inquiry, and the view that language is representative of reality (Holzman, 2006, Gergen, 2001). Under the influence of postmodern thoughts, the way of doing psychotherapy has been undergoing rapid changes in recent years, such as problem definition, client-therapist relationships, and the process of therapy and therapists' expertise (Johnstone & Dallos, 2006).

Among all the postmodern thoughts, social constructionist perspectives on psychological research and practice are most frequently mentioned in the literature. Social constructionism challenges the "truth" claim of knowledge through its emphases on the social and linguistic invention of knowledge (Burr, 2003, Gergen, 1999, 2009). The implications of social constructionism for psychotherapy have been pointed out at various places by different scholars (e.g., Anderson, 2006a, Warhus, 2001, Hedges, 2005, Morrow, 2007, Parker, 1999, Gergen & Gergen, 2007, Willig, 1999). Psychotherapy, from a social constructionist's view, is a social construction (Gergen & Gergen, 2007). Psychotherapy can help construct new vocabularies through which to construct new worlds of meaning and relationship (Gergen, 2009). In the following I introduce the implications of social constructionism for psychotherapy from two aspects. First is its emphasis on language use and discursive resources, second is the collaborative therapeutic relationship.

First, it can be said that the most important implication of social constructionism for psychotherapy is the changed understanding of language. Language is not seen as a mere medium through which we express ourselves; rather, language can generate and construct new meanings. Social constructionist therapy argues traditional therapy is focally concerned with individual mental states and language is seen as merely reflecting our mental activities. Accordingly, in the social constructionist's approach to therapy, the therapeutic emphasis shifts away from mental exploration, instead, the prevailing concern is how language (discourses) constructs meanings for self and world, and the implications of these constructions for the individual's well-being (Gergen & Gergen, 2007, Hedges, 2005, Neimeyer, Herrero & Botella, 2006, Sinclair, 2007). The assumption of this kind of therapy work is that language not only reflects reality, but also constitutes reality. As McLeod (2004a) argues, psychotherapy needs to "shift from an individualized, psychologized image of the person to a sociocultural or postpsychological perspective". In order to do that, psychotherapy needs to require a new language that would allow discussion of a different type of therapeutic process.

Social constructionists' approach to therapy views therapy as a meaning making process. However, meaning is not located within the mind of individuals, rather it is constructed in the broad socio-cultural and historical context (Strong, 2007). Meanings which prevail in a wider social and cultural context of a society and culture are considered as discursive resources for people to take up and further construct meanings for their experiences. In a social constructionist approach to therapy, people's own understanding (construction) of their experience is given predominance and is regarded as more relevant to their experience than the dominant discourse in society. In this process, people can explore different meanings, searching for those that best empower them in dealing with their circumstances (Anderson, 2006a).

Second, a social constructionist approach to therapy encourages a collaborative therapeutic relationship between therapists and clients. Social constructionism challenges the notion that the therapist is an objective expert on clients' problems. In the collaborative approach, the therapist does not see they have the answer to what is good for the client, neither does the therapist speak from any

position of knowing the truth or owning the knowledge. Rather, the therapist's expertise is in creating a space and facilitating a process for dialogical conversations and collaborative relationships (Anderson, 1997, Anderson, 2006b). The therapy process is one of the joint meaning-making between both parties (Gergen, 1999). In this process, both client and therapist work together to open up new possibilities and choices rather than the therapist attempts to change the client (Anderson, 2006b, Kaye, 2003).

In Anderson's (2006b) view, a postmodern collaborative perspective of therapy is less hierarchical. Greater attention is paid to clients' views of problems and well-being. Clients are seen as unique individuals presented with dilemmas in their life, rather than categorized problems. Kaye (2003) further argues the collaborative approach calls for:

“a greater socio-political awareness on the part of therapists enables people to challenge the truth regimes to which they are subject and in terms of which they govern themselves. From this perspective, while it may be useful to have people reclaim aspects of experience previously marginalized in the interests of conformity to a dominant narrative, it is equally import to set a context in which people are at the same time enabled to examine the effects of dominant socially constructed value constellations and behavior specifications on their lives” (p.237).

In recent years, social constructionism has become a popular theoretical base for several psychotherapeutic approaches, such as discursive therapy (e.g., Avdi, 2005, Strong & Pare, 2004, Willig, 1999,), narrative therapy (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990), solution-focused therapies (O'Connell, 2005). In the following, I take a closer look at several social constructionist informed therapy approaches, namely discursive therapy, narrative therapy and solution-focused narrative.

Discursive therapy

In discursive therapy, psychotherapy is understood as a process of “discourse transformation” (Larner, Rober & Strong, 2004). Discursive therapy aims to help people get beyond accustomed and dominant ways of understanding by introducing new ways of talking and understanding (Larner et al., 2004). In discursive therapy,

the conversation between clients and therapists is seen as a “construction zone” where meanings are constructed in the context of collaborative discourses (Avid, 2005, Strong & Pare, 2004).

Accordingly, the therapist’s role in discursive therapy is seen as offering up a discourse as a resource to construct more helpful meanings. Therapists invite clients to take a critical stance to examine their language use as some discourses can be more helpful than others (Strong & Pare, 2004). In this way, therapy helps clients become more discerning about the words and languages they use in their meaning-making process. Particularly, therapists invite clients to reflect on the negative consequences of dominant discourse they use for representing their experiences, and introduce them to new ways of speaking about their lives (Sinclair, 2007). In this approach, people are helped to extend apparently finalized meanings in their talks. Therapists need to hear how the specific meanings people live by work or do not work for them, and to talk beyond those not working (Sinclair, 2007).

From the perspective of discursive therapy, meanings are ‘pre-made’ to an extent, and we also make them in conversation through speech. We join a world in conversation, and take up particular ways of talking and relating within it. Our common sense, in this way, arises from our common use of particular ways of talk. People tend to use language in resourceful ways particular to their cultural histories and relational circumstances (Strong & Pare, 2004, Sinclair & Taylor, 2004).

More specific, discursive therapy explores conversation at both macro level and micro level (Larner, et al., 2004). At the macro level, discursive therapy concerns about the way we use discourses in a particular socio-cultural context. Discourses contribute to how we make meaning. Discursive therapy examines unhelpful discourses, challenge discourses previously taken to be “truth”, and explore new ways of understanding (Strong & Zeman, 2005). In this sense, discursive therapy involves changing how talk occurs so that other understandings and actions are made possible (Anderson & Burney, 2004).

At the micro level, discursive therapy is interested in more detailed language use. The common-sense nature of the language is under enquiry. For example, Strong and Pare (2004) examine how conventional grammatical structure of English

has implications on people's experiences and have effects on social power relations (Strong & Pare, 2004). They point out psychological theories and practices that use the conventional English grammatical structure inevitably lead to the individual seen as solely responsible and culpable for the psychological development of concerns. The individual is thus available for scrutiny, evaluation, diagnosis and intervention by the detached psychological expert (Strong & Pare, 2004). The conventions of the English language thus generate the traditional professional position which captures these people as "other". The "other" is outside of normal, often medicated in an attempt to find normal, and counselled back to normal (Bird & Cook, 2004). However, Bird & Cook (2004) argue that once we see the constructive aspect of language, it in turn generates the possibility for the exposure and negotiation of the power relation inherent in the taking up of meaning (Bird & Cook, 2004).

Narrative approach to psychotherapy

Narrative therapy seeks to make sense of our lives and experiences by ascribing meaning through stories (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007). Stories are regarded as the basic building blocks of narrative therapy. Stories are seen as growing out of our lives and reflect our lives, and storytelling makes explicit our experiences in life. The stories are also seen arise within social conversations and culturally available discourses. And people's experiences are constructed through stories. Our stories constitute us, shaping our lives and our relationships (Sinclair, 2007). More importantly, our stories do not simply represent us or mirror lived events. Individuals can write and re-write their experience rather than determined by it (White & Epston, 1990).

Therefore, narrative therapy holds the view that changing people's stories about their lives can help to change their actual lives because the ongoing changing stories reveal our changing perspectives and our ever-unfolding grasp upon the meanings of our lives (Morgan, 2000). A narrative therapist's roles include asking questions that help clients tell their life stories, externalizing and deconstructing disempowering problem-saturated stories, listening carefully for events that may help open up alternative stories, and constructing helpful stories with new meanings (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990, Robbins & Harrist, 2004).

Changing these stories often involves challenging larger social stories within people's problem-saturated stories about themselves and their lives (Payne, 2006). Narrative therapy acknowledges the cultural, historical and social context in which the meanings are located, and see stories derive from these unexamined dominant social and cultural meanings (McLeod, 2006b). However, dominant stories or discourses are seen to prevail and maintain particular versions of reality, reflect particular cultural values, and more so they can serve to oppress certain group of people. For example, it is pointed out that in western culture the psychological problems are predominantly constructed as placed within individuals (McLeod, 2004b). By telling unhelpful or oppressive stories about our lives, we keep these stories alive, and with them, often misery, unhappiness, and injustice (Payne, 2006). When these dominant discourses are taken for granted as truth and unexamined, other possible life stories are closed off (Payne, 2006).

In narrative therapy, this dominant construction of problems as located in individuals in western culture is challenged. One goal of narrative therapy is to change the story to capture the complexity of life as experienced by that person and to construct alternative stories for people's problems, which are more empowering and less pathologizing (Goncalve, et al., 2009). For example, Hoffman and Kress (2008) showed how narrative therapy can be used to deal with self injury behaviour through externalizing the problem and internalizing personal agency. The process of unpacking and exposing unhelpful stories through the way they have been put together over time enables the discovery of alternative stories that have been disqualified or made invisible. From this approach, new or different stories are always possible.

Solution-focused approach to psychotherapy

Solution-focused therapy puts emphasis on clients' strengths, resources, and abilities (Sinclair, 2007, Macdonald, 2007). Solution-focused therapy is influenced by the philosophies of constructivism, social constructionism, as well as by strategic family therapy (Sinclair, 2007). In the view of solution-focused therapy, traditional therapy is based on a problem-focused model in which clients are seen as confronting problems, and the task of the therapy is to alleviate or remove the problem (O'Connell, 2005). In contrast, solution-focused therapy highlights the strengths of

the person and explores solutions to achieve the person's goals.

Solution-focused therapy also values the use of language. Language is used to in a way to influence the way clients view their situations. From a discursive point of view, the 'problem' is just a discursive construction of people's experiences. There are other possibilities of speaking of people's experiences (Smith, 2006). In this sense, the talk of 'problem' can be replaced by exploring resources and goals for the future. Solution-focused therapy aims to help people see the potential for solutions through past successful attempts and imaging a future without the problem, and to create anticipation for change (Corcoran, 2005).

One characteristic of solution-focused therapy is the use of "miracle questions" (Corcoran & Pillai, 2009). It invites clients to a new way of speaking to foresee the future rather than dwelling on the past problem (Sinclair, 2007). The goals are chosen by the clients and that the clients themselves are seen as having resources which they will use in making changes (Sinclair, 2007). Therapists promote descriptions in specific, small, positive steps and in interactional terms (Macdonald, 2007). Descriptions favor the presence of solutions rather than the absence of problems; the start of something new rather than stopping something that is happening already (Macdonald, 2007). Therapists adopt a respectful, non-blaming and cooperative stance, working towards the clients' goals from within their clients' frame of reference (Macdonald, 2007). Solution-focused therapy has gained increasing popularity in dealing with a range of issues. For example, it has shown effectiveness in helping people with substance abuse problem, and for families to deal with suicide of family members (e.g., Smock et al., 2008, Castro & Guterman, 2008).

'Psychotherapy' in Chinese culture

The term 'psychotherapy' is indeed a modern Western word. Here, I adopt the English word of "healing" to describe Chinese counterpart of 'psychotherapy'. In a nutshell, Chinese cultural concept of healing can be seen as surrounded by the notions of balance and harmony.

The traditional Chinese healing is practiced in the forms such as 易经 (yi jing, Oracle of change, which is one of the most ancient Chinese texts emerging more than

three thousand years ago) , 风水 feng shui (a kind of ancient fortune-telling based on the theory of yin and yang), and most well-known, traditional Chinese medicine (in the forms of herbals, acupuncture, diet, tai ji and therapeutic message) (Hwang & Chang, 2009).

It is beyond the limit of this article to explore the socio-political and historical contexts in which these Chinese philosophical thoughts were embedded. It is important to be aware that the impact of these thoughts on Chinese cultural ways of making sense of life and dealing with life situations. In Chinese traditional culture, Confucianism and Daoism are two major dominant schools of thought that are important to Chinese understanding of health and practice of healing. In the following, I will take a turn to look at traditional Chinese medicine as a healing, as well as how Confucian and Taoist schools of thoughts influence Chinese healing.

Traditional Chinese medicine as a healing

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has been used as a healing system for Chinese people for health care and curing illness for thousands of years. Today TCM is still widely practiced in China. Central to traditional Chinese medicine is the concepts of yin and yang and wu xing. Yin and yang are seen as two different natural forces (yin represents the shade or the female, yang represents the sunshine or the male) which create all things in the universe. Wu xing is the five basic elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) making all things and creatures (Hwang & Chang, 2009). TCM is commonly regarded as developing from the philosophy of Daoism in Chinese culture, focusing on moderation and balance (Kohn, 2004, Quah, 2003). Under this philosophy, the traditional Chinese healing system (TCM) emphasizes rebuilding the inner balance between yin, the passive force, and yang, the active force. This is achieved by establishing a harmonious relationship between the individual and the environment.

“Health” in traditional Chinese medicine is understood as a balance of yin and yang and a mutual equilibrium of the five elements. Health is harmony between nature and the individual. According to traditional Chinese medicine, mental health is to maintain a good mental balance. Therefore, healing emphasize restoring balance between yin and yang (Chen & Swartzman, 2001).

For example, extreme and excessive emotions, such as anger, fear, joy, are considered to lead to the imbalance of yin and yang in the body, and thus cause disease. Therefore, the expression of extreme emotions is discouraged. Instead, internal regulation of emotions, and prevention of excessive emotions are valued. Meanwhile, the avoidance of emotional expression serves the social function for Chinese people. Under the influence of Confucian thought, social harmony is emphasized and people should avoid interpersonal conflict and conform to social customs in an effort to maintain tranquility and achieve contentment. Emotional expression is thought to likely produce social disharmony and therefore should be inhibited. It is noted that verbal expression of emotional distress is not sanctioned in Chinese culture. Instead, bodily complaints are judged as more socially acceptable than complaints of emotional distress.

The Confucian thought of healing

Confucianism is the most dominant school of thought in China. It had been officially taught through many dynasties as the mainstream thought for intellectuals to cultivate themselves. Well-being in Confucian thought can be understood as maintaining a harmonious social relationship with others (within the family as well as in social arena).

Yan (2005) summarizes the implications of Confucian thought for psychotherapy:

First, the power discrepancy between the therapist and the client is acknowledged in the therapeutic relationship. The therapist is seen as having power over the client due to their authority and status. However, the therapeutic relationship needs to be reciprocal and collaborative in order to achieve good outcome (Yan, 2005). According to Yan (2005), this can be drawn upon from the Confucian concept of *ren ai* (仁爱). *ren ai* means benevolent love and kindheartedness towards others. Confucian thought requires the authority to be kind and considerate for the people with less power or knowledge during social interactions. Likewise, in therapy it calls for the therapist to be able to demonstrate kindheartedness and care toward the client. More so, the concept of *ren ai* can be used to encourage clients to develop genuine love towards others.

Second, interpersonal conflict is seen as one of the major distresses in people's life. Therefore, helping people deal with interpersonal conflicts is given priority in healing. In this regard, the concept of "harmony" is the guiding principle in healing as Confucian thought stresses the value of harmony as the basic principle for interpersonal relationships. That means,

"even though there are often differences among people, those differences do not necessarily prevent people from being able to coexist and strive together toward goals. On the contrary, their differences will allow them to be complementary to each other for their mutual benefit. There is no need to force every person to become the same" (Yan, 2005, p. 135).

It is clear that the Confucian thought of "harmony" is based on the acknowledgment and acceptance of individual differences.

Third, in Confucian thought the ability of empathizing towards others is stressed. In this regard, the most famous Confucian saying is "己所不欲勿施于人" ("Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you"). This teaches people to relate to others through taking the perspective of others. This view resonates with the therapeutic factor of empathy in western psychotherapy.

Forth, Confucian thought of healing places an emphasis on self-cultivation. A well-rounded person is required to cultivate themselves to achieve the "golden mean" in dealing with problems (e.g., a well disciplined manner and mild expressions of emotion). In psychotherapy that means the therapist needs to guide the client to concentrate on cultivating themselves, cope with reality, and learn to accept any consequences with calm and ease (Yan, 2005).

Fifth, the principle of Golden mean in Confucian thought can be helpful in teaching people how deal with emotional distress. Too extreme emotions are avoided in order to keep healthy. This is translated in psychotherapy on how to teach people to regulate their emotions, as well as how to deal with conflicts and problems (Yan, 2005).

Daoism perspective of healing

In contrast to Confucianism's focus on relationship with social others; Daoist thought is characterized by an emphasis on the relationship with nature. Daoism

healing teaches a person to minimize desire for success and achievement, stressing the importance of following the nature of the universe, and pointing out the vicissitude of life (Young, Tseng & Zhou, 2005). In particular, Daoism suggests a paradoxical way to deal with situations in life. In the book of *Dao de jing* (the teaching of Daoism), many analogies are used to describe this paradoxical view of life. It is shown in the following,

“When man is born, he is tender and weak; at death, he is hard and stiff. When things and plants are alive, they are soft and supple; when they are dead, they are brittle and dry. Therefore, hardness and stiffness are the companions of death, whereas softness and gentleness are the companions of life. Therefore, when an army is headstrong, it will lose in battle; when a tree is hard, it will be cut down. The gentle and weak belong at the top.”

“.....to yield is to be preserved whole, to be bent is to become straight, to be hollow is to be filled, to be tattered is to be renewed, to be less is to gain, to have plenty is to be confused.”

“Water has the best virtue. It nurtures everything in the universe. Water is the most soft and gentle thing in the world, but it can penetrate hard stone. The rule is to deal with hardness by softness. Water always places itself in the lowest position. The water in the ocean is the most humble thing in the world as it always places itself in the lowest position. Because of this all the rivers and branches converge and flow into the ocean. As a result, the ocean becomes the most powerful thing in the world.” (Young et al., 2005, p.148)

The above shows the Daoist dialectic way of sense-making. The dialectic way of sense-making suggests entirely opposite ways of approaching challenging situations, such as dealing with hardness with softness and doing nothing except following nature, transcending conflict through accepting the conflict. This is in contrast to the common sense of fighting back when challenged, vigorously dealing with problems (Zhang et al, 2002).

In terms of the implication of Daoist thought for psychotherapy, the goal of healing is thus to provide a person with an opportunity to review the situation and examine his or her attitudes and orientation toward life, and to obtain alternative meanings on the way of life (Young, Zhang & Xiao, 2002). According to Daoist

thought, a person who is caught up in a narrow view of life and rigidly obsessed with certain goals tends to feel trapped and suffers from problems. In this sense, Daoism also challenge what is regarded as “truth”. The famous saying from Daism is “dao yi dao, fei chang dao”, which means what we regard as “true” are always changing and no ‘truth’ stays as true forever. Daoist thought provides an entirely different view of the world and of the life of a human being, in contrary to the orthodox Confucian thought in traditional Chinese society which emphasizes personal efforts to achieve socio-economic status. It has been pointed out that Daoist thoughts are more commonly adopted than Confucian thoughts by ordinary Chinese people in their lives to make sense of their experiences because ordinary people’s lives are full of hardships, whereas Confucian thought set more unrealistic goals to reach for ordinary Chinese people (Yan, 2005).

Recently, it has been suggested that there is similarity between the Daoist view of change in Chinese culture and the post-modernist thinking in the west (Chen, 2006). According to Chen (2006), these two school of thoughts share the viewpoint that things are constantly changing and related to one another, therefore no ‘truth’ can be considered as fixed or constant. What we see as ‘true’ depends upon a particular frame of reference of time and space, and upon a specific perspective. Chen (2006) considers Daoist view of can help people readjust their rigid ways of thinking. It can provide an alternative perception of life and suggest we approach problems in an entirely different way (Young, et al., 2005). In this sense, Daoism can be seen as providing a Chinese perspective of “coping” as a counterpart of the “coping with stress” discourse in the west.

In summary, traditional Chinese medicine, Confucianism and Daoism must be relevant to the development of Chinese psychotherapies because they have permeated practically every aspect of Chinese people’s psychological, social, and moral life for thousands of years. Confucianism emphasizes hierarchy, moral development, achievement, and social responsibility. Excessive compliance with it may give rise to rigidity, feelings of being challenged by responsibility, and frustration. In contrast, Daoism focuses on conforming to natural laws, letting go of excessive control, and the flexible development of personality. Extreme adherence may foster passive compromise, resignation, and apathy (Zhang et al., 2002). It needs to be stressed that

neither Confucian nor Daoism thought has been practiced in Chinese society as a religion in the sense like in western society. It is not unusual for members of a Chinese family to practice different philosophical thoughts. According to Yan (2005), “the Chinese may consider Confucian thought useful for improving human qualities, stabilizing harmonious interpersonal relationship, and cultivating a scholarly manner, particularly when life is going well. However, when a person’s life is not successful, the philosophy of Daoism can be helpful, and when a person is suffering, Buddhism can be beneficial. Thus, the Chinese mind is characterized by multiple synthesized systems of thought, rather than a single way of thinking” (2005, p.130). What is regarded as “Confucian” or “Daoism” thoughts have been interpreted and reinterpreted constantly under the influence of the political and social changes in Chinese society.

Summary

Viewing psychotherapy as a cultural practice requires psychotherapists be aware of the cultural and social contexts of psychotherapy. Traditional major approaches to psychotherapy in western societies are considered as reflecting the individualistic cultural orientation. Western psychotherapy can be seen as reinforcing culturally sanctioned values and ways of dealing in western culture. The multicultural movement in psychotherapy requires consider the appropriateness of certain psychotherapy for clients from different cultural backgrounds. Under the increasing influence of the postmodern movement in western culture, the traditional sense of psychotherapy has been challenged and more new approaches to psychotherapy have been explored. There are similarities between the postmodern psychotherapy approach and the traditional Chinese way of sense-making in terms of challenging the ‘truth’ claim. This implies that the postmodern informed psychotherapy approach can offer opportunities to work with Chinese migrants.

Chapter Seven: My study--Introducing new ways of speaking migration experiences

Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce my research on the development and application of psychotherapeutic intervention with Chinese migrants in New Zealand. First, I provide the research rationale. Second, I introduce my research aims. Third, I explain my research approach in terms of theoretical stance, methodology, and data analytic approach.

Research rationale

I pointed out in Part One of this research, that migrants' experiences are constructed as a process of adjustment in western discourse. During this process, migrants have to cope with stress, deal with acculturation and identity issues, and so on. As a result, psychological intervention work with migrants tends to address these issues. The limited research to date has focused on dealing with cultural shock, adolescent's adjustment, intergenerational family conflict, dealing with acculturation issues in adjustment, and teaching coping strategies. Few psychological interventions have directly looked at helping migrants make sense of their migratory experiences itself. It seems only when a migrant starts experiencing extreme distresses and present to mental health services (e.g., due to depression, anxiety disorders, and psychosis), the migratory experiences of the person become noticed in the psychological assessment and interventions.

In New Zealand, a scarcity of research has been done on psychological intervention work with Chinese migrants. There is research suggesting that CBT is effective in working with Chinese in New Zealand (Foo & Kazantzis, 2007). However, the existing work has been done with the local Chinese population who are more acculturated (e.g., the psychological intervention was conducted in English language), and no psychological intervention work has been done with the population of recent Chinese migrants.

Ho's (2004) review also shows there is a lack of research on the mental health status of Asian migrants in New Zealand. Although there is no concrete evidence to

suggest that the mental health among Asians is different from the general population, employment problems, language difficulties, disruptions of family and social support networks continue to be pointed out as the risk factors to jeopardize Asian migrants' mental health. The literature review by Ho et al. (2002) asserts that cultural differences, lack of English proficiency, as well as the existence of alternative services are the major barriers to mainstream mental health service utilization among Asians in New Zealand. More so, like Chinese in China and abroad, Chinese in New Zealand also tend to use traditional Chinese medicine for emotional distress (Chen, 2006).

The literature review indicates there is a lack of psychological intervention work with the Chinese in western countries. Within the limited work, most research has adopted the conventional approaches to psychological intervention (mostly cognitive-behavioural therapy), and few studies have been done in exploring using the postmodern informed approaches (such as narrative therapy, discursive therapy or solution-focused therapy) to working with Chinese, let alone any Chinese indigenous psychological approach. With that said, I have noticed that increasing interest has been drawn upon into incorporating indigenous Chinese cultural knowledge (such as Confucius and Daoist thoughts) in the development of western psychological approach to work with Chinese (e.g., Zhang et al, 2002, Tseng, 2004b). This is in particular noticeable in CBT (e.g., Chen & Davenport, 2005).

Born and growing up in China, I have been socialized with the Chinese cultural knowledge and cultural way of sense-making. As a Chinese migrant to New Zealand myself (I have lived in New Zealand for over seven years), I have my share of migratory experiences with other Chinese migrants here and am still in the process of making sense of my migration experiences. The struggles of many other Chinese migrants in New Zealand have caught my attention. Meanwhile, studying clinical psychology at the postgraduate level in a western academic institution, I am informed with western psychological approaches to interventions, and interested in how to conduct psychological interventions with the population of Chinese migrants in New Zealand.

This part of research (Part Two) explores how to conduct ‘psychological interventions’ with recent Chinese migrants in New Zealand. My conceptualization of ‘psychological intervention’ is influenced by the postmodern informed western psychotherapies as well as Chinese cultural understandings of healing, which aims to provide cultural meanings to help people construct their experiences in an empowering way. Therefore, in this part of research, the use of the term ‘psychological intervention’ is different from how it is commonly understood and adopted in mainstream clinical psychology. This study involves development and application of how to intervene with recent Chinese migrants in New Zealand to assist them better making sense of the experience in transition from living in China to living in New Zealand.

Research aims

In the previous study (Part One of my research), I examined dominant western cultural constructions of migrants’ experience (e.g., stress and coping, acculturation, identity negotiation) that have become a common sense way of understanding migrants’ experiences. Following that, I introduced Chinese cultural understandings explaining how things could be seen differently from the western perspective, which led to my first phase of research in which I illustrated useful cultural meanings Chinese migrants draw upon to make sense of their experiences of changes in life. The study at this second phase is based on the findings of the first part of my research. It concerns about how to transfer those useful cultural meanings into discursive resources in psychological practice to help recent Chinese migrants deal with changes in life.

In particular, there are three aims for this second phase of research:

The first is to offer an opportunity and space for recent Chinese migrants to explore the meanings of their experiences in New Zealand.

The second is to introduce and make explicit culturally meaningful discursive resources (or ways of speaking) and meaning-making of migration experiences to recent Chinese migrants.

The third is to analyze how these cultural meanings are taken upon by Chinese

migrants to facilitate making sense of their own migration experiences.

Research approach

By and large, this study is influenced by social constructionist notion of psychotherapy (drawing upon ideas from discursive therapy, narrative therapy, and solution-focused therapy), group therapy, as well as the Chinese Daoism cultural way of sense-making. In particular, I adopt McLeod (2006a)'s notion of counselling or psychotherapy as "an arena within which a person can reflect on difficulties within a personal niche, and find new cultural resources, or adapt existing ones that can be used to resolve these difficulties".

In this study, the psychological intervention will centre on providing culturally appropriate ways for recent Chinese migrants to negotiate meanings for their experiences of life in New Zealand. The cultural appropriateness involves considerations of the goals, the format of intervention, as well as providing culturally relevant communication and interpretation. Furthermore, theoretical and philosophical aspects of the intervention need to be culturally relevant to the clients (Tseng, 2004a). In the following, I explicate my research approach from these aspects.

Social constructionist approach/Daoism approach

A social constructionist approach to psychotherapy requires viewing psychotherapy as providing an arena for people to construct meanings for their lives (McLeod, 2006a). McLeod (2004) proposes "the shift from an individualized, psychologized image of the person to a socio-cultural or post-psychological perspective". He argues, in order to do that, it "requires the adoption and development of a new language, one that would allow discussion of a different type of therapeutic process". When working with Chinese migrants, this may suggest locate the meanings in cultural contexts. For Chinese people who are socialized to see problems as rooted in social and interpersonal context, a social constructionist approach may be an appropriate framework to provide culturally meaningful explanations for their lives.

Collaborative approach to the relationship during intervention

Taking a social constructionist approach also implies a collaborative approach to the relationship between the facilitator and the participants in the intervention. That means that as the facilitator, I consider my participants as the expert on his or her life in this process. I will respect and honor their story and take seriously what they have to say and how they choose to say it. I do not expect certain answers, and do not judge whether an answer is direct or indirect, or right or wrong. I appreciate, respect and value all of the voices and realities, because multiple voices and their multiple realities become the richness of differences which can open up possibilities for new ways of doing (Anderson, 2006b).

Taking a collaborative stance also means that I will take a not-knowing stance. Anderson and Burney (2004) refer this not-knowing to the way in which the therapist thinks about their knowledge and expertise. This means I do not believe I have superior knowledge or the truth over my participants. I bring and offer what I know or think I might, but always hold it and present it in a tentative manner. Not-knowing stance requires that my participants' story take centre stage, whereas for me it involves constant learning--listening and trying to understand them from their perspective and in their language (Anderson, 2006b). Taking a learning position in this intervention also means I need act to spontaneously engage the client as a co-learner (Anderson, 2006b). That is, I offer my voice, perspective as simply food for discussion, but I remain willing and able to have my knowledge (including professional and personal values and biases) ignored, questioned and changed (Anderson, 2006b).

Discursive approach to intervention

I adopt the ideas from a discursive perspective of therapy, seeing psychological intervention as providing a way of transforming ways of speaking. Therefore, I am not seeking interpretation/explanations from inner psychological constructs such as "cognition" or "emotions", rather only concerned about the way of speaking and the words spoken of. In this sense, one aim of this intervention is to provide diverse and flexible cultural discursive resources for constructing meanings, rather than changing cognitions or relieve emotional distress.

Taking narrative therapy and solution-focused therapy, I also see myself and

my participants are conversational partners as we engage in dialogical conversations and collaborative relationships in the intervention. One attempt is to identify and transform participants' problem-saturated stories and look for solutions to their problems.

Focusing on explicit Chinese cultural meanings and ways of sense-making

This intervention is interested in drawing upon culturally relevant discursive resources to help Chinese migrants to make sense of their experiences. Providing culturally relevant meanings involves drawing upon the first phase of my research in the thesis. The findings from Part One illustrate that the meanings that Chinese migrants construct for their experiences (e.g., negotiation loss and gain, negotiation interactions with others) largely derive from Chinese cultural understandings of how to deal with life changes as well as social interactions. Chinese sayings, metaphors and proverbs are frequently used by Chinese migrants to make sense of their experiences in New Zealand. More importantly, Chinese migrants draw upon a dialectic meaning-making process to deal with problems in their migratory life. This way of making sense of their life can be seen as embodying traditional Chinese cultural way of 'coping'.

Furthermore, the findings show that the group of recent Chinese migrants are less 'acculturated' and western discursive resources are hardly used to explain their lives. Therefore, it is considered that in order for the meaning-making process to be relevant to Chinese migrants' experiences, there is a need to draw upon Chinese cultural understandings to make sense of their experiences. More so, the intervention will focus on making explicit this cultural way of meaning-making process, and see how participants will take up these meaning constructions.

Focusing on drawing upon strengths

In this intervention, I regard my job as the facilitator is to help build participants' access to the strengths and to amplify change toward its application in problematic situations. I attempt to identify their talk of problems or difficulties, and explore the strengths or solutions to their problems. The source of strengths can be drawn upon from the Part one of my research. The Chinese cultural metaphors and stories can be used to encourage participants to change their problem-saturated talking

(e.g., “the story of Mr Sai”, the saying of “loss is accompanied by gain”). Rather than being focused on the past and a history of the problem, attention is oriented to build hope, and motivation for participants. The goal of the intervention is to empower participants to view themselves as capable and resourceful, which is assumed to further encourages small, concrete behavioural change (Smith, 2006).

The intervention will revolve around the theme of constructing strengths to deal with adjustment in life in New Zealand. The group discussion will focus on helping Chinese migrants to make sense of their experiences in a way that emphasizes their strengths to deal with difficulties related to migration and fitting in. This will involve a process of helping Chinese migrants to construct meaningful stories (give meaningful interpretations) for their difficult life experiences in New Zealand. Here, it is important to acknowledge that Chinese migrants may have different views of strengths, which may not be sanctioned in western culture. As a result, the meanings of “strengths” need to be culturally relevant for them. It is considered that the findings from the first phase of the research (cultural constructions of strengths) can be used as culturally relevant meanings of strengths for this group of recent Chinese migrants.

Group-based psychological Intervention

In my research, I decided on group work as appropriate to work with recent Chinese migrants to facilitate the changes in constructing helpful meanings for their experiences. The choice of group work is based on the following considerations.

First, the characteristics of group work are seen as helpful to achieve the goal of the intervention. Group therapy is understood as working through its therapeutic factors. The therapeutic factors of instillation of hope, acceptance, universality, cohesion, interpersonal learning are seen as often possibilities for participants to draw upon cultural understandings to co-construct new meanings for their experiences (e.g., Yalom, 2005, Whitaker, 2001, Fehr, 2003). The specific purposes of the group work include: to better understand their own situations, to give new meanings to their experiences, to explain their experiences by drawing upon culturally relevant meanings to them, to empower group members by raising awareness of possible meanings (to develop awareness of alternative meanings available to explain their

situations), to learn the skills to construct an alternative story for their experiences. From a social constructionist view, one goal of the group therapy is to help individuals to discover, acknowledge and deconstruct the beliefs, ideas, practices of the broader culture in which a person lives that are serving to assist the problem and the problem story (Brabender et al, 2004).

Second, my research findings at the first phase support the use of group format to work with Chinese migrants. Participants gave positive feedback about the form of focus group discussion. Despite limited facilitation, participants describe the discussion itself as “therapeutic” and they have already benefited from engaging in the discussion of their experiences of adjustment. One theme emerged from the discussion is the importance of peer support in overcoming the life difficulties in New Zealand. Moreover, participants express the need for collective action (“community-based” intervention) to help Chinese migrants deal with adjustment issues. In this regard, group work is considered more useful than individual therapy.

Thirdly, group work is culturally appropriate for working with Chinese people. Research has shown that Asian clients were frequently more comfortable disclosing personal information in groups than in individual counselling sessions (Chung, 2004). Hong and Ham (2001) consider many therapeutic factors of groups are relevant to work with Asian populations in America. It is pointed out that the therapeutic factors of universality, altruism, the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group, and development of socializing techniques are particularly relevant when working with people from collectivistic cultures that value interconnectedness with family and community. For new migrants, they are often relieved to find out in a group session that they are not the only ones feeling the isolation or lack of social support in their experiences in the receiving country. On the other hand, there is precaution in group work with Asian population. The most frequent concerns include clients’ uncertainty about the therapeutic rationale for group therapy, clients’ expectations for clinicians to be directive and informative, the shame and stigma attached to mental health problems, inhibition about disclosing personal and family issues to outsiders, differences between Asian and mainstream American communication styles, and the Asian cultural preference for subtlety and non-confrontational approaches in expressing disagreement (Hong & Ham, 2001).

I see the group provides a place for participants to share and also reflect on their experiences of difficulties after migrating from Mainland China to New Zealand. During the group sessions, I position myself as a facilitator to provide a space for discussions, introducing new ways of speaking, and direct discussions. In the following, I explicate the details of the group work.

Methods

In this section, I first introduce participants' recruitment, ethical consideration and the procedures of conducting the group interventions. Then I provide details of the process of group sessions. Last, I explicate my analytical methods of the participants' accounts.

Participants

The group work targets recent adult Chinese migrants from Mainland China who have lived in New Zealand for over one year but less than five years. In this study, the most recent Chinese migrants who had lived in New Zealand for less than one year were excluded. It was considered for the first year migrants are still at the stage of orienting themselves to a new environment. As a result, they are more likely to be concerned with practical issues involved in the early settlement (e.g., arrangement of housing, children's education), and therefore may benefit more from seeking practical advice on how to access resources than engaging in discussions to gain better understandings of their experiences of adjusting to a new life. The inclusion of migrants who had lived for at most five years is based on the understanding that adjustment is a long-term process for first-generation of non-western migrants in western culture. For example, my first phase of research indicates that Chinese migrants who have lived in New Zealand for a number of years are still faced with the confusion of how to make sense of their experiences in many aspects of life in New Zealand, despite the fact they are relatively well functioning in society. Many of them expressed the notion that five years is a transition point in their adjustment to life in New Zealand. Participants were also relatively well-functioning recent Chinese migrants who had never used any mental health services, but express concerns with making sense of their experience of adjusting of life in New Zealand.

Ethical Consideration

This research was approved by Human Ethics Committee in Massey University. The ethical issue considered was around confidentiality. It was anticipated that participants would be concerned about how the information would be used. Participants were given an Information Sheet (both in Chinese and in English, the English version is the translation of the Chinese version, see Appendices) and asked to read it and raise concerns before they agreed to take part. Participants were fully informed of the purpose, procedure, and use of my research. Participants were assured that their names would be kept confidential, and pseudonyms would be used in any written information (e.g., transcripts, data analysis, reports, and publications). The tapes would be stored securely and only be accessible to the researcher, and would be destroyed at the end of the research. Participants were also asked to keep confidential of personal information of other participants in the focus group discussion. Participants who agreed to take part in the focus group discussion were asked to review the details of the Information Sheet and given opportunities to raise questions before the group discussion began. Then participants signed a consent form at that point.

Procedures

Participants were recruited from the local Chinese communities in Auckland. As the researcher and Chinese migrant who had lived in New Zealand for over five years, I approached Chinese migrants I am acquainted with, Chinese community support workers, Chinese community coordinators, and migrants support services in Auckland region. I introduced my research to them, gave them copies of Information Sheet, and asked them to pass it on to relevant potential participants. In this way, I was able to identify interested people and obtain their contact details from these sources. Through phone calls and emails I explained in detail what would be involved in the group discussions in my research, and they had to opportunity to ask questions.

In total, ten participants were recruited. Two groups were formed, each consisting five participants. Participants of a similar age were placed into one group. This is because arranging members for a group in terms of chronological age is suggested as an effective approach to short-term group therapy (Whitaker, 2001, Fehr,

2003). This helps to establish cohesion in a group, as cohesion is all-important to the effectiveness of short-term group. Individuals of a same age group share a set of developmental tasks. The recognition that they share both the tasks and the struggles to accomplish these tasks will help to develop a common spirit that facilitates the group's work (Whitaker, 2001).

Therefore, one group consisted of elderly participants who migrated to New Zealand under the Family Category to join their adult children. Their age range was from 60 to 75 years old, having been lived here from one year to four years. Four males and one female were in the elderly group. The other group were young participants. Two of them aged 33 and 34 respectively, who migrated to New Zealand under Skilled Migrant Category directly two to three years ago. The other three participants in this group were females in their 20's. They were international fee-paying students in New Zealand before they obtained residency. They had lived in New Zealand between four and five years.

The group session procedures were the same for the two groups. Each group had three sessions in total. Two to three weeks break occurred between each session. Each session last one to one-and-a half hours, and was audio-taped. I completed the three group sessions with the elderly group before starting the group work with the young group. For the elderly group, all the three sessions were conducted in the language school class they all attended. For the young group, all the three sessions were carried out in the Massey library study room. All participants attended the three sessions, except one male participant in the elderly group was absent for the second session due to sickness.

The intervention was conducted in the language of Mandarin. This is based on the consideration that recent Chinese migrants from Mainland China usually have inadequate English proficiency and experience difficulties in expressing themselves in English. Conducting the intervention in the client's first language is believed to help better communication and better expression of their problems. However, doing intervention in the Chinese language requires paying attention to the cultural aspect of language, particularly the different ways the Chinese language constructs meanings from the English language. The group discussion also takes consideration of cultural expression of distress, cultural beliefs of mental health, which has implications for

how to explain problems differently in Chinese language during intervention.

All the sessions were conducted under close supervision. I carried out initial analysis after each session, updated with each to my supervisors, and obtained feedback before engaging in the next one. It took over three months to complete all the group sessions.

Process of the group intervention

The group intervention aims to provide culturally relevant meanings for Chinese migrants to make sense of their experience in life in New Zealand. More specifically, the goal was to co-construct different ways of looking at ‘problematic’ situations that are more helpful for participants to deal with issues relating to adjustment in life in New Zealand.

As the facilitator, throughout the three sessions I emphasized to participants that one of the aims of the group sessions was to generate different ways of understanding their experiences rather than to reach an agreement or search for a single “right” way to deal with their situations. I did this by pointing out the unique experience of each individual in their migration path due to their different backgrounds. The process and content of the three sessions was planned as below.

Session One

In the first session, the attempt was to allow participants to share their experiences. The discussion was initiated by asking participants to talk about the changes that they experienced in life after migration and how they understand these changes. Participants were given opportunities to talk about and share their experience of “difficulties” in life in New Zealand. The questions that were asked at the beginning of the group discussion include:

“How do you find life after migrating to New Zealand?”

“What changes have you experienced after migrating to New Zealand?”

Meanwhile, I attempted to explore the ways that participants had been using to deal with these identified problems by asking the following question:

“How have you dealt with these changes in New Zealand?”

Session Two

In the beginning of the second session, the attempt was to shift the focus of the discussion onto the main issues brought up during the first discussion. Therefore, I explicated participants’ ways of speaking of these issues (based on the analysis of the first session). Then I directed participants’ discussion to explore their understandings of the meanings of migration, and the meanings of social relations they encounter (families, other migrant Chinese, culturally different others) in New Zealand. In doing so, I encouraged participants to co-construct new meanings for their experience in relation to “migration” and “fitting in”.

For example, I explored participants’ understandings around migration by asking the following questions:

“What is your understanding of the event of migration?”

“How migration has impacted on your life?”

“What does ‘fitting in’ mean to you?”

Later in this session, I attempted to introduce alternative meanings of “migration”, “migrants” and “fitting in” for participants to discuss. At the end of the second session, I asked participants to make an endeavour to speak of the issues of their concern by drawing upon alternative meanings discussed in the group session.

Session Three

The third session was planned to revolve around discussing the new meanings of “migration” and “fitting in”, observing how participants take up these new meanings to speak of their experiences in New Zealand, and helping them to construct strengths for their living situation in New Zealand.

At the end of the third session, participants were asked to give feedback on the group discussion in terms of whether they find it helpful for them to make sense of their experience of difficulties, what implications would this have in their adjusting to life in New Zealand, as well as how this kind of group work can be improved to help

other recent Chinese migrants.

Data analysis

A discursive approach to analysis was used to examine how the meanings that participants construct for their experiences have changed before and after the group sessions and how these changes have facilitated participants to approach practical life issues. The analytic approach was informed by the view that a discursive analytic approach can be useful in examining social constructionist psychotherapy approaches to interventions (Busch, 2007). From this view, the analytic process is regarded as an interpretive practice, and it shows different ways participants take up the meanings introduced by the facilitator of the group intervention (Busch, 2007).

The analysis was also based on Muntigl (2004)'s notion of three stages of discursive change in therapy. According to Muntigl, discursive change can be construed in terms of three phases that correspond to clients' developing discursive resources. The first phase is clients' initial discursive repertoires at the onset of therapy, which are the initial ways they talk about their experiences. The second phase are the transitional stage, new meanings are being constructed for their experiences through the therapist's scaffolding. The third and final phase indexes clients' developed discursive repertoires. Clients in this final stage can draw upon more helpful discursive resources to make sense their problematic experiences (Muntigl, 2004).

However, rather than attending to the linguistic aspects of language use (as illustrated in conversation analysis or suggested in some form of discursive analysis), I analyzed the discursive changes through identification of major themes and interpretation of the process that crystallized the changes because it is beyond the scope of this research to examine the language use at the micro level. More so, the difference between English and Chinese language in terms of grammar, ways of expressing meanings makes it difficult to analyze the text using linguistic analytical strategies derived on the English language. Given the process and the outcome can be seen inseparable in qualitative analysis of psychotherapeutic work, I attempted to provide the evidence of therapeutic outcome through demonstration of the process of discursive change in participants.

In light of this, my analysis focused on observing and describing what kind of meaning potential clients draw from when entering group discussion and how this potential evolves during the course of group sessions through interactions with other group members including the facilitator. This involved a search for commonalities of interpretative repertoires or discourses that emerge from reading and rereading the text, as well as considering inconsistencies and variation in the text.

I read and re-read the transcripts for each discussion session for each group. My initial analysis was focused on identifying whether there were changes in participants' talk around "migration" and "fitting in". Therefore I underlined those sentences around "fitting in" as the sessions progressed, such as "we have to fit in to make a new life here.", and later on "fitting in is about mutual understanding." I focused on looking at the talk that seemed problematic for participants, or participants had disagreement with. I looked at what facilitated this process of discursive change. For example, I examined how participants took up the introduced meanings for "fitting in" (as a "universal experience" and "two-way process") to further talk about it.

Another line of investigating discursive change was to look at the specific area of difficulty participants initially talked about, and examine the talk about it before and after. For example, the group of young participants talked about difficulty in obtaining satisfactory employment. I was looking for the way they spoke of it at the beginning of the first session as well as the end of the last session. However, I found it difficult to do it this way as participants' talk were often changing from one topic from another during discussion. Through supervision, I was helped to see that the discursive change is not completed in one discussion or in a single session. The talk went back and forth, meanings were (re)generated, challenged or co-constructed by participants during this process. Until this stage what I had been doing was trying to identify the content--"what" has changed, instead of exploring the process--"how" the talk unfolds during the discussion. Therefore, I decided to re-focus on the process rather than the content. I re-immersed myself into the transcripts to take a closer look at the conversations among participants themselves in just one particular group and tried to capture what was happening in the moments of interaction. At the same time,

I attempted to pay attention to the progress of the group discussion in order to give an overview of the changes over the course of the group sessions.

I analyzed both young and elderly groups of discussions. However, I decided to present only the analysis of the group of young participants' talk. This is because I identified that the processes of discursive change were similar for both groups, but that the group of young participants appeared to experience more difficulties and challenges in New Zealand than the elderly participants. Therefore the group of young participants' talk presented as more problematic in the beginning of the group session, and, as a result, I was able to introduce more discursive resources to them for discussion. Because the analysis was directed at providing snapshots of the moments when issues were raised, discussions were generated and new meanings were co-constructed by participants, I felt the young participants' discursive changes were more salient in this regard. Therefore, the analysis I present below focuses on how the group of young participants' talk of difficulties in the areas of job/employment, language/communication, discrimination/stereotyping, as well as "fitting in", have interconnected, unfolded, changed or transformed throughout the group sessions. The analysis was organized chronologically in correspondence to the progress of group sessions. It showed how the discursive changes were accomplished in the process of co-constructing helpful meanings to make sense of migratory experiences while drawing upon introduced meanings for "migration" and "fitting in" among participants.

Chapter Eight: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The findings are organized to address the main goal of the second phase of the research, to examine the process of discursive changes in participants; in other words, how participants take up introduced cultural meanings as well as co-construct new meanings under facilitation in the group discussions.

Exploring the process of discursive changes

Session One

The talk of participants initially revolved around employment issues. From very early in the session, participants spoke of their difficulty in getting a satisfactory job and sought explanations for their situations. This is shown in the following:

A: “Finding a job is difficult. The biggest barrier, in my view, is that we are not recognized or accepted by the local. No doubt, there is discrimination in the job market. They look down upon us in their mind, even though they don’t speak it openly. One reason for that is because we don’t speak good English. But more importantly, is because that we think differently. They probably find it hard to communicate with us. Obviously there is cultural difference. But even when we do have good English language ability, it is likely we will be turned down for jobs because they would say we don’t have the ‘experience’. But we do have the ‘experience’. The problem is that our experience is not recognized by the employers here.”

B: “I think it is to do with the look too, you know, the Asian face. They will automatically feel distant or reject us when they see the Asian face.”

C: “Sure. A good example is that ‘all Asians are bad drivers’. There are so many negative reports in the media about the Chinese here, such as murders, gangs, and kidnapping. It is very shameful.”

D: “But do you know the other day the chief police appeared on TV to talk about the Asian Crime here (New Zealand) in responding to the recent high profile Chinese kidnapping case? He said that in reality Asians are under-represented in the crime

committed in here. That means we don't do much crime as the locals or other ethnic groups here."

C: "True. But we were always singled out..."

E: "They think we brought the crime to here. They were probably horrified about how three young Chinese men can kidnap a rich Chinese young man, asking for ransoms, then cut him up and dumped the body in the ocean. They probably think it is a Chinese way of committing crime."

C: "No wonder they think this way. It is true in China, it (kidnapping) is becoming common."

E: "But it makes our situation here (in New Zealand) more difficult."

The above shows the topic of discussion was initiated around job difficulty faced by participants in New Zealand, however when "discrimination" was raised by one participant to explain job difficulty, this was quickly echoed by other participants and sparked discussion about discrimination. It is clear "discrimination" was spoken as one major area that all participants have an issue with. Participants linked the discrimination in job market to the negative image about Chinese pictured by the local media (e.g., "Asians are bad drivers", "Asians brought crime to New Zealand"). It is evident that participants were all concerned about the image of Chinese as a collective group in that they see it as pertinent to their individual situation in New Zealand. Participants spoke of the feelings aroused in them (e.g., "shamed"). They also drew upon the discourses around cultural and physical differences to make sense of the shared experience of discrimination. Meanwhile, participants also attempted to challenge the negative stereotypes of Chinese. For example, one participant drew upon the evidence against the negative image that Chinese committed more crimes by citing the chief police's comments ("Asians are under-represented in crimes in New Zealand"). To target the discussion around discrimination, I introduced the concept of stereotype to help them make sense of the experience of discrimination. This is in the following,

Facilitator: "There are definitely a lot of stereotypes about Asian people in New Zealand. Like you mentioned Asians are not good drivers. It can be hard to deal with. Stereotyping is a common thing. We all hold stereotypes of other peoples and other

cultures when we don't know others well. Some stereotypes are positive; some are neutral, while others are negative. Likewise in China, there are different customs and cultures in different areas and provinces. Often we hold stereotypes of people coming from different provinces....”

B: “There are too many stereotyping in China. We all know the saying, for example people from X province are shrewd, or people from Y province are lazy.”

A: “That's true. In China, if a Beijing local person moves to Shanghai, he/she would find the culture totally different and hard to fit into there. In the eyes of Shanghai locals, there are many stereotypes of Beijing people. The food and character of people are so different in each place in China.”

Facilitator: “So even within China there are a lot of people moving around to different places, kind of like migration.” (China has restricted residency policy and people used to be not allowed to live in another province.)

D: “There are millions of migrant workers in China. They left countryside to cities hoping for better jobs and better future for themselves and their families. They take on the low-grade jobs in city, working extremely hard but get paid little. Also these migrant workers are looked down upon by city people. I guess our situation of job difficulty here is same as theirs in China. We are all migrants. We are faced with the same situation.”

A: “Those migrant workers' life is very harsh in China. They were not accepted by the city people. There are a lot of discriminations against them in the city.”

B: “We are just like 插队 *cha dui*.” (插队 *cha dui* refers to the historical event when city young people volunteered to go to countryside for re-education under the call from the Chinese communist party during the Cultural Revolution in China), instead of going to countryside we *cha dui* to a foreign country”.

E: “But there are difference between our situation and the Chinese in China. In China, even though people move to different places, at least they can still speak the common language, share the same social system. Their look, values are more or less the same. But migrating to a new country like here, things are totally different. That makes it more difficult to fit in.”

A: “Well, I must say in China it can also be difficult to find a job nowadays. Social network is sometimes more important than the person’s capability in getting a job. I have worked in China before so I know how complicated and political the interpersonal relationship can be at work. Things are not fair there. I find here the individual’s ability is more valued.”

It is clear when I introduced the concept of stereotyping and applied it to the Chinese context, participants were able to start to speak about the “discrimination” in China. When participant A mentioned about people moving from places to places in China, I decided to introduce to them the new meaning for migration. The above shows that participants were able to take up the introduced meaning of “migration” in the broad sense. Once “migration” is spoken as “moving from one place to another”, they were able to link themselves to the Chinese both living in China and abroad. Through comparison with other groups of Chinese (e.g., migrant workers in China), participants spoke of their migration experience as not peculiar to themselves, but also apply to millions of Chinese people who moved around within China and who emigrated to other countries. However, this was also challenged when one participant pointed out the different situation they are faced with in New Zealand and those in China (shown in participant E). This was again challenged by another participant (A) who talked about the drawbacks in China in getting a job. Therefore, by speaking of “discrimination” as a universal experience, participants better appreciate their situation of job difficulty in New Zealand and achieve the sense of not being alone.

Yet, the difficulty of getting a job still exists despite the fact it is seen as a universal experience. When it comes to how to overcome it, participants initially talked about improving their English skills because the lack of English proficiency was seen as contributing to their job difficulty. This is illustrated in the following:

E: “We have to admit that our English is not as good as the locals. That put us in a disadvantaged position in the job market. We have to study hard to improve it.”

D: “The fact is our English can never be as good as theirs. After all, English is not our first language and we didn’t learn it from a young age or from a native tongue. Even we can become fluent after practice, we still have the Chinese accent.”

B: “If we grew up here, maybe we won’t have the Chinese accent. When children migrated here, they can learn a new language very quickly. When they grow up they will just have the Kiwi accent when speaking English.”

It is very common for participants to speak of English as their weakness and to express feelings of inferiority and powerlessness in their life in New Zealand. Therefore, I attempted to invite participants to see the issue of language/communication through a cultural lens by introducing what another group has discussed from the first part of my research. When language is understood as an aspect of culture, participants gave new meanings to their experience of learning English in New Zealand. This is illustrated in the following:

Facilitator: “It is hard to become very proficient with English for us. I have a Chinese accent when I speak English too. But English is not just a language; it also embodies a different culture (than Chinese culture). A lot of Chinese migrants have noticed that. For example, one of my research participants earlier on said he noticed that in English language there are only “uncle” and “aunty” two words to address relatives of older generation. But in Chinese, we have so many different names to address elderly relatives. For example, mother’s brother is called “jiu jiu”, father’s brother is called “bo bo”. Distinct names are used for close and remote relatives. It just reflects a fact how complicated the interpersonal relationships are in China. My participant said it would be more difficult for them to learn the Chinese language because it would be hard for them to learn the writing (Chinese character), let alone to grasp the complicated interpersonal relationships in China.”

E: “For sure. They will sound funny when they speak Chinese.”

A: “Learning English reminds me of learning Cantonese in Mainland China. It has become so popular to learn Cantonese in Mainland China in the last couple of decades since the Opening and Economic Reform policy took place at the end of 1970’s. Everyone envies Canton province (the first province in China to start the economic reform) and Hong Kong. It was fashionable to learn Cantonese dialect, watching Cantonese dramas, and singing Cantonese songs. There has been a huge influence of Hong Kong (including Canton) culture in the 1990’s. Then Taiwan became strong, we started to learn from Taiwan.”

B: “Yes, that’s right. Lots of Chinese people learned Japanese language at well in the past because Japan was more affluent than China. Then Korea became

developed, so did Korean language became a popular foreign language to learn in China.”

C: “Here we learn English because western countries are still richer and more powerful than China. We are not just learning a new language; more so we are learning what is regarded as a more advanced culture at the moment. Socio-economic status of a country is the underlying determinant of the status of its culture and language.”

A: “It is not only the English language we have to learn to get a job here. About five or six years ago, it was almost impossible for a Chinese migrant to get a job in a Chinese business in Auckland without being able to speak Cantonese. That’s because back in early days almost all Chinese migrants here were from Canton and Hong Kong areas. It was only in recent years with more and more Mainland Chinese migrated to New Zealand, mandarin started to be more accepted.”

D: “Canton dialect already became a language now. It even has its own name. It is called Cantonese rather than Chinese now.”

B” “Well, Shanghai dialect is getting popular too. A few days ago, I saw an advertisement for real estate agent which prefers applicants who can speak Shanghai dialect. It is amazing!”

C: “Of course, that means there are more rich people from Shanghai here now.”

A: “So it is true that socio-economic status is the foundation”.

Here, the talk of learning English has generated discussions about participants’ further talk about Chinese people’s experiences of learning different Chinese dialects and foreign languages in China. Participants’ experience of learning English is contextualized in Chinese people’s experience of learning other foreign languages at different times in history (e.g., learning Cantonese, Japanese, and Korean). English is not seen purely as a language, but also is symbolized as socio-economic status. Learning a new language is co-constructed by the participants as linked to the socio-economic status of the people or nation (regions) who speak the language.

Likewise, participants situated their experiences of learning English in the socio-economic context in New Zealand. The diversity of language use among Chinese in China and overseas is widely observed. For example, Hong and Ham

(2001) noted in the US different sub-groups of Chinese Americans speak different dialects which separate the newer immigrant communities into Cantonese speaking and Mandarin speaking subgroups. This shows that Chinese is not a homogeneous ethnic minority group. Like Chinese migrants in the US, Chinese communities in New Zealand are very diverse and subdivided. The above talk of participants show how diverse the dialects Chinese migrants speak in New Zealand and each dialect usually symbols the regional culture and economic situation of that particular part of China (e.g., Canton, Shanghai). In this way, participants make sense of their experience of learning English and job circumstances.

Session two

It becomes increasingly evident that participants' talk of difficulty with job, language and communication, as well as other areas of their lives in New Zealand, centers on the perceived goal of fitting into New Zealand society. There were talks like the below:

“All our difficulties here, whether it is to do with job or communication, are because we can't fit in.....”

“If we can fit in, we won't have all these problems.”

“But fitting in is difficult. We did not grow up here.....”

It seems participants share a view that once they fit in, their difficulties would dissipate. However, the dilemma exists because fitting in is a challenge. Under this circumstance, I introduced the new ways of speaking of “fitting in”--“a universal experience” and “a two-way process”, attempting to invite participants to co-construct new meanings for “fitting in”. This is shown in the following.

Facilitator: “It sounds like we feel it is difficult for us to fit in because of the cultural differences, the discrimination and so on. But the issue of fitting in is not new to us. Many of us experienced it before and it is a shared experience with other Chinese in China or abroad. We talked about a Chinese moving from one province to another would face the issue of fitting in”

D: “Well, many Chinese people in China admire us having the opportunity to live overseas, we probably feel superior to them, and at the same time we felt inferior here

because of the difficulties we encountered here, like discrimination here and not able to fitting into the mainstream society. It is hard.”

A: “I guess we need to keep reminding ourselves of our own purpose of migrating to New Zealand. Even though there are a lot of things we dislike here, there are things that attracted us to here. Coming to a new country we can learn a lot of new things.”

E: “In fact, now if we decided to move back to China, there is a process of fitting back in. I find it is so dirty in China because of the urbanization and industrialization progress. When I came back to New Zealand from holiday in China, I went straightway to the beach, sat there for a long time and enjoyed the fresh air. So if I did choose to move back to China again, it would take time for me to adjust to the lifestyle there.”

C: “En...When I went back to China for holidays, I found it was hard to communicate with my friends there now. I don’t know the topics they were talking about, and when I told them about my experiences in New Zealand, they did not find it interesting either.”

Facilitator: “it sounds like going back to China we are faced with the issue of fitting in now.”

B: “Well, many young people like us have gone back to China or moved to other countries because they couldn’t find jobs in New Zealand”.

C: “It may be hard for us to fit back in to the society in China if we stayed here for a while and decided to go back for whatever reasons. As a developing country, China is changing too fast. It may be difficult for us to understand lots of things happening there. People also hold different assumptions about why we would go back. They might think we went back because we cannot survive in New Zealand. The rumor can go around very fast and it can be hard for us and our family to deal with.”

B: “Definitely. If we decide to go back to China, we are faced with the same issue of fitting in. The life in China is changing so fast right now. Everyday there are new buildings being built. The changes in cities are beyond my recognition every time I went back for visit. It is easily to get lost.”

E: “Yes, I agree. People in China are changing as well. When I went back I found I did not share the same conversational topics with my old friends any more. When they talk about their experience at work in China, I didn’t feel it was relevant to me. I had no idea about what they were talking about, such as the new movies or pop stars. On the other hand, when I attempted to talk to them about my experience in New Zealand, they were not that interested. And sometimes they didn’t get the jokes which I found interesting.”

A: “That’s right. When we go back we will be faced with the same issue of fitting back into Chinese way of doing things.”

As mentioned earlier, choosing to stay on in New Zealand or go back to China has been an area of struggle for participants. The difficulty in fitting into New Zealand has been talked as one major reason for participants’ wanting to go back to China. However, when “fitting in” was co-constructed as a universal experience, participants spoke of the issue of “fitting into China” when going back. The above demonstrates that participants took up the introduced meaning of fitting in as a universal experience and further make sense of their experience of going back to China as a “fitting in” process. Therefore, constructing a universal “fitting in” experience is not only used to make sense of their experience of discrimination in New Zealand, but also to understand their experiences going back to China as migrants overseas.

More so, when the discourse of “fitting in” was introduced as a two-way process (e.g., “it is not only about how migrants change ourselves to adjust to the new environment, but also involves how migrants are accepted by the locals”), participants co-constructed new meanings for their experience of being stereotyped and discriminated against. In this regard, the media is seen as playing a role in (re) producing stereotyping. This is shown in the following.

Facilitator: “Many Chinese migrants regard fitting in as more than a one-way process. It is also to do with the extent to which we are accepted by the local people. The negative stereotyping of Chinese can hinder us being accepted.....”

A: “That’s right. Fitting in has two aspects. One is to do with how we feel about it; the other is to do with what the local thinks of us.”

C: “The media is often one-sided. Their impressions of China and Chinese people are derived from old movies or based on limited information. The Chinese in New Zealand cannot reflect the whole Chinese in China. Plus the Chinese in New Zealand are very diverse.”

E: “I think the media tends to report negative events anyway. People like to hear disasters. In this regard, it has nothing to do whether it is Chinese or not.”

B: “There are more and more Chinese in New Zealand. Chinese is the largest Asian ethnic minority group in New Zealand. From a statistic point of view, it is normal to appear to be more wrongdoings of Chinese than other Asian ethnic minority groups. But as a matter of fact, the crime rate among Chinese is way below the national average.”

A: “Although New Zealand media tends to report negative news about the Chinese in New Zealand, it can be read as their growing interest in China and attention to Chinese in New Zealand.”

.....

The above illustrates the discussions around the problematic experience of “discrimination” generated diverse and flexible discursive resources for participants to make sense of the negative image of Chinese from different perspectives. For example, the negative reports are interpreted as the media’s interest in the Chinese community in New Zealand. It is evident that new meanings shift participants from feeling they are being treated unfairly to a strength-based and contextualized understanding of their experience. When fitting in is spoken as involving the local people’s acceptance, it generated further talks such as:

B: “New Zealand as a country is too young and isolated. It does not know how to deal with migrants. Unlike other countries where the history of migration is much longer, people in those countries are more sophisticated and worldly”.

... ..

D: “Many New Zealanders don’t even know what the contemporary China is like. They even asked me whether people own fridge or cell phone in China these days. That’s ridiculous.”

... ..

A: "They are protective of locals in job market".

B: "New Zealand is just a small island. I think they have an islander mentality. They think they are the centre of the world. That's why they are protecting their own people."

Here, participants draw upon more broad contextual discourses (such as comparing the histories of different western countries and using geographic location) to explain their difficulties in job situation, however, they construct it in a way to their disadvantage. This is opposite to the discussion in the elderly group where elderly participants constructed strength by drawing upon socio-historical discourse. Therefore, at that point I decided to introduce to participants the view on the advantage of New Zealand from the geographic and historical perspective (drawing from the first part of my research).

Facilitator: "That's interesting that you mentioned the history and location of New Zealand that may have contributed to our job difficulties here. Another group of my participants also talked about this issue. They say that countries, like America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, are relatively young compared to many other countries in the world, like Asian or European countries. They (the US, Australia, New Zealand) were founded in the last. When China had undergone civilization for thousands of years, these countries were still deserts. Only when they were discovered by navigators, did these countries start to develop. The indigenous peoples are no longer the mainstream in society, like the Indians in America, or the Maori in New Zealand. These countries are migrant countries per se, consisting of old and new migrants. It is relatively easy to fit into these young countries compared to the countries with long histories, such as Japan, Korean and European countries. These older countries have their own histories and civilizations of over one thousand years old. It is almost impossible to fit into these countries. In addition, among these young migrant countries, America has advantages in geographic location, political and military power. Therefore, it is normal for Americans to feel national pride and superiority. As to New Zealand, it is a very small and young country. To certain degree it is peripheral in the world arena in terms of economy and politics. The development of New Zealand needs to depend on big countries, like China and America. Therefore, New Zealand is not like America who can openly defy China in

political and economic matters. In terms of fitting in, I think we are more willing and more likely to fit in New Zealand than in America.”

Facilitator: “What do you think of this perspective?”

A: “I have to agree with that view. It is much easier to live here than in Japan. Have you seen that movie about the Chinese living in Japan? Their life is so hard... ..”

B: “But at least we don’t look much different from the Japanese. In Japan, As long as you can speak Japanese, they can’t tell you whether you are a Chinese or not. But in New Zealand we look totally different in appearance.”

C: “But the Japanese culture is also very different from here. It is very fast-paced. People there are under huge pressure to make a living.”

A: “Japan is a little island with a large population and little natural resources. As a nation, they must constantly feel being threatened. (I think) that’s the reason why Japanese have developed a strong sense of national identity and preserved their cultural traditions very well through education, whereas in China the education of traditional culture was totally wrecked in Cultural Revolution. That also explains why they underwent economic revolution in early time, and then invaded China, later now became so close to western countries. Japanese are under pressures for survival in everyday life. So they have high rates of suicide and heart attack. It is the price a country has to pay for its economic development. Just like the contemporary Chinese society, city life is very stressful too.”

Facilitator: “So New Zealand may be relatively isolated, but less stressful. And I remember you all mentioned earlier that you all adore the genuineness of the local people here, and the simply and unadorned way of living in New Zealand...”

A: “Yes, working in New Zealand is less stressful and more secure than in China. Once you get a job here, it is unusual to get fired unless you quit. In China, it is very common you have to work overtime without pay.”

C: “The employer can’t do it here though.”

The above shows participants took up the new meanings I introduced to further co-construct new meanings about the unique aspects of New Zealand to their advantage. There were challenges among participants (e.g., participant B challenged

A, and then was challenged by C). This gave an example of how participants shifted their talk from the problematic to the positive aspects of employment in New Zealand by drawing upon the geographic and historical discourses.

So far in the group session, “fitting in” has emerged as a focal part of discussion for participants to make sense of their experiences in New Zealand. Participants have co-constructed “fitting in” as a universal experience, as a two-way process and find niches for their fitting in. However, the meanings/assumptions of “fitting in” remain intact and un-challenged. Therefore, at this point, I attempted to challenge participants’ understanding of “fitting in” and invite them to co-construct more helpful meanings for deal with the perceived differences with others. This is shown in the following.

Facilitator: “In our discussions, you have talked a lot about *fitting in*. There seems a view that in order to make a life here we have to fit into New Zealand society. But can I ask what do you mean by fitting in?”

C: “To me, fitting in means as the beginning means we understand what we speak to each other, then we have to understand each other’s culture, the last step is to have some common topics and common interest. My experience at work is that it is difficult for me to understand their topics. Sometimes they say something very interesting (to them), but for me I don’t understand why it is interesting. As a result, we don’t really communicate with each other apart from dealing with work-related topics.”

B: “That’s because we don’t get their jokes. So when they find out we don’t understand their jokes, they will slowly lose interest talking to us.”

A: “I remember the first time I went to chat with a local person. He told me he thinks Chinese don’t have a sense of humor. He thinks we don’t laugh about what they think is funny. But in fact, we do have our own sense of humor, and we just lack their humor.”

E: “Right. If we translate our jokes into English, they probably won’t find it funny either.”

Facilitator: “Jokes often reflect a culture. There are cultural differences between China and New Zealand. Lots of Chinese people I have met say they sometimes don’t get their (local people) jokes.”

B: “It is understandable. After all, we don’t share the same cultural background. We grew up in different cultures and societies. We have no idea about the drama episodes or the celebrities they talk about; neither do they know what we are familiar with as we grew up....”

A: “Fitting in for us is limited. I don’t think we have to eat the same food, or hanging out with them all the time in order to fit in.....”

B: “Fitting in totally is not good. I know some Chinese migrant family. Their kids grew up here who can’t speak Chinese well or understand Chinese culture. The parents regret very much that they did not put effort to teach the kid Chinese when they were younger because they wanted them to fit into the locals as a result neglected our own culture. So fitting in is a dilemma. I think the opposite of fitting in is keeping our cultural uniqueness. If we fit in, we will lose our uniqueness.”

Through exploring the meanings of fitting in, participants start to speak the cultural differences that make communication difficult and therefore hinders fitting in. Participants also talked about the dilemmas about fitting in. It seems fitting in and keeping own cultural heritage has been constructed as two polarized sides and participants have been caught up in choosing one over the other.

Session three

It is evident that participants see fitting in as their goal of adjustment which involves changing themselves, at the same time they come up with a shared view that there are some aspects of differences which participants cannot change (e.g., differences in physical appearance, upbringing and cultural background). Therefore, the dilemma arises between change and non-change. This session was started by participants’ further talking about “fitting in”. In challenging the assumption held by participants about “fitting in”, I followed with the question below:

Facilitator: “so does fitting in mean we have to be the same as them?”

B: “I don’t agree. Even the second or the further generation may not be the same. After all, we look different in appearance.”

D: “I remember once I was invited to a wedding of a local friend. When the music was turned on, everyone just started performing a type of wedding dancing together. I don’t think I would ever be able to learn that. Music is such a cultural thing. Listening to Chinese songs can generate emotional resonance in me, but not with the English songs.”

E” “As the first generation of migrants, we grew up and socialized in China. This determines that we have lots of deep-rooted habits which cannot be changed. We are culturally different being with different ideologies and economic situation. The second or the third generation might be able to become the same with them.”

A: “Well, fitting in to me, means to accept each other to certain degree based on mutual understandings. We can keep our differences in respect to opinions, values, lifestyles, languages, etc, but we also need to communicate with each other. We need to understand and support each other when there are differences between us. If the others can see things from our perspective, at the same time we can appreciate others’ perspective better, we can achieve some level of communication.”

Facilitator: “So fitting in can be understood to accept the differences, live with differences, and at the same time try to find the common ground. It sounds like a Chinese saying “求同存异” (seeking the common ground based on maintaining differences).

B: “Yes, we don’t have to change all aspects of ourselves to achieve the mutual understandings. We can hold on to our own things...”

(Participants all agreed.)

The above shows that participants co-constructed more helpful meanings for “fitting in” to solve the dilemma they faced before. When “fitting in” is spoken of as understanding each other and accepting differences, participants changed the way they talked about fitting in (fitting is about changing), rather it is about mutual understanding and keep the way they are (non-changing). Because this way of sense making (dealing with change through non-change) can be seen as a dialectic way of

sense making embodied in traditional Chinese Taoist culture, this is an opportunity to invite participants to look to their strength and niche by making explicit the Chinese cultural way of sense-making which involves dialectically negotiating both positive and negative aspects of life experience. Therefore, I introduced the findings of the first part of my research and pointed out that the way participants are making sense of their experience is a very dialectic way of sense making.

Facilitator: “Our migrants’ life here can be seen as how to deal with change and non-change. There is a dialectical way of dealing with it, as we are all familiar with the Daoism saying “变与不变”, *change involves non-change*. ”

C: “I never thought this way. It is true. We can hold both *change* and *non-change*...”

B: “In fact, a lot of minority groups in China keep their tradition very well. They have their own language, culture and customs.”

A: “Yes, I travelled to Naxi ancient city and listened to the ancient music performance. That was beautiful. They are only a small minority group, but have kept their music from hundreds of years ago. That makes me realize there are so many precious things passing down from different dynasties in our long history. For them (Naxi minority group), they just keep one thing unique and pass it down, now it becomes a symbol for them. For us (Han group), there are too many cultures, so we don’t really have something to represent us. As a result we don’t appreciate our traditions.”

E: “Well, they (ethnic minority) are small groups. China is too big and different provinces have its own history and culture. It is hard to find something to represent us all.”

C: “That’s right. Like the Beijing Olympic, people were arguing using what symbolic designs to represent China. At the end of it, they couldn’t reach agreement because there are too many cultural symbols and there is no single one that can be singled to represent our whole nation.”

Through the discussion, participants talked about the different cultures exist in China. They talked about how ethnic minority groups in China are keeping their traditions and cultures. While as the dominant Han ethnic group in China,

participants appreciate their situation as a minority group in New Zealand. In another word, they imply they can learn from the ethnic minority groups in China to keep their own culture in New Zealand. Once again, this shows participants are able to see their situation from the lens of culture. More so, participants extended the discussion to understand the reason for them not able to keep traditions and cultures. In the above, they talked about the diverse cultures in China (e.g., through giving an example about the lack of agreement on Chinese cultural symbol in the Beijing Olympic game). This talk about culture generates more discussions as follow.

D: "China is changing rapidly too. Chinese people living in China are becoming more and more westernized."

B: "There is a huge western cultural influence in China. Traditional Chinese culture is getting lost. I think nowadays many Chinese people just regard western culture as better than Chinese culture."

A: "That's probably what originally drove us (Chinese migrants) to migrate here. We came here because we thought the culture here is more advanced."

C: "But every culture has its strengths and shortcomings"

... ..

E: "I think it comes down to the power difference. Western countries are more powerful economically, so their culture is dominant."

(All participants agreed).

The above shows that once the discourse of "culture" is drawn upon in sense-making, participants speak of their migration experience as learning more "advanced" culture. But this was also challenged by a participant as "each culture has its strength and shortcomings". Under this circumstance, it is evident that participants draw upon the discourse of "power differences" in their talks to make sense of their experience as migrants. Culture is also talked in terms of power. Western culture is seen as economically powerful which explains its dominance over other cultures. Talking through power, participants drew upon the collective power of Chinese migrants to emphasize their strength and resources:

B: “From an individual’s perspective, the process of change is slower and harder to take notice than from the collective perspective. But changes are taking place. More Chinese are participating in the local politics. For example, there are more Chinese put their hands up for the local government election this year than ever before. The service industry has been improved so much to cater for Chinese people’s needs. The ATM machine has Chinese translation now. More government agencies provide multilingual services. The locals are also changing for us, not just us changing.”

A: “I noticed more Kiwi kids pick up Chinese as the second language to learn in school now. Just a few years ago, French, Germany, Japanese languages were the popular choices for second language. This is because that China is getting stronger, and there are more Chinese migrants overseas.”

E: “But they may just learn it for fun, not study seriously.”

C: “But at least they are changing the way they used to think. When I first arrived here, there was hardly any news about Chinese in the media. In the last few years, more and more news are concerned about China and Chinese living in New Zealand.”

Participants discussed the growing population of Chinese migrants, the increasing participation in local politics and economic development, the improvement of services for Chinese migrants (e.g. providing bilingual services in social department, the banking services) are all to their advantage to adjust to a new life in New Zealand. The talk is shifting to a more positive prospect for their settling in.

Towards the end of the last session, once again participants were invited to look for Chinese cultural meanings to help them deal with difficulties and challenges in New Zealand.

Facilitators: “There are a lot of Chinese cultural resources we can use to help us make sense of our experience and give us strength to deal with challenges in life in New Zealand. For example, in traditional Chinese culture, Daoism’s dialectic ways of making sense of change can help us to think of how to deal with the differences with others. We don’t have to change ourselves totally to make a meaningful life in here. We can still hold on to what we have got, at the same time make some possible changes to make life easier. We can also draw strengths from many Chinese traditional stories, metaphors and poems, like Mr Sai’s horse, “求同存异”, etc.”

Facilitator: “What do you think of this?”

A: “We do have lots of good values, traditions and ways of thinking in our culture we need to keep and promote.”

D: “It is a shame that we have overlooked our own valuable cultural resources for such a long time.”

C: “Every culture has its good and bad sides. We can learn good things from them, but also need to keep our own good things. Drawing upon a Chinese saying 扬长避短, we can absorb the good and discard the bad in both our culture as well as others’ culture.”

... ..

Facilitator: “What are some of other Chinese sayings you can think of?”

B: “There are no always winners or losers.”

C: “There are many idioms, like “三十年河东 , 三十年河西” (power stays for 30 years in the east side of the river and another 30 years in the west side of the river).

D: “风水轮流转” (Fengshui/good luck rotates).

The discussion of Chinese cultural resources generated many more useful sayings, idioms and poems that point to the vicissitudes of life, the dialectic ways of making sense negative experiences and a positive outlook in difficulty. At the end of the group sessions, participants were invited to give feedback:

A: “I find the discussion very helpful for me. Now I know it is not just me who is struggling in making sense of these changes after migrating to New Zealand. Being able to listen to different views and know how other people see things and deal with difficulties really help me put things into perspective. It also prepares me for future challenges.”

... ..

D: “Now I come to see it is not all good or all bad. Living anywhere has both sides—advantages and disadvantages. I have more appreciation of my situation now.”

.....

C: “I have learned from others’ story so I can prevent from making the same mistakes. Understanding the differences, I think I can keep who I am, but try to change to improve myself while I can.”

Summary of the findings

The analysis shows how participants co-construct meanings in the group sessions to make sense of their experiences. There are noticeable changes among group members in the ways of speaking their experiences. At the beginning of the group session participants’ talks about the “problems” exemplify the common issues faced by Chinese migrants in New Zealand. All participants speak of shared difficulties with language and communication, experiences of discrimination (particularly in terms of the negative views of Chinese in the mainstream media), as well as concerns about how to fit into New Zealand society. It was also evident that the perceived difficulties are related to a strong desire to fit into the New Zealand culture and society.

The exploration of discursive changes is examined through the way participants co-construct new meanings based on the introduced discourses around migration, migrants and fitting in. By and large, the discursive changes are evident. Participants’ talk moved from speaking their experiences as problem saturated towards focusing on their strengths and resources; from a one-sided perspective towards a more dialectic way of sense-making (involving both sides), from limited and fixed ways of speaking of migratory experiences towards diverse and flexible understandings, from individualized and isolated sense-making towards a sense of shared and collective experience embedded in the broad cultural, political, and socio-historical context. It is clear that participants attempted to take account of social, geopolitical, historical and cultural factors to make sense of their experiences.

As the sessions progressed, it became increasingly noticeable that the conventional and prominent ways of speaking of their experience have been challenged and different ways of sense-making have been generated. This was achieved by participants' challenging each other and come up with more helpful ways of understanding. More importantly, it is evident that participants took up the introduced discursive constructions around "migration" and "fitting in", and were able to further co-construct helpful explanations for their experiences in New Zealand.

Focusing on discussing the meanings of "migration", "fitting in" seems to help participants to generate various perspectives as to how to speak of these matters. This in turn assists them to make sense of their own situations through drawing upon these new meanings. The processes of drawing upon these new meanings included the following aspects.

First is the co-construction of a "universal" experience of "migration" and "fitting in". The problematic "fitting in" became seen as a shared experience for Chinese living in New Zealand as well as in China and other countries. However, it is clear that this way of speaking "fitting in" as "problem" was disempowering to understand their lived experience, although the building of "fitting in" as a collective experience was helpful to make sense of their difficulty.

Second is the acceptance of "differences". The exploration of the meanings of "fitting in" elicited participants' discussion around the perceived "differences" between themselves and the "others". Participants acknowledge the differences that exist in aspects of physical features, culture heritage, economic, geopolitical and historical context. These differences are taken up to make sense of their problematic "fitting in".

More importantly and the third is about the co-construction of strengths and niches. Participants were able to construct a niche/strength/advantage for themselves by drawing upon alternative discourses around the perceived differences (from others) and similarities (with other Chinese) that is more empowering. At the stage, their talk is moving from saturated problems to strengths. Participants are starting to see their experiences as migrants from a more positive perspective.

Last but not least, is turning to Chinese cultural meaning resources. The explication of the traditional dialectic way of making sense of life changes and differences, the ample Chinese cultural knowledge help participants to recognize the Chinese cultural resources are available to them to make sense of their experiences. This is seen as an empowering experience.

Discussion

In reviewing the aims of the intervention, it is clear that the group discussions achieved the role of offering an opportunity for Chinese migrants to explore the meanings of their experiences. The three sessions progressed well; as one participant commented that “the topics for discussion went deeper and became more comprehensive and meaningful as each session went along”. Participants actively took part in the discussions and sought explanations for their experiences in New Zealand. At the end of the group work, participants gave positive feedback. They considered the content of discussion as very relevant to their experiences because it addressed their issues and concerns about living in New Zealand. Participants commented that the focus of group discussion was practical and also useful for them to understand their situations. In particular, elderly group members commented on the format of group discussion. They spoke of how this form of group is quite different from their experience of groups in China which are rather political propaganda and lacks relevance to their everyday life.

Another aim of this study was to introduce and make explicit culturally meaningful discursive resources (or ways of speaking) of migration experiences to recent Chinese migrants based on the findings of the previous phase of the research. As a facilitator I successfully introduced and explicated the discursive resources. In terms of the process, the first session was more of cohesion building than externalizing “problems”. It was anticipated before the group commenced that group members would talk about their problems in the first session. Interestingly, it was observed that the initial talk was more focused on their positive experiences in New Zealand, and this was particularly evident in the elderly group. It seems elderly participants followed an indirect and non-confrontational communication which is endorsed in Chinese culture. As for the young group, at the beginning participants expressed concern about the cohesion among the group members. The young group

consisted of participants who directly migrated from China under the skilled migrants' category as well as participants who had been international students in New Zealand before obtaining residency. They expressed the concern that their experiences in New Zealand might be different. Therefore, I addressed the issue of group cohesion by pointing to the similarities among young group members (such as the fact that they are all aged under 35 years old, all faced with the challenge of getting a satisfactory job in New Zealand as well as the difficult decision as to leave or stay in here). I suggested to them these commonalities provide them the opportunity for mutual learning. This worked well to facilitate the young group participants to speak more of their common experiences in their subsequent discussion.

As the sessions progressed, I was able to gather new helpful meanings co-constructed after each session and introduced them to the two different groups (young participants and elderly participants) when necessary. For example, I conducted the elderly group discussion first and noticed they constructed the geography and history of New Zealand in a positive manner to explain their migration experience, while later on when the young group participants talked about the location and history of New Zealand in a negative way, I was able to introduce the elderly participants' constructions to the young group participants which was helpful for them to see other perspectives and took up the positive meanings.

In the meanwhile, I challenged unhelpful ways of constructing migratory experience. For example, some participants' talk of "fitting in" connotes a one-way only process. I asked participants to clarify the meanings of "fitting in". This helped them to become exposed to the unhelpful constructions of fitting in, which was followed by their challenging each other and subsequently generated more useful meanings for "fitting in" through discussion.

In the last session, I facilitated participants to employ these new positive meanings to revisit their "problems" that emerged in the first session and to encourage participants to understand these problems from new perspectives. This in turn generated participants' discussions around the usefulness of these 'new' meanings in making better sense of their experiences.

In conclusion, participants responded well to the intervention. The intervention achieved the goals of providing a place for recent Chinese migrants to share their experiences of difficulties after migrating from Mainland China to New Zealand. They took up introduced new ways of speaking about “migration” and “fitting in”, and further co-constructed helpful meanings to better make sense of their experiences and difficulties.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions of my research

Overview

This research has explored a cultural approach to better understanding Chinese migrants' experiences and for working with Chinese migrants in 'psychological intervention' in New Zealand. It is based on the assumption that better understanding of this group of Chinese leads to better psychological practice with them. This research was made up of two parts. Part One (chapters one to four) focused on understanding how Chinese migrants make sense of their experiences after migrating to New Zealand from China, whereas Part Two (chapters five to eight) took this further to look at how to intervene with recent Chinese migrants to assist them in the transition period from living in China to living in New Zealand by drawing upon the findings from Part One.

There is a lack of research on Chinese migrants' own perspectives in making sense of their migration experiences in New Zealand. Most research on exploring Chinese migrants' experience has adopted western cultural discourses as the framework for interpretation (e.g., stress and coping, acculturation) and there is a lack of consideration of Chinese cultural meanings and cultural sense-making process. No research so far has looked at adopting a discursive approach to psychological intervention in working with recent Chinese migrants in New Zealand. This research is the first to explore how Chinese migrants make sense of their experiences in New Zealand and how to work with recent Chinese migrants in psychological intervention by drawing upon a cultural-centered and discursive approach.

The key points to be derived from this research are:

First, negotiating meanings for "migration" and "fitting in" is the central process for Chinese migrants to make sense of their migratory experiences in New Zealand. In this meaning-making process, Chinese cultural meanings provide useful discursive resources for Chinese migrants to draw upon to better understand their experiences of migrating from China to New Zealand. The sayings such as "fish or bear's paw", "loss are accompanied by gain", "life is about negotiating loss and gain" are used by Chinese migrants in a way to allow them more flexibility in constructing

their experience in New Zealand. More importantly, the dialectical sense-making embedded in traditional Chinese cultural knowledge is a helpful way to transfer their discursive constructions from negative to positive aspects of their migration experiences.

Second, a group-based, collaborative, and social constructionist approach to ‘psychological intervention’ is helpful for recent Chinese migrants to take up functional discursive resources (based on other Chinese migrants’ shared experiences) to further co-construct positive meanings to make sense of their difficulties in adjusting to life in New Zealand.

In the following, I summarize implications for future research on migrants’ experiences, as well as implications for psychological intervention with Chinese migrants.

Implications for future research on migrants’ experiences

This research has a small scope and is only concerned with Chinese migrants from Mainland China. It is not intended to be generalized to all Chinese migrants in New Zealand who come from diverse geographic, socio-cultural, historical and economic backgrounds. However, the research has demonstrated the importance of taking these broad contexts as well as the associated discourses into consideration in understanding migrants’ experiences. Future research can explore other non-western migrants’ experiences in New Zealand by taking a discursive analytical approach. More importantly, increasing attention has been called to search for strength and resilience of migrants instead of focusing on their problems (Ehrensaft & Tousignant, 2006). Future research can look at how other non-western migrants draw upon their indigenous cultural knowledge to construct positive meanings for their migratory experiences in a new country.

Implications for psychological intervention work with Chinese migrants

Seeking a sense of shared experience

The group approach to intervention seems to be a good means to work with Chinese migrants to address their adjustment issues in a new country. The adoption

of group work instead of individual work achieved the purpose of providing a space for participants to share their migratory experiences in New Zealand. The group therapeutic factor of “universality” worked most effectively for group members. Talking about the shared experiences of migration and “fitting in” in New Zealand helped participants to recognize a sense of togetherness and belongingness. Talking about their “difficult” experiences also alleviated the feelings of isolation and loneliness, realizing “I am not alone”. For example, many participants spoke about it is good to know that other people had the similar experience to theirs. This made them feel better about their own situation. Speaking of shared experiences can also be seen as Chinese cultural way of sense-making. This is demonstrated in participants’ drawing upon other Chinese people’s experience (both in China and overseas) to better appreciate their own situation. Therefore, this research supports the benefit of taking a group approach to working with Chinese migrants (e.g., Chung, 2004). This suggests future psychological intervention can consider adopting forms of group intervention in working with Chinese migrants in addressing difficulties in migratory life.

The importance of taking account of context

A social constructionist approach to therapeutic work requires paying attention to the socio-cultural context in which meanings are embedded (Hoshmand, 2006). The consideration of context also means paying attention to the background of Chinese migrants in psychological intervention with them. As pointed out in various places, Chinese are made up of diverse groups. This study is concerned with recent Chinese migrants from Mainland China. Providing culturally appropriate psychological intervention work for recent Chinese migrants needs to acknowledge that this group of migrants may not be ‘psychologically’ minded. This means psychological intervention is still culturally foreign to them and there may be stigma attached that psychological intervention is for the mentally-illed person. This means it is important to formulate the goal of the intervention and translate it in a way to avoid implying psychological illness in Chinese language in the recruitment as well as in the intervention with Chinese migrant. More so, it is widely noted that Chinese people do not consider negative feelings and emotional problems to be reasons for seeking professional help, and when they do seek professional help they tend to expect the

professionals to be the authority and expert and thus giving advice (Chen & Davenport, 2005). Therefore, it is more effective to construe psychological intervention in a way that emphasizes offering alternative meanings to understanding their situations rather than focusing on reliving emotional distress. This is consistent with discursive therapy's understanding of the therapeutic process as a process of meaning transformation (e.g., Strong & Pare, 2004). This suggests discursive therapy can be effective in working with the Chinese.

Further, viewing psychotherapy from its cultural context requires culturally derived meanings to be used as a resource of alternative meanings in psychotherapy (McLeod, 2006a). For people of western cultural background, the alternative meanings may be derived from eastern philosophical thinking. On the contrary, for migrants of non-western cultural background, the alternative meaning system may well refer to the dominant understanding in western culture. In this sense, there is a need to raise awareness among Chinese migrants about how problems are dealt with from western cultural perspectives. This can be achieved by addressing cultural specificity of different understandings. For example, in my study, as the facilitator I made explicit the cultural contexts in which the different understandings are embedded. Doing so helps recent Chinese migrants to be equipped with the different discursive resources available to them in order to resist the problematic construction of their experiences in the dominant western culture. More so, this can help them to have a better understanding of the ways that people of western cultural backgrounds understand and deal with problems in life (e.g., how they conceptualise problems as emotional distress and seek professional help). This explication of culturally specific discourses may give them more options and resources to deal with problems in western society. This is in congruent with the Chinese dialectical way of thinking. Here the Chinese idioms can be drawn upon, “古为今用” (make the past serve the present), “西为中用” (make the west serve the east), “洋为中用” (make foreign things serve China). By doing so, the psychological intervention can achieve the function of providing other possible interpretations to the taken-for-granted dominant understandings in different societies and cultures, whether it is New Zealand, China or somewhere else. This is also in agreement with the assumptions of psychotherapeutic approaches informed by social constructionism, in which one aim of therapy is to

offer people a wider range of socio-cultural discourses to make sense of their experiences, which can be different from the dominant discourse in the person's particular cultural context (Avdi & Georgaca, 2007).

'New' or 'old' approach to working with Chinese

In western culture, the dominant discourse around psychological intervention guidelines for working with Chinese clients often stress that the facilitator needs to adopt an educator role as this is regarded as fitting with Chinese clients' expectation of psychotherapists as an expert, as well as fitting with the Chinese value for respecting an expert or authority (e.g., Hodges & Oei, 2007). Psychological intervention work with Chinese is often recommended to be goal directed to address their problems.

In contrast, my research adopted a more collaborative (social constructionist) approach to psychological intervention. I did not assume the role of expert or authority over participants' problems. During the group discussion, I put emphasis on seeking diverse meanings as well as different ways of sense making. I highlighted there was no single right solutions to their 'problems'. The goal of the group discussion was not about finding the 'right' way to successful adjustment, but rather generating new meanings which are at the participants' disposal. My research shows that the social constructionist approach worked well in group discussions. Participants were able to make the most of the opportunities to explore different understandings around their experiences, and were flexible about the usefulness of the meanings to their own unique experiences. I also point out participants' way of sense-making reflects a dialectic way of thinking in traditional Chinese culture. In terms of opening up possibilities in meanings for life, this is in accordance with a social constructionist approach to psychological intervention that emphasizes encouraging people to have flexible perspectives (Avid & Geirgaca, 2007). Here, the old and new, eastern and western approaches find common ground.

This implies that a social constructionist approach to psychological intervention can be as useful as other traditional western approaches to working with Chinese. This supports the effectiveness of a social constructionist approach to therapy (such as discursive therapy and narrative therapy) for working with people with diverse

cultural backgrounds. This also means that, in psychological practice with people from western cultural backgrounds, a social constructionist approach to therapy can introduce them non-western cultural ways of sense making (e.g., traditional Chinese dialectic way of sense making) to open up alternative ways to make meanings in life.

The use of cultural metaphors

In psychological intervention, the use of proverbs and metaphors has been pointed out as useful for providing relevant meanings (e.g., Tseng et al., 2005, Bernal & Saez-Santiago, 2006). Proverbs can help people to gain a new perspective of their problems and increase motivation for change. Chinese culture is rich in proverbs and metaphors. In particular, proverbs are frequently used as philosophical guides to deal with problems in times of distress. My research demonstrates that the cultural knowledge that Chinese migrants draw upon to make sense of their experiences in New Zealand is often marked as Chinese proverbs and sayings (such as “fish or bear’s paw”). More importantly, these proverbs and sayings symbolize Chinese philosophical ideas of life and the way to deal with life situations, and they are easy for participants to grasp. This supports the view that cultural metaphors can be very useful in psychological interventions. This suggests that introduction or explication of meaningful Chinese proverbs can be a useful way to help Chinese migrants to make use of the cultural resources available to them to better understand their experiences of difficulty in New Zealand.

Meanwhile, a social constructionist approach to psychological intervention suggests we cultivate a kind of ethical sensitivity to meaning, especially since discourses are seen as offering incomplete and value-based ways of understanding (Parker, 2004). Therefore, psychological intervention, seen this way, can focus on cultural resources such as stories and metaphors to assist people to explore more helpful meanings. There is a need to call for cultural stories and metaphors (which are rich in meanings) to be widely utilized in psychological intervention.

The search for meaning in psychological intervention

The importance of meaning in psychological intervention has been emphasized (Corey, 2009, Hermans, 2004, Mackay, 2003, Neimeyer & Raskin, 2000, Raskin, 2007). Psychological interventions are faced with the challenge of using culturally

appropriate and relevant ways of seeking meanings to work with people from different cultural backgrounds.

In western culture, the source of meanings has traditionally been seen as residing within the individuals. Accordingly, the search for meaning has been emphasized as being with the individual, who is responsible for his or her 'inner experience' (such as cognition, and emotion). The social constructionist view of a person's experience is as deeply influenced and constrained by culturally sanctioned discourse, and the meanings that individuals give to events are essentially culturally dependent. This echoes a Chinese perspective which highlights the embedding of meanings in particular social, cultural and historical contexts. More importantly, the process of meaning-making is also culturally specific. The way individuals make sense of their experiences is embedded in their unique cultural context. The search for meaning needs to go beyond the meaning itself to explore how meaning is constructed and transformed in the context.

In this sense, psychological intervention can be seen as a cultural meaning-making practice. The goal of psychological intervention is to help a person understand the ways meanings are constructed and gain access to these different ways of speaking of themselves and their situations. Different cultural approaches to psychological intervention in the west and the east can offer useful ways of understanding individuals' experience as long as they provide interpretations that are relevant and meaningful for the person as well as making their assumptions explicit. Across time and cultures, there is always room for more and different meanings. Because non-western migrants' experiences are often depicted as negative, psychological intervention for them needs to call for positive meanings, which can be found in different cultures. In this case, psychological practice with Chinese migrants can make use of ample Chinese cultural meanings and ways of sense-making to help them deal with negative changes encountered in the process of migration.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Information Sheet for Part one of research (in Chinese and English translation)



Massey University
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
New Zealand
T 64 9 414 0800 extn 41244
F 64 9 414 0831
www.massey.ac.nz

研究课题：如何克服移民生活中的逆境

“研究简介”

我们邀请您参加一个对中国移民如何适应新西兰生活的研究。我叫陈娟，我在梅西大学（Massey University）攻读临床心理学博士学位。我的研究课题是理解中国移民怎样克服新西兰移民生活中的逆境，特别是在日常生活中怎样调整心态去面对来自移民生活中的多方面的压力。我的导师是梅西大学的心理学教授（Kerry Chamberlain）和临床心理学讲师（Dr Kerry Gibson, and Mei Wah Williams）。这项研究会帮助我们更好的理解中国移民怎样克服移民生活中的逆境。这项研究的结果会被用来制定一个指南去指导在新西兰从事心理健康和咨询的专业人士更好地理解帮助需要心理辅导和治疗的中国移民去积极处理移民生活中的问题。这项研究会用于完成我在梅西大学临床心理学博士学位。

我们需要征集来自中国的移民来参与我们的研究。如果您在 30 岁以上，在中国大陆出生长大，移民新西兰并在新西兰居住有 2 年以上就符合参与条件。在这项研究中，你所需要做的是参加一个小组讨论。小组由 4 到 5 个人组成。在讨论中您可以谈到自己或他人在新西兰克服困难的情形，以及你对中国移民应该怎样适应新西兰生活的看法和意见。讨论大概持续 1 个小时。我们希望这个小组讨论能帮助您深入了解移民的生活适应状况，并且从他人身上掌握一些克服困境的技能。但是请您能保密不向外人透露涉及小组中其他成员隐私的讨论内容。

我鼓励您参与我的研究，但是参与是您的自愿。如果你愿意参与这项研究，你需要在“同意参与表格”上签名。小组讨论的内容会被录音机记录下来以便我转录和分析，但是您可以放心您的个人资料都是保密的，所有的研究记录都不会揭露你的身份。在小组讨论进行的过程中，您随时可以要求关掉录音机。在小组讨论结束后，您都有权利要求退出我的研究，并收回你所提供的任何信息。我在小组讨论中收集到的信息会被用来完成我的博士论文，论文也有可能再在心理学刊物上发表。“同意参与表格”，录音带和我的抄本会被锁上保密，只有我和我的导师才可以打开。在我的研究论文被评估以后，录音带会被销毁。同时根据梅西大学的规定，签名的“同意参与表格”和抄本在保存五年后会被销毁。

作为这项研究的参与者，你有权利获得一份研究结果的概要。小组讨论期间我会提供点心，在讨论结束时你也会获得 20 纽币现金的补偿。

如果您感兴趣参加我的研究，或有任何问题想了解更多关于我研究的信息，请联系我或者我的导师。





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SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
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New Zealand
T 64 9 414 0800 extn 41244
F 64 9 414 0831
www.massey.ac.nz

**A study to understand how Chinese migrants deal with changes in life
after migrating to New Zealand**

Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in a research project that aims to understand how Chinese migrants deal with changes in life after migrating to New Zealand. My name is Juan Chen and I am undertaking this project under supervision of Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Clinical psychologists Dr Kerry Gibson and Mei Wah Williams, all from School of Psychology, Massey University, Albany campus. I am interested in understanding Chinese migrant's experiences of adjustment to the life in New Zealand and how they deal with stressful life events here. The findings of this research will be used to develop a psycho-educational protocol to teach western mental health professionals how to work with Chinese migrant clients and help the clients become more resilient in dealing with problems in life. This research will be part of the fulfilment of my Doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Massey University.

We are seeking Chinese migrants volunteers to participate in this research. The recruiting criteria for participants are Chinese migrants aged above 30, who grew up in Mainland China, migrated to New Zealand, and have been living in New Zealand for at least 2 years. If you are interested, we would like you to take part in a focus group discussion, to talk about your experiences of adaptation to the life in New Zealand. The focus group will consist of 4-5 Chinese migrants, and is expected to involve about 1 hour of discussion time. You will agree not to disclose personal information discussed in the focus group to outside people. We hope that all participants involved in this study may in some way benefit from the discussions around adaptation to the life in New Zealand and gain some viewpoints in regards to the resilience in Chinese migrants.

I would like to invite you to participate in the study, but you are under no obligation to do so. You will need to sign a consent form if you agree to participate in my research. The discussion in the focus group will be tape recorded and transcribed, but you can be reassured that your name will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in the transcripts or final research report. You can ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the focus group. You can also withdraw from the study, or retract any information you have provided, up to the end of the focus group discussion. The information collected, will be written into a thesis, and may also be published in psychological journals. The consent forms, tapes and transcripts from the interview will be locked away, only accessible to my supervisors and myself. The tapes will be destroyed after the thesis has been evaluated. The consent forms and transcripts will be held for five years prior to destruction as required by Massey University.

As a participant in this research you will be given a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded. Snack food will be provided for you during the focus group discussion and you will also be reimbursed with 20 dollars cash for the time you spend on this research.

If you are interested to take part in this research or wish to know more about this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors.

Juan Chen
School of Psychology
Massey University

Kerry Chamberlain
School of Psychology
Massey University

Mei Wah Williams
School of Psychology
Massey University

Phone: 414 0800 ext: 41253

Email: Juanchen2001@hotmail.com

Phone: 414 0800 ext: 41226

Email: K.Chamberlain@Massey.ac.nz

Phone: 414 0800 ext: 41222

Email: M.W.Williams@Massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 06/043 (insert application number). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Brian Murphy, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 9251, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix II: Information Sheet for Part two of research (in Chinese and English translation)



Massey University
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
New Zealand
T 64 9 414 0800 extn 41244
F 64 9 414 0831
www.massey.ac.nz

课题题目：如何更好地适应新西兰移民生活

“课题简介”

您好，我叫陈娟，我在梅西大学（Massey University）攻读心理学博士学位。我现在在做课题，内容是帮助中国移民更好地理解移民给生活带来的变化，以及怎样在日常生活中调整心态去面对和处理来自移民生活的多方面的挑战。这项研究是完成我在梅西大学心理学博士学位的一部分。我的导师是梅西大学的心理学教授（Kerry Chamberlain）和临床心理学讲师（Mei Wah Williams 和 Kerry Gibson）。这项研究会加深关于如何去帮助中国移民克服移民生活中困难的理解。这项研究的结果会被用于指导为移民提供服务的政府部门，移民服务中心，华人社区，以及心理健康和咨询服务中心去帮助中国移民积极处理移民生活中的问题。

我们邀请您参加这个课题研究。这项课题会给您提供一个机会去学习并掌握如何更好地适应在新西兰的移民生活。我们需要征集来自中国大陆的移民来参与我们的课题。如果您在中国大陆出生长大，移民新西兰，并在新西兰居住有 1 到 5 年的时间，就符合参与条件。在这项研究中，您所需要做的是参加一个由 4 到 5 个人组成的小组讨论。讨论分 3 次进行，每周一次。每次讨论大概持续一个半小时。我会征求意见，选择适合所有小组成员讨论的具体时间和地点。小组讨论的内容会涉及到您和您的家人在新西兰的适应情况，以及您对中国移民应该怎样适应新西兰生活的看法和意见。作为这项课题的研究者，我会组织和引导小组讨论的内容，我也会针对如何理解移民给生活带来的变化给予反馈信息，以供小组成员参考和讨论。我们希望通过小组讨论您能更好地理解“移民”的意义，意识到如何利用自身的长处和优点来克服挑战，学习到如何调整心态去积极地适应在新西兰的移民生活。

小组讨论的内容会被录音机记录下来以便我转录和分析，但是您可以放心您的个人资料都是保密的，所有的研究记录都不会揭露您的身份。我会在所有抄本和论文中使用假名。“同意参与表格”，录音带和我的抄本会被锁上保密，只有我和我的导师才可以打开。在我的研究论文被评估以后，录音带会被销毁。同时根据梅西大学的规定，签名的“同意参与表格”和抄本在保存五年后会被销毁。

我鼓励您参与我的研究，但是参与是您的自愿。如果您愿意参与这项研究，您需要在“同意参与表格”上签名，同时保密不向外人透露涉及小组中其他人隐私的讨论内容。作为这项研究的参与者，您拥有以下权利：

- 拒绝回答任何您不愿意讨论的题目；
- 在参与期间询问任何有关这项研究的问题；
- 提供的所有信息都不会使用您的名字；
- 在小组讨论进行的过程中要求关掉录音机；
- 随时要求退出我的研究，但是在小组讨论中提供的信息会被保留。
- 在研究结束后，如果您愿意，可以获得一份研究结果的概要。

小组讨论期间我会提供点心，在所有讨论结束后您将获得 50 纽币现金作为感谢您的参与。

如果您感兴趣参加我的课题，或想了解更多了解我的课题，请直接联系我。

Juan Chen 陈娟
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
电话: (09) 414 0800 ext: 41253
(09) 4192309 (晚上 7 点后)
Email: Juanchen2001@hotmail.com

如果您有关于我课题的任何问题，也可以联系我的导师。

Kerry Chamberlain
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
电话: (09) 414 0800 ext: 41226
Email: K.Chamberlain@Massey.ac.nz

Mei Wah Williams
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
电话: (09) 414 0800 ext: 41222
Email: M.W.Williams@Massey.ac.nz

Kerry Gibson
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
电话: (09) 414 0800 ext: 41241
Email: K.Gibson@Massey.ac.nz

这项研究已经通过梅西大学伦理委员会的审批。申请号码是 [07/036](#)。如果你有关于这项研究的任何疑问，请联系梅西大学伦理委员会主席 Ann Dupuis 教授。电话: (09) 414 0800 转 9054。电子邮箱: humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz。



Massey University
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
New Zealand
T 64 9 414 0800 extn 41244
F 64 9 414 0831
www.massey.ac.nz

Adjusting to migration: A cultural approach for Chinese migrants

Information Sheet

My name is Juan Chen and I am a full-time student studying for the Doctoral degree of Clinical Psychology at Massey University, Albany Campus, Auckland. I am undertaking this project, as part of my degree, under supervision of Professor Kerry Chamberlain and Clinical Psychologists Mei Wah Williams and Kerry Gibson, all from School of Psychology, Massey University. In this project, I am interested in exploring how to apply cultural knowledge with Chinese migrants in a culturally appropriate way to help them better understand their experiences of adjusting to life in New Zealand. This research aims to shed light on how to provide culturally sensitive services to Chinese migrants to deal with adjustment to living in New Zealand.

You are invited to take part in this research project. You are eligible to participate if you are an adult Chinese migrant, who grew up in Mainland China, migrated to New Zealand, and have lived in New Zealand for more than 1 year and less than 5 years. If you participate, you will join 3 or 4 other Chinese migrants in a group to take part in three sessions of group discussion. Each session will be held weekly for three weeks, and each session is expected to take about 1.5 hours. The group discussions will be held at a time and place convenient to all members of the group. I will facilitate all the sessions of discussion. In the first session, you will have the opportunity to share your experiences of adjustment in New Zealand with other group members. The second session will be around making sense of your experiences of life changes as a result of migration. The third session will focus on how to deal with fitting in to live in New Zealand. We hope that all participants involved in this study may benefit from the discussions around adjusting to life in New Zealand and gain a better understanding of how to deal with concerns in adjustment to living in New Zealand.

The group discussions will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim, but you can be reassured that your name will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in the transcripts or any report from the research. Pseudonyms will be used in any written information. The tapes which contain personal information will be locked away and only be accessible to me. The consent forms, tapes and transcripts will be stored securely for five years and then disposed of by Massey University.

Please note you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you will need to sign an Informed Consent Form before participating in this study. You will agree not to disclose personal information discussed in the focus group to outside people. As a participant, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular topic;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during your participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the group discussion;
- withdraw from the study at any time under the understanding that the information you provide will be retained;
- be given a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded if you request.

Refreshment will be provided for you during the group discussions and you will also be reimbursed with \$50 at the end of the last group discussion for the time you spend on this research.





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If you are interested in taking part in this research or wish to know more about this research, please feel free to contact me.

Juan Chen
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
Phone: (09) 414 0800 ext: 41253
(09) 4192309 (after 7 pm)
Email: Juanchen2001@hotmail.com

If you would like further information about any aspects of this research, you can also contact my supervisors.

Kerry Chamberlain
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
Phone: (09) 414 0800 ext: 41226
Email: K.Chamberlain@Massey.ac.nz

Mei Wah Williams
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
Phone: (09) 414 0800 ext: 41222
Email: M.W.Williams@Massey.ac.nz

Kerry Gibson
School of Psychology
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
Phone: (09)414 0800 ext: 41241
Email: K.Gibson@Massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application number is: 07/036. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Ann Dupuis, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x9054, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz

Appendix III: Consent Form (in Chinese and English translation)



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课题题目：如何更好地适应新西兰移民生活

“同意参与表格”

(这份表格会被保存 5 年)

我已经阅读过“研究简介”，有关人士已经给我详细解释了这项研究的细节，并回答了我所有的疑问。我也明白我可以随时提出其他问题。

我同意小组讨论的内容被录音，我同意不向外人透露小组其他参与者的信息，我同意在满足“研究简介”列出的条件下参与这项研究。

姓名： _____

签名： _____

日期： _____

如果您愿意索要一份研究结果的概要，请写下您的联系方式，我会在在研究结束后寄给您。

地址： _____





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PATICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the group discussions being audio taped. I agree not to disclose to others any personal information about other participants in the focus group. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name (Printed): _____

If you would like a summary of my research findings, I will send you a copy after it has been completed. Please provide your contact details below:

